

# **Creative Education and Creative Work**

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

**De Montfort University  
May 2015**

# ABSTRACT

This research brings together the Creative Economy and Employability agendas, concerns of British government policy from the late 1990s to the current day. It interrogates the concept of employability in creative industries degrees from the viewpoint of contemporary students and graduates. It unpacks the meanings of employability and investigates employability's place in the undergraduate experience from the undergraduate perspective.

A grounded methodological approach is taken to ensure the research findings are rooted in the student voice.

Participants in this research claim that generic university employability strategies are irrelevant to their creative practice. They want to learn how to develop meaningful communities of practice and gain access to the gatekeepers of creative work within the creative industry that they aspire to work. They want to be supported to access creative networks because without the necessary cultural, social and financial capital, these privileged circles remain closed, elitist and impenetrable.

This research develops Creatour, a philosophy for creative work and life as a contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to creative employability. Creatour offers an alternative philosophy to the dominant models of skill acquisition to meet employers' needs. It argues that 'complexability' describes what graduates should be developing for work in a global world.

Creatour, adapted from the practice of Parkour, is a creative philosophy about finding your own path, overcoming obstacles, being resilient and living a 'good life'. It supports participants to view employability in a holistic way both at university and after. Creatour is collaborative and co-produced with

undergraduates, graduates and relevant others such as employers and practitioners.

Creator encourages students to regularly work in different ways, groups and spaces and to seek alternative actions or solutions that maybe more relevant, inclusive and commercial.

Feedback from research dissemination shows Creator as useful to other disciplines as a contemporary approach to learning and work.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have heard many stories about what a PhD will do to you and what it will do to your life. In my story I have really enjoyed working on this research and working with its wide range of participants who have been generous with their time and candid with their experiences. Research students seem to either loathe or love their time on a PhD. I feel very fortunate that I am part of the latter group. I owe this to my three supervisors who have stuck by me since 2009 and have met regularly together as a group. Mary Tyler, David Batchelor and Jayne Stevens have been immensely enthusiastic and supportive. All their energy in the many hours of supervision has been very much appreciated.

Also, I want to thank my colleagues in Education Studies and Youth and Community who have supported this research. Special thanks to Jean Hine for her valuable input into the annual reviews and to Pam Thompson for research meetings and coffee.

Finally, thank you to my family, to Andy, Abe, Hal, David and Juliet who are still interested in me and in my research six years on.

# LIST OF OUTPUTS FROM THIS PHD

## Articles and papers

1. International Conference of Experiential Learning (ICEL) Research Seminar at Principia College, Elsah Illinois USA. July 2015. *Complexability not employability – Creatour is co-produced and develops a philosophy for diverse graduate careers.*
2. International Conference of Experiential Learning (ICEL) Research Seminar at Principia College, Elsah Illinois USA. July 2015. *Border crossings and creative practices In HE: Investigating an ‘ecological’ model.*
3. ‘The Guardian’ February 26 2014 article on creative learning, degrees and creative work - *Why do creative industries still favour the privileged?*
4. SRHE Annual Conference. Newport. December 2013 - *Experiencing Employability – first and final year undergraduate perspectives of ‘The Employability Agenda’.*
5. SRHE Annual Conference. Newport. December 2012 - *What is a degree for? – Using students’ contributions to explore meaningful models of employability for creative degrees, creative aspirations and creative work.*
6. Conference of Academic Librarians. De Montfort University. July 2012 Keynote - *Meanings of Employability.*

7. SRHE Annual Conference. Newport. December 2011 - *Student Voices - Are creative jobs closed to new members, or can employability be acquired through the undergraduate experience?*
8. Taking Over the Academy. June 2011. Kingston University student workshop -*What is creative employability?*
9. Education in a Changing Environment 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference. University of Salford. July 2011. *Creative Degrees and Creative Employability.*
10. Responding to Employers: Moving into the Mainstream - An Employer Engagement and Employability Conference. De Montfort University. June 2010. *Using conceptual models on professional degree programmes to enhance student learning.*
11. 'The Guardian' September 1 2010 guest blog on creative learning, degrees and creative work *I've got a creative degree.*

#### Dissemination

12. Ten staff workshops with staff (academic and support staff) at a post 1992 university on definitions of employability and its place in the undergraduate curriculum.
13. Presented to pedagogic interest groups and transdisciplinary research groups in the faculties of a post 1992 university. Shared with cohorts of students on a Masters programme, Education Practice MA and with cohorts of students on a mixed discipline Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PgCert in HE) at a post 1992 university.



# 1. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

This research is at the heart of the significant contemporary, international, social, cultural and political changes that are impacting on British governments' strategic priorities and policies, focusing predominantly on their influences on education, culture and work. It brings together the Creative Economy and Employability agendas, areas of concern for British government policy from the late 1990s to the current day. The Cultural and Creative Industries, described by government as the Creative Industries, have made a significant contribution to the British economy and are the fastest growing industry in the UK (The Warwick Commission 2015).

In particular this research interrogates the concept of employability in creative industries degrees from the viewpoint of contemporary students and graduates. It unpacks the multiplicity of meanings of employability and investigates employability's place in the undergraduate experience from the undergraduate perspective. It asks the research questions:

1. How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices?
2. Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience?
3. What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?

The research seeks to capture the voices of current students studying on undergraduate degrees in the creative industries and of those that have recently graduated from these courses.

This thesis is structured into the following chapters.

1. This chapter, the *Research Overview*, introduces the research, its background and its context. It provides an overview of the whole journey of the research investigation.

It transports the reader from a positivist perspective of education and work, to an explorative and iterative approach gaining a contemporary perspective through the eyes and voices of undergraduates and graduates.

The first part of this chapter looks through the political lens and examines definitions and policies for employability, higher education and the creative industries from British government and European perspectives. I introduce the dominant models for employability, which are influencing higher education institutions and their programmes. This chapter focuses particularly on undergraduate learning and graduate work.

I then offer a rationale to pursue the student perspective of employability from undergraduate experiences and from graduate aspirations for potential work. The student lens is absent in the government departments that are planning the strategies and policies for the future of higher education in the UK. Students should be part of future planning and their voices should be continuously informing higher education practice.

The chapter moves on to give an overview of how the student/graduate voice was sought, what methodologies were used, the research data and how the findings were used to explore alternative approaches for creative employability to prepare undergraduates and graduates for potential, creative, working life. I argue that 'complexability' is a more appropriate word than 'employability', to describe what graduates want to develop for potential, creative work.

The chapter ends with an introduction to Creatour. This is a philosophy adapted from the practice and philosophy of Parkour. Creatour is holistic and flexible. It develops from the research data and is co-produced with undergraduates, graduates and relevant others such as employers or practitioners. Creatour offers a contemporary perspective about the way to live a creative discipline and a creative working life.

2. Chapter two, *Literature Review*, offers a review of literature on the themes underlying the research questions around employability, the creative industries, higher education and what is understood of 'creative people'. This is followed by a second focus that informs important themes, emerging directly from the research data and interim findings.
3. Chapter three, *Methodology* offers a critical narrative of the research process in terms of its methodological approach which moves from positivist beginnings exploring dominant models arising out of government strategy and policy (Part One), via a scan for more appropriate methods, to the adoption of a grounded approach (Part Two). The grounded approach employs an iterative methodology aiming to seek other models, perspectives or themes arising directly out of the data investigating the creative, undergraduate experience.

4. The fourth chapter *Research Findings and Analysis* presents an analysis of the data generated.
5. Chapter five *Synthesis – Developing a contemporary perspective of employability*, draws together the research questions, literature review, methodology and research findings developing a contemporary perspective of employability within the creative undergraduate experience.
6. The thesis ends with a chapter that concludes the research through a *Summary and a Way Forward - New ways to engage with contemporary students and graduates*. In this chapter I assert that we need to find new ways to engage with contemporary students and graduates. Individuals can be prepared for the complexity of contemporary global work in all industries, not just those defined as ‘creative’. Creative collaboration begins at school, moves continuously into higher education, training and work and develops a way forward to problem-solve, to overcome obstacles and pursue solutions to many of our challenging problems for sustaining a ‘good life’ for all.

## **Introducing the Research Journey**

This thesis takes the reader on a journey, which interrogates the concept of *employability* and researches how employability is interpreted by undergraduates and graduates in their experiences of creative undergraduate degrees in the UK. The research journey moves from critiquing the dominant, positivist, British government led models and funded research approaches explored in the original literature search, to a study that takes a grounded approach in the pursuit of new perspectives.

A grounded viewpoint enables different themes to be revealed because the research is situated directly in the data. The grounded approach used is inspired by Charmaz (2006), who encourages the researcher to be an explicit part of the research process, and to co-produce the research with the research participants. Throughout this thesis, the reader will notice that the chapters are written in the first person and this has been a conscious decision to document the research journey. Its purpose is to show that the researcher is directly involved in the process. The use of the first person ensures that the iterative research decisions taken in the research journey are made totally transparent. Employing this approach generated emerging themes from the data that were then explored in the latter part of the *Literature Review*.

## **An Outline of the Current Historical and Political Context**

In 2009 my interest in the government policy agendas around higher education, employability and creative industries brought about a curiosity to conduct research that interrogated these themes. It would be realised through understanding students' perceptions of their creative undergraduate experience and whether these students believed they were able to acquire or develop 'employability' for potential, graduate work.

The initial research interrogated the literature of higher education, employability and the creative industries. I began reading about employability and creative undergraduate degrees because I was curious about the political and educational interest in the term the 'creative industries' and the assumption that graduates could be prepared for creative, graduate work through an undergraduate, university degree. Both a Labour government and Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government (referred from now on as the Coalition government) in Britain promoted the creative industries and the creative economy, as significant areas playing an important part in the

economic growth and the economic recovery of the UK (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998; Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001; Department for Culture Media and Sport 2008; London Government Association 2009; Cameron 2010). These British governments promoted and advocated ways to train creative people for future creative employment.

As a lecturer supporting academic staff in a post 1992 university, I had been asked by a lecturer in art and design if I could help him make sense of the university employability strategy “as it did not apply to his discipline or his art students”. Further investigation revealed many more academics teaching creative undergraduates who felt unable to put the university employability strategy into practice. As a drama graduate myself, the creative industries/creative economy agenda and political preoccupation with strategies to develop and sustain creative employment really caught my attention. I wondered what do other drama graduates think about this? What do graduates in other creative disciplines believe employability is within their graduate work? Do creative students and graduates think employability can be acquired in their degrees? To what extent has this question been explored?

There is evidence that higher education is shifting to a more vocational foundation rather than a scholarly one. This emphasis on learning for work begins at secondary school.

UK employers do not expect schools to produce job-ready employees by the time they leave secondary school. But what they do expect is to be able to recruit young people with the right skills, capabilities and attitude for the work place.

(CBI 2013;n.p.)

Learners are explicitly being prepared for the labour market and to meet employers' needs. Indeed the CBI states "Business relies on our universities for research, innovation, workforce training and graduate talent"(CBI 2013;n.p.).

Both Labour and Coalition government policies have pushed the marketisation of higher education, in which universities are competing for funding and students. Both governments in their policy documents use metaphors that link students to higher education as a commercial enterprise. Students as customers, students as consumers, students taking the driving seat, students leading provision through demand, students choosing provision rather than through supply (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).

All these terms suggest that students are expected to see university as a service or commodity that can be consumed or bought. The introduction of tuition fees means current and potential students are being encouraged by government policy to look personally for 'value for money' in their degree experience and a return on their investment in terms of graduate earnings.

Universities are being driven by government policy to publish data about the graduate earnings and career destinations of students from particular programmes (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). Government policy (both Labour and Coalition) intends that potential students are able to objectively view this data and compare it between institutions and programmes, in order to make informed choices about what they will get back from their investment in their higher education experience.

A report by Million + (2012) the university think tank showed that there was an initial downturn in university applications after changes in tuition fees from September 2012. The report claimed that graduates are more likely to be employed. An undergraduate degree increases the probability of being

employed by approximately 3 percentage points compared to possession of 'A' Levels (BIS 2011). Qualifications command higher salaries. The average earnings premium associated with an undergraduate degree stands at approximately 27% (overall) compared to possession of 2 or more GCE 'A' Levels (ibid).

Graduates pay additional tax. The average *net Exchequer benefit* associated with the financing of undergraduate degrees stands at approximately £89,000, which corresponds to an Exchequer rate of return of 10.8% (ibid). Graduates supply a highly-skilled workforce for the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Participation in higher education generates economic growth, enhanced wellbeing and a host of non-monetised benefits. These include improved health outcomes, greater probability of undertaking and completing further learning, as well as the wider benefits relating to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, intergenerational and social mobility and stronger local communities. A decline in participation in HE is likely to undermine rather than enhance social mobility.

A further report (Million + 2013), argued that the 30,000 fewer undergraduates enrolled in higher education in 2012-13 would lead to an equivalent loss of £6.6 billion to the UK economy over the following 40 years. The report (ibid) calculated that the average net earnings premium associated with obtaining an undergraduate degree, over a working lifetime, was £115,000, with a Master's degree adding an additional net premium of approximately £59,000 for an individual. For the Exchequer, the net benefit of financing an undergraduate degree was estimated at £94,000, which is equivalent to an Exchequer rate of return of 10.8%, with the Exchequer benefit from a Master's degree being approximately £62,000, or a 25.0% rate of return. UK higher education exports were estimated at £8.788 billion in 2012 prices, of which approximately £7.576 billion is associated with foreign students coming to study in the UK. The UK economy receives approximately £7,088 per EU and international undergraduate student per annum in tuition fee income, as well as a further



£11,988 per student per annum in non-tuition fee expenditure. The corresponding estimates for postgraduate students stand at £8,204 and £14,666 respectively (ibid).

In 2015 the practice of demonstrating value for money of a university degree, contributing numerical salaries to specific graduate jobs and linking graduate employability with economic growth is now standard discourse in university prospectuses and government literature.

Both Labour and Coalition governments believe higher education should be used to prepare graduates for work (CBI 2009; CBI 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009; Browne 2010; CBI 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). This graduate work is in all sectors of employment. In *Ready to Grow*, the CBI state 70% of employers surveyed wanted to see the UK government making the employability skills of young people one of their top priorities (CBI 2010).

## **Creative Work and Policy Development**

In the area of creative work, Labour and Coalition governments have seen the creative industries as economically significant in their policies for growth and recovery (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2006; London Government Association 2009; Cameron 2010). Both governments have looked to higher education to develop creative undergraduate programmes in order to explicitly prepare for creative work and creative entrepreneurship. High profile government policies have led to an increase in higher education degree programmes and an increase in creative graduates (Heartfield 2005).

It is important to note that from May 2010, the Coalition launched various initiatives bringing government policy, creative industries' business needs, creative industries' training and development all together, with the aim of

growing a healthy British creative economy. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) initiated the first discrete campaign for the creative industries. Their first creative industry campaign was launched in 2010 (CBI 2010) and was followed by regular lobbying for policy that supported the growth of the creative industries (CBI 2011a; CBI 2011b; CBI 2011c). In the period from 2010 to 2015 several key reports have been published that have pushed the creative and cultural agenda into mainstream media news and have developed government and industry thinking and policy. The key areas are now examined.

In 2011 The Creative Industries Council was set up in England with the aim of joining up thinking between creative business and government policy (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2012). Vince Cable, Sajid Javid and Nicola Mendelsohn are currently the co-chairs (after May's general election this is likely to change). The Council focuses on barriers to growth within the creative industries, such as access to finance, skills, regulation, intellectual property (IP), export markets and infrastructure. Smaller working parties take forward the strategic actions of the larger group. Their work has sought to bring industry and government needs and perspectives closer together.

In 2011 *Creative Britain* was launched to support regional creative talent outside of London (Creative England 2012). This was to ensure that resources and talent did not privilege London and that the creative and cultural arts were cultivated and nurtured everywhere at a local level. In 2012 the Skillset Skills Group were commissioned to consult with the creative industries and report on ways forward for economic growth (Creative Industries Council Skillset Skills Group 2012). The 2012 report's (Creative Industries Council Skillset Skills Group 2012) recommendations included computer science, arts and/or a creative subject (music, film, media and photography) in the National Curriculum as core subjects, and also as options within the English Baccalaureate. As the English Baccalaureate was abandoned (BBC 2013) this was not implemented. Instead it was replaced with a revised curriculum,

promoted as a more 'rigorous' curriculum and led by the Coalition's previous government Education Minister Michael Gove. Gove's curriculum focused on "essay writing, problem-solving, mathematical modelling and computer programming"; any emphasis on creativity was absent (Coughlan 2013;n.p.).

A lack of creative focus in the new curriculum suggested any government led policy to stimulate creativity across education, creative industries and employability, was not 'joining up' or working in practice. The value and role of the arts in the compulsory and non-compulsory curriculum has been continually debated. The Coalition government have favoured STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) and in so doing demoted the arts (BBC 2013). However in 2014 and 2015 the significance of the arts and cultural and creative education has made a renaissance. Their value is recognised as integral to British life and the development of social, educational, cultural and economic policy (The Creative Industries Council 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015). These reports will be discussed in more detail below.

In 2013 (DCMS and Creative Skills Council) policy was published to support content producers in UK creative industries, to promote creative industries domestically and abroad, to fund the British Film Institute (BFI) to support film production and audience development, to support the growth of digital radio, to change rules to support music, plays and other entertainment, to set policy for public broadcasting, to create local television networks, to support Ofcom to regulate the industries, to develop an independent system for self-regulation of the press, to ensure a mix of media owners and to work with industry and consumer groups to protect children on line.

Also in 2014, CBI launched *The Creative Nation – A Growth Strategy for the UK's Creative Industries* (CBI 2014). This strategy recognised the creative industries as a high potential sector and aimed to secure the future of global competitiveness for the UK's creative industries through the joined up efforts of

government and industry. Creative industries were identified as needing to be more accessible to attract talent from the diversity of the population.

In 2014 The Creative Industries Council launched a website (Creative Skills Council 2014) to position itself as a hub for the creative industries and to coordinate all industries to ensure 2014 became *the year of creativity* (ibid). The launch followed The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) figures that the creative industries were the fastest growing sector and were worth more than £71 billion per year (DCMS 2014). The website's aim is to attract business from developing markets to come to the UK and promotes inward and export investment (ibid). In the same year in July 2014 *#CreateUK Week* was introduced to celebrate the success of UK creative industries and to showcase work and network (DCMS and Creative Skills Council 2013).

In 2014 the DCMS retained the 2001 creative industries definition but used a different methodology to determine what is classified as creative (DCMS 2014). This made a huge impact on how the creative industries are defined, measured and perceived. The new methodology uses "creative intensity", to evaluate the proportion of the workforce in creative occupations (DCMS 2014;4). The methodology takes three areas: the first, the set of occupations identified as creative; second, creative intensity calculated for all industries in the economy; and third, all industries with a creative intensity above a particular threshold are classified as creative industries (ibid). The DCMS now make a clear distinction between the Creative Industries and the Creative Economy. The Creative Industries has become a subset of the Creative Economy. The Creative Industries "includes only those working in the Creative Industries themselves (and who may either be in creative occupations or in other roles e.g. finance". On the other hand the Creative Economy includes the contribution of those "who are in creative occupations outside the Creative Industries as well as all those employed in the Creative Industries" (DCMS 2014;5). In addition to their fiscal value to the UK, the creative economy reflects the importance of the

cultural and creative industries and their impact on all areas of British identity and life (The Creative Industries Council 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015).

In 2014 there were other landmarks for the creative industries, which brought them centre stage. In the overview above, there is a recurring theme, the desire to pull together the disparate areas of the cultural and creative industries into one voice with clear, common goals. In November 2014 the *Creative Industries Federation* (2015) was launched with director John Kampfner and chair and founder Sir John Sorrell. Its national membership, aims to bring together all public arts, the commercial creative industries and creative education, across all sectors (the private, public and independent) with a common case in furthering the success of Britain's cultural and creative life. It views the three areas, the public arts, cultural education and the creative industries as intrinsically linked within a triangle. The Federation encourages public arts organisations to be more entrepreneurial and private companies to have a social/public focus, as well as a private/commercial one. The Federation aims to work with politicians and bring the creative industries together as a united voice.

New initiatives were promoted for funding, research and development. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has a research programme investigating the value of the arts and culture (2015). Arts Council England, the AHRC and Nesta are funding a three year programme on digital research and development (The Warwick Commission 2015). Nesta presents new thinking on bringing finance to the arts (2014). The Heritage Lottery Fund and the RSA recently announced an initiative for applied research into the potential role of heritage in local strategy (2015). British Council research has shown the significance of culture in shaping the UK's place in the world, in terms of its attraction and tourism (Culligan, Dubber et al. 2014).

The two reports of 2014/2015 having the most impact on the cultural and creative industries were from the Creative Industries Council (2014) and The Warwick Commission (2015). These reports have pushed the metaphor of a cultural and creative ecosystem; one classification where all those in the ecosystem rely on and feed each other. The Creative Industries Council launched *\*Create UK* in 2014, a strategy for the creative industries for 2020 (2014). It follows the government's industrial strategy programme. It is an industry and government partnership, which recognised that the creative industries in 2012 surpassed any other industry sector and now has significant gravitas. The strategy aims to unite the different parts of the creative sector and speak with one voice. This strategy tackles familiar developmental areas for the creative industries with its focus on developing access and diversity for all; nurturing talent and skills development; bringing creative industries subjects into all levels of qualifications in the school curriculum; increasing FE and HE programmes with quality marks; increasing employment in the creative industries; opening access to funding to support SMEs and start ups; removing barriers to investment; improving specialist career advice and increasing quality apprenticeships and internships; developing the digital infrastructure; supporting IP and increasing the UK's creative international exports. There is a new initiative for a fusion of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) subjects with business skills in education, bringing the neglected arts subjects into the cosseted area of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. In other ways, this strategy is very different to previous ones. It is more holistic, confident and detailed in joining up industry strategy with government policy. The metaphor promoted from the outset is powerful; an ecosystem that brings together creativity, culture with technology, research and innovation. It also welcomes the new method in defining what is meant by creative industries and how it is measured. It appears more ambitious and joined up than its predecessors (ibid).

The Warwick Commission report (2015) develops the interconnectivity across the creative and cultural areas even further. The Warwick Commission seeks to focus on a coherent strategy for Britain that is both good for society and good for business (2015). The Commission take a holistic approach arguing that the cultural and creative industries (what Government calls the creative industries) are one entity, a cultural and creative ecosystem that is imperative to British life, the British economy and Britain's place in the world. The Commission sets out some important challenges for the arts and creative industries and calls for a joined up plan from the DCMS, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Education (DfE) bringing coherence and unity for Britain's creative ecosystem. In this report all creative and cultural areas are represented, showing evidence that the DCMS definition of the creative industries prior to 2014 was narrow and restricted. The Commission argues that without a synergetic approach, business and society will suffer because currently there are barriers and inequality preventing a cultural life from being a universal right (ibid).

The Commission makes recommendations to ensure everyone has access to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life. They call for investing in the ecosystem, utilising diversity and the range of talent, harnessing the importance of creativity in education and skills development, maximising the opportunities of the digital age and prioritising the role of culture and creativity in developing a sense of identity, place and community across the country and in relation to the wider world (2015). The Commission calls for the Creative Industries Council and the Creative Industries Federation to work together on many of their recommendations.

Education and training have a very strong focus in the report. It is recommended that the DfE and Ofsted ensure that all children up to the age of 16 receive a broad cultural education, bringing a national vision for England's education aspirations in line with those in Wales and Scotland. An arts or

media subject should also be included in the English Baccalaureate and no school should be awarded as 'outstanding' by Ofsted if they are unable to demonstrate excellence in cultural and creative education. An Arts and Culture Pupil Premium and a national Creative Apprenticeship Brokerage Scheme should also be introduced. Within HE, the government should ensure that access to training in cultural and creative Industries programmes at undergraduate and post-graduate are accessed by all. They argue that Britain is impoverished, culturally and economically, as access and participation is not open to all. Diversity needs to be embraced and cultivated in all areas (The Warwick Commission 2015). This view is advocated in this research.

In 2015, as the UK comes up to the May 2015 general election the creative industries can be seen to have moved on significantly since the early days of this research in 2009. The creative industries are now part of a much wider conceptualisation within the cultural and creative ecosystem and their interconnected value within the commercial, the social, the public and the private, the diverse, the cultural and the inclusive are being recognised, championed and developed. This research contributes to this holistic perspective and promotes the need for inclusion, participation and diversity across the creative ecosystem, making both social and economic sense.

## **European, National and Employer Definitions of Employability**

"Employability, a relatively obscure concept" a decade ago (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005;199) is now prominent in many areas of government policy covering education, culture and work. McQuid and Lindsay argue that employability "...plays a crucial role in informing labour market policy in the UK, the EU and beyond" (2005;197).



Employability is not only on our own domestic agendas, but is also one of our European neighbours' concerns. 47 European ministers collectively define employability as salient to the European agenda. The 47 countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) focus on employability as transversal, multidisciplinary skills/competences in subject specific knowledge, contributing to the wider society and to the labour market (Bucharest Communiqué 2012). The role of higher education in this context is to equip students with the skills and attributes (knowledge, attitudes and behaviours) that individuals need in the workplace to meet employers' needs. The European ministers also make a direct link between employability and education institutions, particularly with higher education providing generic employability skills by the time the student graduates. The European conceptualisation of employability views graduates as important players in economic growth (ibid). However, quality of opportunity, access, diversity, social advantages and increased tolerance of other cultures, are more explicit in European strategy as goals in education and work policy (Bucharest Communiqué 2012).

At a national level, British government policies press for 'employability' skills to be incorporated into the higher education degree (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). This therefore is not only in England, but a common theme across all the four nations, ensuring graduates "are ready and able to contribute to future economic growth" (Pegg, Waldock et al. 2012;6).

Employability skills are being seen as important learning in any discipline and at any level in formal education in the UK (HEA 2009; QAA 2009; CBI 2012; Wilson 2012). Employers are regularly surveyed about the skills they want and their perceptions are used to influence education provision about what should be taught (CBI/Universities UK 2009; CBI 2010; High Fliers Research 2012; High Fliers Research 2013). Both Labour and Coalition governments have a similar conceptualisation of the term 'employability' and both support a

similar dominant model which bring education together with industry and employers (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). The features of this common model are:

- Both governments focused on skill acquisition for employability in undergraduate degree programmes in order to meet employers' graduate needs (CBI 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).
- Both sought and valued employers' definitions of graduate employability and employers' view of current undergraduate degree provision (Hesketh 2000; CBI 2009; High Fliers Research 2012).
- Both bought into human capital theory (Mincer 1958; Schultz 1961; Becker 1962; Hanushek 2013) that links government policy and higher education together with employment growth.
- Both, along with employers, promoted internships, work placement and work experience as a key requisite for graduate employability (Archer and Davison 2008; BBC 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).
- Both governments measured graduate employability through graduate first employment destinations six months after leaving university (High Fliers Research 2009; CBI 2012; Higher Education Statistical Agency 2013).
- Both believed that higher education and industry should work closer together to develop employability for graduate jobs within undergraduate

degrees (CBI 2009; CBI 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).

This neo-liberal model is an industry-led conception, which has been uncritically implemented into the policies of Higher Education (HE). HE is directed, by Labour and Coalition governments, to develop the skills the employers believe they need for their workforce. Higher education's function is primarily to create a dynamic workforce. This function links with human capital theory, which will be discussed in the chapter *Literature Review*.

## **Definitions to be Employed in this Research**

Definitions of employability and the creative industries are offered here to assist the reader's understanding. These definitions have been chosen for terms of reference at the initial stages of this research because they most closely represent my understanding of the concepts in 2009.

- Employability - defined as “a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations” (Yorke 2006;8).
- Creative Industries - defined as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001;5).

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 2001 recognised thirteen sectors in the Creative Industries:

*Advertising, Architecture, Art and Antiques Market, Crafts, Design, Designer Fashion, Film and Video, Interactive Leisure Software, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Software and Computer services, Television and Radio.*

(Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001;5).

It is important to note, that since this labelling of the creative collective as the *creative industries* in the late 1990s, there has been much debate about which creative sectors should be included and which contribute to the current British creative economy. The exclusion of the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) and cultural heritage and cultural tourism perceived as central to cultural and economic policy, was viewed as remiss (Flew 2012;13).

In 2014 to 2015 we see a significant development. The creative industries become a subset of the creative economy that represents all creative work. Advertising and marketing; architecture; crafts; design: products, graphic and fashion design; film, TV, radio and photography; It, software and computer services; publishing; museums, galleries and libraries and music, performing and visual arts are the creative economy groups (DCMS 2014;9). The creative industries becomes defined with the cultural industries and symbiotically linked as a single entity in a whole ecosystem and there is a move to categorise creative work using creative intensity that recognises the creative economy in its entirety (DCMS 2014; The Creative Industries Council 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015).

Before 2014 “Creative industries” and the “Creative Economy” were used synonymously and did not have discrete definitions (BOP Consulting 2010;18). In 2006 the Labour government began to formally refer to the creative industries as the creative economy, probably because the latter term was used more by countries outside the UK (ibid). The term, creative economy seems to reach out

to recognise the wider importance of creativity in both the economy and society as a whole, and has been influential in the shaping of policy in the UK and internationally (BOP Consulting 2010;18).

There is no consensus on these definitions in the employability, creative industries and higher education arenas. There appear to be multiple definitions that benefit various stakeholders in this area and this research interrogates the stakeholders and their particular definitions, as the research unfolds and explores its multiple layers.

The term 'creative employability' is used throughout this thesis as shorthand to describe what is needed to access and to sustain potential creative work.

## **The Research Journey**

The research journey is divided into Stage One and Stage Two. Stage One identifies the research with the graduate sample and Stage Two provides the undergraduate sample.

### **Stage One – Research with Graduates**

My initial reading around graduate employability and UK undergraduate degrees led me to examining government policies of the Labour government from 1998 onwards and the Coalition government from 2010, in higher education, the creative industries and the economy. There seemed little difference between governments, in terms of their concepts of employability. Some of the documents noted above (CBI 2009; Browne 2010; CBI 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) are the key British government led reports that outline how higher education and industry should collaborate to develop employability for graduate jobs within undergraduate degrees.

Between 2009 – 2011 new foci came into government employability policies, the importance of the student experience and the student voice (BBC 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). What was surprising was that government researchers had not consulted students with the same vigour as they had employers. Consultation with the student voice was absent. There was little evidence of students and graduates being asked about their definitions and experiences of employability, in order to inform and guide this policy development.

Students numbers had been increasing (HEFCE 2009) and the introduction of tuition fees in 2006 (Eason 2009) and the rise in capped fees (Browne 2010) meant students were being actively encouraged to see themselves as consumers of education. Students' views and evaluations of their university programmes had gained much more power and political impact through the National Student Survey becoming used as a league table for prospective students and university recruitment.

Currently the employers' voice is more influential than the learners' voice and employers drive government policy in higher education experience (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). A student perspective is gained predominantly through a national student survey, which has become a political tool providing a university league table. It has created a consumer satisfaction voice. The student voice (in reality a consumer voice), which is emphasised in government literature for political gain, could be replaced with the seeking of the genuine student voice to inform and shape future government policy.

Students could be consulted about what they believe is important, what they feel meets their needs and could be given the opportunity to voice how they want their learning and education to be shaped. A student voice is needed to evaluate and feedback on learning to co-produce provision.

To illustrate the importance of the student contribution to the planning of educational provision, an example from business, rather than education will be used. Taking an example from an employer's perspective, a training programme for staff development would not be delivered without consulting on what was needed first. The client and/or course participants would discuss what they were looking for, what they believed their needs were and what they were expecting to learn, do or gain from the development. It would be seen as highly irregular for an employer to invest in a training programme without having discussions with the training provider first. They would not view their delegates as mere consumers of the training, who at the end stated if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with it. The training provider would seek the client's input in the design of the training, to ensure the training was meaningful and relevant.

Even a short, training programme would need some degree of collaborative planning to be successful. This is the same for any learning programme in higher education. To be successful, meaningful and relevant, it should be collaborative in its approach to curriculum planning. All parties contribute expertise to the collaborative process, the learners themselves, the facilitators of the learning and the relevant others who may also be involved, such as mentors, practitioners or industry specialists.

In summary, it seems a paradox that the student experience is promoted as so important in government literature (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) but little research seemed to have been undertaken with the students themselves to inform the planning of the student experience in government policy.

The student voice is imperative. Learning should not be planned without learners' contributions to help structure it. Learning becomes relevant and successful if the learners themselves are part of its planning. The student

voice by definition must be a part of the collaborative processes of shaping learning and shaping the student experience.

Listening to and being informed by the student voice is not a new principle. The student experience evaluations and student satisfaction surveys at module, programme and institutional level are common place. An argument for taking note of the student voice is well established within higher education debate (Ramsden 1991; Dearing 1997; Harvey, Plimmer et al. 1997; Hill, Lomas et al. 2003; Bovil et al 2011). The involvement of students in curriculum design is also encouraged in academic development within PgCert programmes and continuous development (Campbell 2010).

I had identified an absence of student involvement and the student voice in the shaping of government education and employability policy in 2008, when I first began to investigate this research area and it still appears to be significantly under represented. In 2015 the National Student Survey continues to be the primary conduit for student feedback.

In 2011 involving the student in the future of HE was not common practice. However, the recommendations for a review of higher education institutions exploring employability, by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2011), encourages the involvement of students and graduates as well as the employers' voice in informing change.

Employers and government departments are dominant in the conceptualisation of employability within Britain. Reviewing the literature available, led me to believe that employability is a contested concept and there has been no agreed definition or construct of what employability is and no evidence that it could/had been acquired by undergraduates for graduate work. British governments' drive



for employer led skill acquisition in the university curriculum and their faith in human capital theory which believes a prosperous economy is built by the workforce collecting skills like deposits in a bank, remains unsubstantiated. Employability is complex, so cannot be easily defined. Employability definitions take several approaches.

Yorke (2006;5) (See Figure 1 page 25) cites lists from Pierce (2002) and the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (Yorke 2006) to show the many dimensions of employability.

**Figure 1** Dimensions to Employability

| <b>Pierce, 2002</b>   | <b>ESECT 2006</b>  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduates obtaining jobs<br/>(measurable to some extent through first destination surveys)</li> <li>• Students being prepared for employment</li> <li>• Students gaining work experience (formal or informal, structured or not)</li> <li>• Vocational (relevance)</li> <li>• Students becoming equipped with a defined range of skills</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting a (graduate) job</li> <li>• Possession of vocational degree</li> <li>• Formal work experience</li> <li>• Good use of non-formal work experience and/or voluntary work</li> <li>• Possession of 'key skills' or such like</li> <li>• Skilful career planning and interview technique</li> <li>• A mix of cognitive and non-cognitive achievements and representations</li> </ul> |

From these lists, Yorke (2006;5) identifies three key areas that make up the construct of employability and contribute to its various conceptualisations across disciplines:

- Employability as demonstrated by the graduate *actually* obtaining a job
- Employability due to the student being developed by his or her experience of higher education (a curricular and perhaps extra-curricular process)
- Employability in terms of the possession of relevant achievements (and implicitly, potential)

Yorke (2006;5)

Graduate employability cannot be linked only to the undergraduate degree experience. The success or failure in finding a graduate job does not relate to the course and institution alone. There are many socio-economic factors involved, such as the economic climate for potential employment, the graduate's nationality, family background, geographic location, entry qualifications, class, ethnicity, age, religion, family connections and family wealth. These factors intersect, so it is difficult to unravel the separate threads in particular cases, to isolate which variables are the most pertinent.

The focus of this research: employability, creative work and creative undergraduate degrees is underdeveloped, with few publications. Within some specific creative industries' disciplines, particularly dance, theatre and art and design, there has been some robust research, which is relevant to the emphasis of employability and creative undergraduate degrees. The research focuses mostly on entrepreneurship and support in starting a small business, art

students' career aspirations on leaving their courses and the destinations of graduates in the creative labour market (Brown 2007; Burns 2007; Walker 2009; Ball L, Pollard E et al. 2010; Evans 2010). Freakley and Neelands (2003) have conducted some unusual research with artists. The work explored the kinds of trading relations that artists engage within their creative practice and discussed the different partnerships and clients that they work with. Freakley and Neelands (ibid) show that the discourse of business and trading is seen as very alien to artists' culture and creative practice. This research implies that arts and business sectors need to develop their understanding of each other.

Not specific to the creative industries, there has been generic work around the theme of employability, undergraduate degrees and work, which has had influence in higher education institutions. There have been higher education guides to implement employability into the student experience. The document *Pedagogy for Employability* promoted the sharing of practice and the implementation of employability through discipline case-studies. These curriculum examples aimed to support the practitioner from any discipline teaching in HE, to bring employability into their teaching and student learning (Pegg, Waldock et al. 2012). Gibson (2006) embedded enterprise into the curriculum and became the first National Teacher Fellow for Enterprise Education in 2007 (The Higher Education Academy 2014). Gibb (1993; 2005) drove the instillation of an entrepreneurial culture into the whole university. He explored entrepreneurship in society, bringing entrepreneurship models to higher education leadership and focusing on understanding and developing entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes across the university.

In 2009, when I began to explore contemporary research around the creative industries and undergraduate programmes, I found there had been no research regarding students' perceptions of employability and how they construct its meaning. There was no work around the student voice. Through seeking the student voice, I wanted to talk with undergraduate students about their construct

of employability and their experiences of it across the range of creative industries programmes.

I believe strongly the student voice from creative students and graduates, needs to be heard to balance the employers' voice that focuses on graduate work in generic employment. The employers' voice promoted in the UK is often the voice of British industry, for example CBI. There is an assumption that a 'graduate job' will be with the kind of employer that is surveyed in CBI research. To be meaningful, each sector needs its own student voice and its own employer voice, which is specific to the industry area.

In reality, there are a number of sectors and many employers and there is graduate work rather than 'one job'. In the creative sector there are many different kinds of employers. A theatre or dance company employer may be a venue or it may be the public, or a funding body such as the Arts Council. For a small/medium enterprise (SME) it may be their customers or another supplier. A self-employed sole artist may work with many clients from education, business and community sectors. Graduates may be employed in a range of ways, through freelance, through commissioning or through working contractually. The notion of one employer is outdated. Some graduates may have many types of employment if they work in a 'portfolio' way where they may work for themselves as a freelancer but may also work at the same time as a PAYE (Pay As You Earn) employee for one or two employers (Ball L, Pollard E et al. 2010). In summary, creative work is very complex and it does not fit with the conventional employment model of one job, with one employer.

I was particularly interested in how the undergraduate experienced this macro, government employability policy at a micro level. Researching with students about their experiences and understanding of graduate work, their perceptions of employability and what emphasis employability should have in their

undergraduate degrees, is essential in order to inform those who are shaping undergraduate degrees.

The initial positivist approach I took began by reviewing current literature within the areas of higher education, employability and the creative industries. The *Literature Review* proved to be a crucial process to understanding these areas and exploring how the themes had been interpreted and researched. Unsurprisingly, the literature and research around employability, higher education and the creative industries in the UK is heavily influenced by Labour and Coalition government drivers for policy and change which aim to develop employment and economic growth for Britain, both in a time of boom and in a time of bust. My review of literature revealed primarily positivist, quantitative studies.

Later in the research process I explored in the *Literature Review* what was known of creative people thus far, in an attempt to broaden the narrow definition of the creative industries and look at a wider definition of how creative people have been defined and how creativity has been conceptualised over time. The literature in the Review offers contemporary definitions of creativity and of creative people.

The Review was utilised to formalise the research questions and decide a methodology, which emerged as two stages to meet the research questions. Stage One, would use an online questionnaire with recent creative graduates. The Stage One findings would be used to shape a Stage Two, which would gain data from creative undergraduates through qualitative, semi-structured interviews.

In the analysis of Stage One data from the sample of 68 graduates completing creative degrees from 2006 to 2009, it was the qualitative data that became most significant. The chapter *Methodology* includes detail of the approach.

Further themes began to emerge from the research data which were then explored in the *Literature Review*.

The need for confidence, money, networks and the membership of privileged circles or clubs to gain access to the gatekeepers of creative work, defined graduates' interpretation of creative employability. Graduates believed these factors are needed to find successful paid work in the creative industries and should be emphasised in the development of the creative undergraduate curriculum. This initial research stage acted as a spring board to review my research approach. I became aware that I needed to find a more open ended method that did not predict research themes derived from the *Literature Review*.

A positivist methodology which used preconceived categories and themes from the *Literature Review* could define my research findings. Through revisiting research methodology and taking a grounded theory (Charmaz 2006) approach, I sought theory, categories and themes that arose from the data from the actual participants themselves.

By adopting grounded theory methods, you can direct, manage and streamline your data collection and, moreover, construct an original analysis of your data.

(Charmaz 2006;2)

I draw on the journey metaphor again, in order to explain the process. I decided not to view the journey through a fixed or a preconceived lens, with the aim of finding evidence to support the terrain in my map. Instead, I would trust that the data would emerge by holding a magnifying glass to other people's journeys, those of the undergraduates, and explore through the interpretation of their voices, the emerging themes and in doing so, perhaps reveal a different map of the area.

Using this approach, Stage Two of the research sought undergraduates' stories about their experiences in their creative degrees and their perceptions of what was needed to be successful in achieving their ambitions. These students were encouraged to reflect on their degree experiences in order to articulate how they had developed to meet their aspirations.

## **The Shift to a Grounded Approach**

I am an educated, white, middle-class, middle-aged female. My experience and professional work, particularly as a teacher and actor, has drawn me to specific groups to seek greater understanding of their actions and interpretations by trying to see the world through 'their eyes'. I am a senior lecturer in a higher education institution. I have worked as a teacher, actor, lecturer and consultant.

I have been told by employers that I am multi-faceted and have an understanding of many different communities and sectors. I believe this is because I have experience and understanding of diverse groups from both my professional work and private life. I have worked closely with learners and colleagues from both disadvantaged and privileged backgrounds. I have worked with young people and adults in the private sector, the creative sectors and the voluntary and public sectors. Being educated in local schools in an African country has been important in my biography. I have direct experience of being immersed in a culture different to my own ethnic origin and experience of being within a minority group.

I wanted to understand current, creative graduates' views of their working world and its relationship to their undergraduate experience and aimed to gain an understanding of their definitions of employability and their viewpoints of its place in their undergraduate degrees. I intended to gain this graduate viewpoint through researching the student voice with a large sample through

surveys. I wanted to gain a snapshot of the contemporary graduate voice, which would help inform my *Literature Review* and Stage Two of my research.

With hindsight, this was a very conservative way of looking at employability and creative subjects. Through my reading around policy, I had looked at employability with 'government agenda eyes' and this had shaped the focus of the survey. Luckily the open, qualitative questions had brought rich, qualitative answers from the graduates I surveyed. I had an eureka moment, a fresh insight. I realised that if I looked at the area more creatively, I may find more authentic data.

Through trial and error, I found that I needed to be more flexible with my whole approach and that I should allow the data to lead my investigation and literature search. I decided to trust the data and use an open, wider approach to find the answers to my questions around employability in creative subjects. The chapter *Methodology* gives more detail on reviewing the research methodology but I outline it briefly here to give the reader some understanding and context.

## **The Grounded Approach**

Grounded theory methods became known through the research work of the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) with dying patients in American hospitals in the early 1960s. A study in this area was unusual because talking about dying was seen as a taboo research area and had been left unspoken. The collaboration of Glaser and Strauss brought a constructed analysis of dying and their systematic and innovative methodological strategies quickly became adapted for studying many topic areas (Charmaz 2006). The Glaser and Strauss partnership brought logic and objective analysis into qualitative data, a research methodology previously seen by some as anecdotal, unsystematic and biased (ibid).



Quantitative researchers were revered because they were seen as objective. They brought theory and research together and tested logically deduced hypotheses from an existing theory. Quantitative researchers however defined existing theory but seldom focused upon new theory. Glaser and Strauss's book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) used qualitative data in a different way and promoted the development of theory from research grounded in data, rather than the testing of hypotheses from existing theory. It was seen as revolutionary in the research world (ibid).

The purpose of grounded theory research is to develop theory that is grounded in the data. The researcher using a grounded theory approach should not enter the research process with a pre-determined outcome or hypothesis. Literature reviews are left later in the research process to avoid determining the data. I myself have been influenced by Charmaz's (2000) interpretation of theory as not only a reconstruction of events, but also a co-construction between researcher and participants. I decided to allow the data from the field work to reveal the way forward in the research rather than trying to predetermine it. This was crucial to the development of the research because graduates' responses did lead me to explore themes in the *Literature Review* that I may have never undertaken, had I taken a deductive, etic approach.

This research recognises that we live in a complex world. The ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives are borrowed from a range of paradigms in a bricolage fashion. An iterative, collaborative investigation, which is co-created with its research participants and their related communities, seeks a holistic approach (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997; Lincoln and Guba 2003).

I believe this research seeks to understand the range of actors, their actions and their constructions. I consider that as a researcher I am part of these constructions and interpretations and that I need to acknowledge my

involvement, viewpoint and bias by explicitly documenting the co-construction within the research process Charmaz (2000).

In summary, my research is influenced by Charmaz's understanding of grounded theory. She views grounded theory methods as useful navigation tools in the research journey. The methods are "systematic, yet flexible guidelines", a set of "heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules" (Charmaz 2006;2). Her interpretation is as follows: Grounded theorists study data and separate, sort and synthesise this data through coding. Coding is where labels are attached to segments of data in order to compare data and make comparisons. Through studying data, comparing data, writing memos, researchers define areas that best fit and interpret the data as tentative analytic categories. When questions arise and gaps in categories appear, researchers seek data to answer questions and fill gaps through further data collection and theoretical sampling for theory construction, rather than population representation. As the research proceeds, these categories become theoretical as researchers engage in successive levels of analysis. The literature review is then developed after independent analysis (Charmaz 2006;3). Charmaz concedes that reading of literature will be necessary, particularly for PhD proposals or external funding bids, and that researchers through their bias will already have some preconceived ideas of the research. Charmaz asserts that researcher bias should be made explicit and should be embraced in the research process as part of the co-construction process. Researchers are part of the world we study and the data we collect. The literature review develops over the course of the research and is further informed by themes that arise from the data. This helps the researcher focus on the actual data and perhaps find original interpretations. Charmaz, unlike Glaser, does not believe theory is objectively 'discovered'. Theory is "not an exact picture of it" but is an interpretation of it (Charmaz 2006;10).

Being a lecturer in a higher education institution, means I inhabit the world in which I research and become part of the interpretations that I investigate. Charmaz (ibid) advocates overtly addressing the researcher's involvement by writing in the first person, weaving the researcher's critique with the experiences and narratives of those that she researches, in order to bring the research alive and live this co-construction.

I am arguing that employability appears to have multiple meanings, is experienced in different ways and is a contested concept. I aim to gain an understanding of the different interpretations and experiences of students and graduates in relation to employability and their undergraduate degrees. I accept that I am part of the world that I am researching and through understanding the interpretations of others, I become part of those interpretations.

## **Research Findings Stage One**

The categories from Stage One data were brought together to map into one diagram that reflected the graduate view of their undergraduate experience. The chapter *Research Findings and Analysis* gives more detail.

Graduates did not use the term *employability*. How employability is defined, interpreted by the graduate in relation to their undergraduate experience, is shown in Figure 2, page 38 The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience. There appeared to be two areas that graduates believed were important in their undergraduate experience:

- external factors (understanding how the industry worked) that made it more likely on graduation to find work in the area they aspired to work in.

- internal factors (graduates seeing themselves able to work in the industry) that gave graduates the confidence to apply to work in the industry.

It seems that graduates, to potentially work in the industry, need most of all to gain confidence. Confidence gained through understanding the industry and confidence gained through imagining themselves able to work within it. How these graduates/students see themselves as professionals, confident, with an identity in the industry, is important. Graduates seem to gain their confidence when they see themselves as having abilities as a creative artist, graduate producer or creator. Students' understanding the industry and students' understanding themselves in the industry is needed in tandem. The graduate notion of employability in the undergraduate experience is looking out to understand work, and looking in to understand themselves as workers.

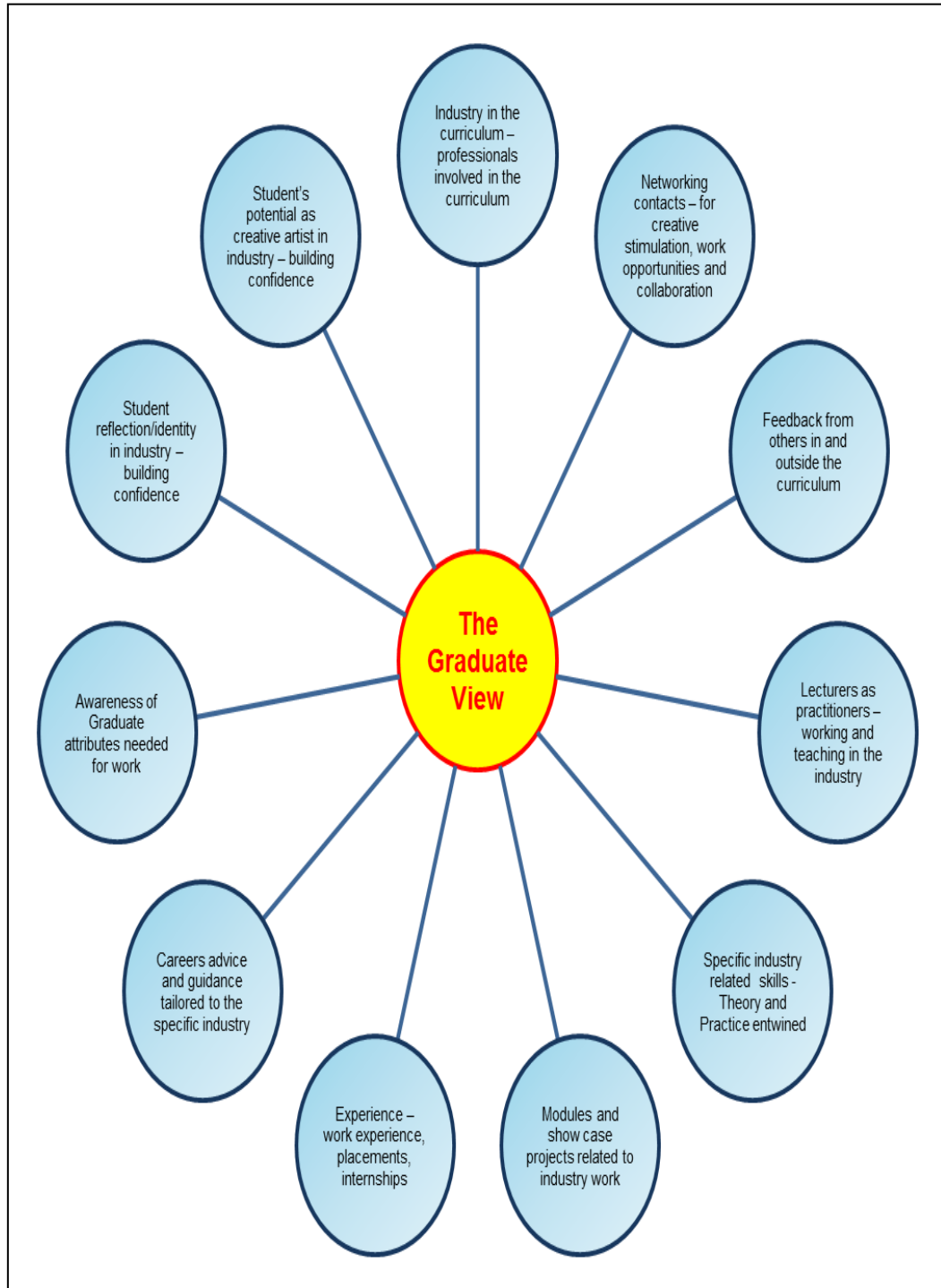
The graduates identified successful key factors in both the curricular and co-curricular undergraduate experience, which they believe developed their creative employability. The chapter *Research Findings and Analysis* discusses these factors in detail.

At Stage One of the research, through bringing the categories together and exploring the relationship between them, a theory begins to develop. Theory is defined by Hage (1972) as concepts integrated through a series of relational statements. A snapshot of my developing theory at the end of Stage One was recorded as:

*To increase the likelihood of a graduate gaining (potential) work in the creative industries a graduate needs to have had meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work in, coupled with opportunities to gain an understanding of their worth within it. This*

*understanding is gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area.*

**Figure 2** The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience



From the Stage One data further themes emerged. The lack of relevant, skill acquisition was not identified as a main obstacle to finding work in the industry of choice. Graduates were all aware of a current recession and felt this made work opportunities increasingly scarce. However, they believed that there were obstacles to gaining creative work that were not only particular to the recession.

Graduates identified lack of personal, industry contacts and money, as being the main obstacles to accessing and sustaining creative employment. Personal contacts are needed to fight competition for opportunities. Money is needed to finance long periods of unpaid internship or work experience. Cash flow is needed to sustain a career of contract working, portfolio working, project working and sole trading. It appears creative work is becoming a career for the privileged.

This first stage of research brought new areas to pursue in both the literature and further research and to take forward into Stage Two of the research focusing on the undergraduate voice:

- Graduates talk about the importance of *identity* in the way students imagine themselves in potential work and the need to belong to a creative community of practice. *Confidence* is a prerequisite factor helping students to imagine a successful identity.
- The importance of *networks* and contacts to provide work opportunities and for work creation. Graduates need to gain membership to these networks or 'inner circles' in order to gain and sustain work. There is a need to investigate further how individuals are able to access these inner circles, networks or clubs.

- The importance of *personal experiences* and histories of undergraduates and graduates and how these shape definitions of employability. The need to investigate further how employability is discussed or addressed in the secondary school experience and post 16 experience at school/further education college.

The development of skills is the *dominant model* of employability in relation to the organisation of the British education system and underpins both theory and practice in learning. Employers' needs are matched with graduates who have the skills the employers perceive they need. Education develops the employability skills employers say they need. This model of employability at the end of Stage One of the research appeared naïve and simplistic.

The process of graduate employment seems far more complex, involving negotiation and interaction between the individual and the gatekeepers to work opportunities. Mason et al (2006) find no evidence that the explicit teaching and assessment of employability skills by university departments has a significant independent effect on gaining employment within six months of graduation or securing work in graduate jobs. Structured work experience and employer involvement in degree course design and delivery does have impact because interaction takes place between individuals and gatekeepers.

These initial findings of Stage One (research with a graduate sample) were disseminated at many meetings, events and conferences (see Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback*). Higher education lecturers (in all disciplines, not just the creative industries) involved in the post 1992 university workshops defining employability and its place in the undergraduate curriculum, (item one in Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback*), were particularly interested in the critical, success factors that graduates had identified which were useful in developing employability in their undergraduate programmes. The lecturers



said these practical interventions could be discussed and explored in their own work and within their discipline teams. The lecturers welcomed the definitions of employability in more pluralistic ways, an alternative discourse to the skill acquisition models in their institution's employability strategies.

In the Kingston workshops (item seven in Appendix I), undergraduates who participated and organised the conference, spoke of *confidence* being the main factor in gaining graduate employment. Those who were confident were more likely to succeed in their aspirations. However "faking confidence until you make it" was an expression that one undergraduate used for both finding work and sustaining work. Talent to succeed was seen by these students as important but confidence was the over riding factor to gain and sustain work.

The SRHE conference colleagues (item ten in Appendix I) were particularly interested in the theme of social capital and class being significant to graduates' success in terms of employability in generic and sector specific graduate work. Cultural capital, economic and social capital are documented as key factors in the success and advantages of children through the British education system. Cultural, economic and social capital are also recognised as resources that individuals and teams can exploit, to develop their career and business opportunities in industry.

The social capital resource, the 'who you know and how you use who you know' to optimise your opportunities are not a part of the dominant models of employability. Needing the economic resources to enter and sustain a creative, working life is also not discussed. Creative work experience can be expensive because it is London centric and offers minimum wage or unpaid conditions. Sustaining constant creative employment is challenging and paid work tends to be sporadic.

Performing arts and design lecturers at the conference (item ten in Appendix 1) agreed anecdotally that employability in the creative industries can be defined as 'contacts and money'. Anecdotally three lecturers spoke of actors who had successful careers but had never trained formally in theatre. They often came from an independent school education, completed a university degree in a non-arts based subject but later pursued a successful acting career through family contacts and networks, with family money to sustain times of 'resting' or unpaid periods.

## Stage Two – Research with Undergraduates

Stage One research took a very different course to that initially expected and disseminating the 'research in progress' at many workshops, events and conferences (see Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback*), gave me constant feedback to the iterative route I was taking. The constant feedback gave validation to both the research findings and to the creative methodological approach I was taking to investigate creative graduates' conceptualisation of employability, without answers being predetermined by the researcher. It ensured that the interpretations that the researcher made were continually being checked and verified as being authentic. It allowed the data to be triangulated as being reliable, by many different groups of undergraduates, graduates, academics and practitioners, throughout the six years of research.

Stage Two of the research sought the undergraduate narratives. I interviewed 20 undergraduate students at a post 1992 institution. The sample was a non-probability sample and the participants in the sample were self-selecting. The sample aimed to reflect the diversity of cohorts: a mix of sex and ethnicity; mature students as well as post college/school entry, non-standard entry students with standard entry and high achieving/first class undergraduate students with struggling students.

The interviews sought to answer the research questions: How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees? In particular they aimed:

- to gain an understanding of undergraduate personal histories prior to university.
- to gain an understanding of what undergraduates believe is needed for their graduate work aspirations.
- to ask undergraduates what, in their experiences has helped them acquire what is needed to be successful in their work aspirations.
- to ask undergraduates what they think they need to do to meet their aspirations and how they would develop the undergraduate experience to help meet their aspirations.
- to ask undergraduates how their perceptions of themselves have changed during the undergraduate experience and how they see themselves in the future, following graduation.

I chose architecture and dance as the undergraduate degrees to collect data. Architecture has a professional body but dance does not, which makes the two disciplines distinctive. Creative subjects are taught predominantly in colleges and post 1992 universities. Only architecture and music have a strong presence in Russell Group universities (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011). Architecture graduates are more likely to be employed after graduation than dance graduates (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

Taking the 'Destination of Leavers from HE institutions', referred to as the DHLE survey (Higher Education Statistical Agency 2005) from 2004/ 2005, creative graduates are more likely to work in a voluntary or unpaid capacity, are less likely to study at postgraduate level and twice as likely to be unemployed than their non-creative peers. 53.7% of creative graduates have full-time paid work compared to 57.39 % of non-creative graduates (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

However, when the aggregate figures are broken down into creative sectors, they reveal better performing subjects than the non-creative graduate group. Those better performing are advertising, writing, publishing and architecture (65.88% and 59.19%) against the non-creative group of 57.39% (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;298). Salaries are inconsistent, architecture and creative technology graduates have the highest earnings (a mean of £18,000 and £17,000 respectively) with craft, performing arts, drama, dance and music, film and television graduates earning the lowest (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

Dance shares many characteristics with other sectors of the creative industries. The sector is highly fluid, characterised by rapid change. It comprises a small number of large enterprises and a large number of small enterprises and the workforce is predominantly self-employed.

(Burns 2007;6)

There are differences between the creative disciplines but there are also similarities. Collaboration is at the heart of dance and dance has a creative community that is collective, covering all areas of the industry. However there is a hierarchy of power in the industry, with pure dance accruing the most power and the wider applications of dance the least (Burns 2007). Architecture too is transforming with rapid change in design, the proliferation of materials, modes of manufacture, assembly, construction management and software packages

(Buchanan 2012). Architecture relies on collaboration within creative communities of practice and the widening array of consultants from multi-disciplinary teams for design, planning, constructing, assembly etc and individuals in these teams have more influence and power than others (ibid).

I sought feedback on focusing particularly on architecture and dance, by seeking lecturers' views who were currently working with undergraduates and teaching on architecture and dance degree courses. Lecturers from two institutions, a pre 1992 and a post 1992, gave me anecdotal evidence about their disciplines. Architecture has more clearly defined graduate employment roles compared to the graduate employment roles in dance. More middle class students are taking degrees in architecture than before. It is seen as a prestigious profession.

Architecture degree courses at pre 1992 institutions seem like 'finishing schools' for affluent students after independent school. Architecture degrees now attract less working class students than in the past because they are long courses and therefore expensive to self-fund. However architecture in post 1992 institutions is attracting some mature students who work in an area related to architecture already and want to qualify with a degree to improve their employment opportunities.

Lecturers from my higher education networks, tell me anecdotally that many students choose dance as a degree because they are passionate about dance and perceive a degree in any subject as helping them to gain a better job. Dance attracts a mix of both working class and middle class students who choose dance because they love it and want to continue the subject post 18. In dance, women are the dominant sex in university degrees but do not maintain this dominance in senior employment roles in the discipline. More women are being attracted to studying architecture at university, which has a history of

being a male dominated discipline. However women gaining employment in architecture after graduation, is perceived as challenging.

Taking a grounded approach links the emerging themes from the data of Stage One, and shapes the aims and content of the undergraduate narratives for Stage Two of the research. The research methodology, research data, emerging themes and literature are all interconnecting. Each feeds the other. To offer a narrative or analogy of how this is experienced by the researcher, it is a little like how one adapts one's practice as a parent or teacher as one brings up their child, or encourages their students to learn independently. One adapts practice based on reflection and trial and error, reading and critiquing relevant literature, observing, asking questions and taking feedback, evaluating others' interpretations of practice. All these ongoing, multiple factors come into play and are brought into the interactions between parent or teacher, with child or student and how the parent or teacher chooses to develop their theory and practice to find what works best for the child or student and encourages their growth and development.

The *Literature Review* focuses on key themes that emerge from the graduate and undergraduate data. Themes surface of creative identity and belonging, creative learning through communities of practice and the types of capital which undergraduates and graduates perceive as increasing the opportunities for creative work. Graduates and undergraduates desire to be involved in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Wenger 2000; Wenger 2009) and to be involved in influential creative networks. The importance of social, cultural and economic capital to access networks and communities of practice arises out of both the undergraduate and the graduate data. The area of privilege is therefore addressed and the need for cultural, economic and social capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1983; Coleman 1988; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Burt 1995; Lin 1999; Portes 2000; Burt 2001) and the need to access networks and clubs with the aim of

gaining creative opportunities and work. These areas have been neglected in the discourse of employability and government policy. The dominant models that define the government concept of employability advocate that a relevant skill set and experience are the prerequisites for graduate employment with an employer.

## **Conceptualisation of Employability**

The first year students have a conceptualisation of employability that seems to be influenced by pre university definitions of employability, particularly how employability is discussed at school and college. Both first and third year undergraduates talk of being encouraged by their school or college to view graduate employment as a key factor in their choice of disciplines and undergraduate courses at university. Undergraduate students seemed to have been influenced at school that gaining a degree is the next step after compulsory education and that this is a safe option or prerequisite to getting a 'good' job.

First and third years' conceptualisation of employability mostly fits with government policy conceptualisation of employability. That is employability is defined as getting an actual graduate job, having the right skills that employers say they want and seeing the employer and 'good' employee fit as crucial. The employer is viewed as having the dominant role and the employee being the subordinate one in the employment relationship.

The ideal employment relationship in terms of employer and employee metaphors are described rather like a parent needing an obedient child or an expert needing an attentive novice. However, the first and third years talk about the importance of contacts to break into creative work and this does not fit with this dominant model. They conceptualise the word 'employability' in terms of the dominant model but do not relate this model to themselves. They see

confidence, contacts and money as crucial factors in their own conceptualisation of their own creative employability. They reject the 'good' employee and employer model by craving their own creative independence through running their own businesses.

After Stage One (the graduate sample) and Stage Two (the undergraduate sample) of the research was completed, the emerging theory was adapted:

*To increase the likelihood of a graduate gaining (potential) work in the creative industries a graduate needs to have had meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work within, coupled with opportunities to gain an understanding of their worth within it. This understanding is gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area.*

*However gaining actual employment in creative industries is reliant on industry contacts because they act as gatekeepers to creative work. The process of graduates gaining employment in the creative industries is complex and many socio and economic variables come into play. Current graduates and undergraduates in British universities perceive that confidence, personal industry contacts and access to funding increase the opportunities to break into the creative industries. This is because confidence is needed to believe in one's potential and contacts are needed to enter and sustain creative work. In addition to contacts, financial resources are needed to sustain a creative working life. Financial resources are needed to subsidise long periods of low paid work experience, to manage a creative, portfolio working life where payment is unpredictable and to keep up to date with the continuous professional development needed to compete in the ever transforming, creative economy.*

Undergraduates' personal narratives show that they link their course choice to their aspirations of graduate, creative work. Many choose a career related to



the discipline where they experience the most pleasure. This pleasure is reinforced by influential people or role models, feedback from others, self-development, peer learning and their own emotional experiences. The pleasure associated with 'the living of the discipline' can lead to work and leisure becoming entwined. The discipline affects the way they see and live their lives and becomes their own way or their philosophy for living their life.

The discipline has become part of them, affecting their actions. Some of the first year undergraduate architecture students and the first and third year undergraduate dance students refer to their discipline as a philosophy. A philosophy seems to be a way of viewing, thinking and feeling the discipline in their perception of the world.

James (a pseudonym), a third year dance undergraduate talked about Parkour. Parkour became a key theme in the research analysis and fed directly into an alternative approach to creative employability. Parkour is a philosophy which pursues emotional, physical and mental training, in an environment where people can be part of a community, learning, training and working together. It involves physical movement, moving through space from A to B and overcoming challenges in the journey. The Parkour community of practice which meets in towns and cities, is not closed. People can drop in, join in, from within or from outside of their own geographical area, to learn together, to teach each other and to support each other and to overcome obstacles. The Parkour community may sound a Utopian community of practice to some, but accounts such as from James and from social media sites on Facebook, show that Parkour communities are supportive, open and developmental. The holistic Parkour approach offers a good philosophy for an alternative perspective of employability which was more relevant for creative working and creative life.

Drawing on the research findings and the need for a creative philosophy for learning and work that is supported by a community of practice and which

explores the many varying creative journeys, developing resilience for a good life; the principles that underpin Parkour, are borrowed and adapted to design the philosophy of Creatour. Creatour brings together this research of graduate and undergraduate voices about their undergraduate experience of creative degrees and creative work, and aims to offer a contemporary philosophy about the way to live a creative discipline and a creative life.

Creatour moves away from employability as graduate skill acquisition to meet employers' needs, and instead provides a holistic philosophy that prepares individuals for creative employability through continuous physical, mental, spiritual and social development. Undergraduates and graduates are able to continually adapt Creatour to shape and meet their own journeys and destinations. Creatour is the beginning of a philosophy for creative life which leaves the employability concept as a skills bank, firmly behind.

The overall findings were disseminated through many events as part of the iterative research process to gain feedback and critique (See Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback*). Feedback was used to shape and to evaluate Creatour through input from students, graduates, practitioners, employers and lecturers.

This thesis closes with a final chapter that summarises the research project and critiques the research approach and the synthesis of the research conclusions. It reflects on Creatour as a way to make sense of creative practice, to understand creative work, overcome creative obstacles and to shape creative employability within the undergraduate creative curriculum. It explores how Creatour would also benefit other disciplines, outside of the cultural and creative industries, who wish to engage with a more holistic curriculum and want to investigate appropriate creative teaching and learning strategies to meet contemporary undergraduate needs and their graduates' potential, professional practice.

Creatour develops an ability to work in complexity and develop resilience. It enables undergraduates and graduates to be able to work in many different ways, in many different spaces and with many different people within the complexities of contemporary global work, rather than to cope and adapt to change specifically led by employers. Through the philosophy of Creatour, 'complexability', rather than 'employability', is developed.

The thesis ends by addressing developments since the commencement of this research and looks forward to ways and spaces to engage with contemporary students and graduates. Many new ideas, new knowledge and new solutions are found through new collaborations (Puttnam 2012). I believe that higher education needs to promote, support and value collaboration by encouraging communities to cross boundaries, epistemologies and disciplines in all areas of their work. A contemporary university should be supporting graduates to be able to work in many different ways, with different people and in different spaces. It should be giving students the confidence to find different approaches. Employers of all sectors believe that working within this kind of complexity is required for global work (IBM 2010). Individuals can be prepared for the complexity of contemporary work in all industries, not just those defined as 'creative'. Creative collaboration (defined as exploring, researching, making, creating and producing learning across disciplines) which begins at school and continues through into education, training and work, develops a way to problem-solve, to overcome obstacles and pursue solutions to the many challenging impediments for sustaining a 'good life' for all. A good life should focus on ethical, cultural and social considerations, as well as economic ones.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research was initially structured by means of two sequential literature reviews, undertaken as the research unfolded. However in writing up the work, this chapter integrates the two reviews and updates with recently published relevant material.

The literature was initially reviewed around the key areas of employability, higher education and the creative industries. This was crucial for unpacking themes, gaining depth and contextual understanding. Through critically evaluating recent research and thinking, I was able to recognise the dominant models which influenced policy and practice. I added to the neo-liberal government/industry led discourse conceptualising 'employability' and the 'creative industries' by exploring the much broader area of 'creative people'. This literature base demonstrates how narrow the creative industries definition had been drawn by the Coalition and Labour government.

The *Literature Review* then presents the *findings informed* review of literature that arose out of research material, garnered through listening to the graduate and undergraduate voice. This provides a contrasting discourse to the initial literature, exploring the themes around employability, higher education and the creative industries. It explores additional themes identified while analysing the field data from the 68 graduates (represented from all the creative industries) and the 20 first and final year students of architecture and dance undergraduate degrees.

The initial part of the *Literature Review* acted as a spring board to experiment with my approach and explore alternative methods to interrogate the research questions. Through evaluating current research and thinking, I was able to

recognise the dominant models which influenced policy and practice. I realised these dominant models were also influencing my research approach. The initial interrogation of the literature in the areas of employability, higher education and the creative industries verified a dominant discourse, a neo-liberal and industry-led conception which has been uncritically adopted in many universities. By taking an alternative approach, I became aware of other factors that were underrepresented or overlooked within the dominant discourse of employability. Without first unpacking the dominant understanding of employability, I would not have developed a more multi-layered and critical perspective of employability through investigating the student voice.

This *Literature Review* takes the reader from the dominant conceptualisation of employability led by industry and government, to a conceptualisation of employability from the graduate and student perspective. It focuses particularly on employability in relation to undergraduate learning and potential, creative work. This chapter is structured into six sections as follows:

1. The Historical and Political Context. This summarises the very recent historical and political context which has shaped higher education in the UK, moving from a Labour to a Coalition government.
2. The Employers, Higher Education and the Economy. This addresses the recent and current EU, government and employer conceptions of employability and how these have influenced higher education degrees in the UK.
3. The UK Economy and the Creative Industries. This section considers recent and current definitions of the creative industries, the creative industries' contribution to the UK and the drivers influencing the teaching and learning of creative disciplines at undergraduate degree level.

4. Recent and Current Employability Research. This section reviews current research linking graduate work (particularly in the creative industries), with the theme of employability.
5. Creative People and Creativity. This section explores what we know of creative people thus far. It presents contemporary definitions of creativity and of creative people. It discusses the conceptualisation of creative people through various research paradigms and addresses employability through the development of creativity in education and for work.
6. The final part of the *Literature Review* is the *findings informed* review of literature that arose out of research material garnered through listening to the graduate and undergraduate voice. This is a contrasting discourse to the initial part of this chapter which explored government and industry led arguments around employability, higher education and the creative industries.

## 1 The Historical and Political Context

In Chapter One *Research Overview*, I outlined how my interest in 2009 in government policy agendas around higher education, employability and creative industries brought about a curiosity to develop a research study that interrogated these themes through understanding students' perceptions of their creative undergraduate experience and whether these students believed they were able to acquire or develop 'employability' for potential graduate work.

In the introduction I explored how HE in the UK appears to be shifting to skills based learning with education being linked directly to work. This emphasis starts its journey as early as primary and secondary school. The CBI look

particularly to secondary education, FE and HE to develop learners who are able to join the labour market, have the skills to meet employers' needs and are able to contribute to the building and sustaining of economic growth (CBI 2013). I also examined both Labour and Coalition governments' policy which brought about the marketisation of higher education, where universities compete for funding and students in a commercial market. Both governments in their political rhetoric use metaphors that link students to education as a commercial enterprise. Students as customers, students as consumers, students taking the driving seat, students choosing provision and students leading provision through demand (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). All these perspectives suggest that students are expected to see university as service or commodity that can be consumed or bought.

The introduction of tuition fees (ibid) has meant current and potential students are being encouraged by government policy to look personally for their 'value for money' in their degree experience and their returns on their investments in terms of graduate earnings. The emphasis of investment is on money, rather than the time or effort needed by the student to gain their degree.

In a time of high tuition fees and low economic growth, universities are being driven by government policy to publish data about the graduate earnings and career destinations of students from particular programmes (ibid). Government policy (both Labour and Coalition) has intended that potential students are able to objectively view this data, compare it between institutions and programmes, in order to make informed choices about what they will get back from their investment in their higher education experience. This has been evidenced through the publication from September 2012 of Key Information Sets, referred to as KIS, that detail university performance (Unistats 2014). Students leaving university from 2010, are given a formal record of student achievement at

graduation called the Higher Education Achievement Record (2014), referred to as the HEAR.

The word 'employability' (CBI 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009; Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; CBI 2013; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) has become the term used to conceptualise the following: a focus on skill acquisition in undergraduate degree programmes; the value of employers' views and their definitions of the term having the dominant voice; the developing of strategies and policies that link education and work explicitly to economic growth; the promoting of work experience as a prerequisite for securing employment; the measuring of employability through the graduate securing a job six months after graduation and the focusing on business goals and ideals which are underpinned with business theories which forge strong collaborations between education, business and industry. The emphasis of this conceptualisation is on education for a private, rather than public good. It is a post-Thatcher idealism that promotes an individual investing in education for their personal commercial rewards, rather than socially driven ones.

Employability has become a common staple in government policy covering education, work and culture. Educational institutions have become desensitised to the meaning of the word because it is so prevalent in political strategy. Primary and secondary schools in England are daily being transformed into academies that are sponsored by industry and encouraged to operate with commercial ideologies (Benn 2012). English universities no longer view employability with ambivalence and employability strategies are becoming common place within the academy (Pegg, Waldock et al. 2012).

## European Conceptualisation of Employability

The 47 countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which include the UK, focus on employability as transversal, multidisciplinary



skills/competences in subject specific knowledge, contributing to the wider society and to the labour market (Bucharest Communiqué 2012). The role of higher education in this context is to equip students with the skills and attributes (knowledge, attitudes and behaviours) that individuals require in the workplace to meet employers' needs. The European ministers make a direct link between employability and education institutions, particularly with higher education providing generic employability skills by the time the student graduates. The European conceptualisation of employability also views graduates as important players in economic growth (ibid). However, quality of opportunity, access, diversity, social advantages and increased tolerance of other cultures, are more explicit in European strategy, compared to British strategy, as goals in education and work policy (Bucharest Communiqué 2012).

The Coalition government in comparison has emphasised the importance of the employers' needs. Political rhetoric emphasises that students "are at the heart of the system" and "in the driving seat" (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011; 6) and hold the power in their educational provision. In reality it seems employers are the ones with the true power, particularly as education is linked to economic growth and the subsequent health of British industry. Employers are regularly surveyed about the skills they want and their responses are used to influence education provision about what should be taught (CBI/Universities UK 2009; CBI 2010; High Fliers Research 2012; High Fliers Research 2013).

In summary, both Labour and Coalition governments share a similar conceptualisation of 'employability' and both support similar dominant models which bring education together with industry and employers (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). Higher education is used by Labour and Coalition governments to develop the skills the employers' believe they need for their

workforce. Education's function is primarily to create a dynamic workforce. This function links with human capital theory.

## Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory originated with Becker, Mincer and Shultz (Mincer 1958; Schultz 1961; Becker 1962) who claim that individuals can increase their labour market returns through investments in education and training. Their work seeded a rapid growth in theoretical and empirical application of human capital to a plethora of issues. Hanushek (2013) argues that the importance of skills in the workforce already had an historical place in economics and believes human capital theory was merely resurrected in the 1950s and 1960s. He cites Petty (1676 [1899]) looking at the cost of war and immigration in terms of skills and wages and Smith (1776 [1776]) and Marshall (1898) exploring the significance of skills.

Human Capital is a conceptual theory which has been used in the management of countries with a surplus of human labour. As birth rates have increased, so has a surplus of human labour. The theory argues that a surplus of labour can be transformed into human capital to compensate for a country's lack of tangible, physical resources in relation to their population growth. Raw human resource is transformed into a highly productive human resource. The raw labour resource is transformed through investment in education, health and social capabilities into a valuable, sophisticated human resource. A country's scarcity of physical resources is believed to be relieved by the development of human capital through private and public investment in funding and national education and health policies. The theory supports that human capital investment is human development and where there is human development, it is inevitable that a country's quantitative and qualitative growth will follow.

Mahroum (2007) argues that human capital management has three core functions; the capacity to develop talent through education and training for the local labour market, the capacity to deploy talent locally through employment and the capacity to draw talent from elsewhere (academics, researchers, research and development) to cultivate and nurture the talent within the country. These three capacities together, Mahroum asserts, form the backbone of any country's human capital competitiveness (ibid).

Human capital theory has been criticised as being an elusive concept that lacked satisfactory measurement (Hanushek 2013). Differences in earnings are measured by differences in skill or human capital; human capital is measured by differences in earnings, in short a tautology.

Mincer (1970) was influential in bringing human capital measurement together with schooling. He argued that the primary purpose of schooling was to develop the generic skills of individuals and these generic skills were measured by school attainment. School attainment was already measured so it seemed an efficient solution to measure wage differences alongside the already quantified school attainment and later with on-the-job investment. This viewpoint has had longevity and is still used today "in over 100 separate countries" (Hanushek 2013; 2). However this measurement seems flawed. School attainment and wage differences do not have a neat correlation. Class, sex and ethnicity are widely known to influence wage differences and therefore school attainment and workforce training cannot be isolated variables.

Hanushek (2013) argues that this measurement has huge difficulties in international settings. To compare human capital quantifiably across countries, one would need similar quantifications measuring school and workforce attainment. An academic year in Japan is not equal to a year in England. In addition qualifications are not interchangeable across the world. This measuring of human capital presumes schooling or training is the only source of

human capital for economic growth; the World Bank and other development agencies cite nutrition and health as developing economic growth and human capital (ibid).

Human capital theory underpins recent British government policies which bring together education, work, health and economic areas. The Blair and Cameron policies are all outcomes of human capital theory. The themes of this section of the *Literature Review*, Higher Education, the Creative Industries and Employability are included in the following policy (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998; BBC 2009; Browne 2010; Cameron 2010; CBI 2010; CBI 2011; Department of Culture Media and Sport 2013; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). Within these policy documents there are many similarities. There is the eulogising of the importance of 'upskilling' the British work force through increasing formal qualification levels and explicitly ascribing an employability function to secondary, further and higher education for developing skills to meet employers' needs. Both encourage business opportunities for entrepreneurial activities to increase the outputs of small and medium enterprises. Both also, have sought to increase skills development and funding in order to retain creative talent and creative industries in the UK.

Labour and Coalition governments believe that if a country invests in education, health and social policies to develop its human capital, an increase in the country's economic productivity follows. Statistics are drawn from education, work, health and economic policies as evidence of the impact of these policies on the economy's health. However there is no empirical proof of the correlation between upskilling the workforce and economic growth because so many variables are involved in its measurement.

Today, the success of human capital theory still remains contested. Government led evidence marketed as objective and robust, is criticised by

some in the media, the public and the academy, as laden with political spin and rhetoric (Holmes 2013).

This section has critiqued the political context, moving from a Labour to a Coalition government, highlighting the increased commercialisation of higher education and the measurement of explicit, employment outcomes for graduates from undergraduate degrees. The next section casts a wider net and surveys the recent EU, government and employer definitions of employability and their influence on the student experience and vocational, higher education degrees in the UK.

## **2 The Employers, Higher Education and the Economy**

The literature presents a history of universities being linked to employment and the economy. Roodhouse (2009) argues that vocational and employer engagement is not new to universities. He cites Waterhouse's (2002) history of universities as technical educators, taking technical education to mean not simply the practical but types of action to make and manipulate physical things. Like other European universities, the classical model of the late medieval French university, the Sorbonne, had four faculties. The lower faculty, the Faculty of the Arts, trained men in the skills of the clerk (church employee) and the three higher faculties in theology, medicine and law. The learning in this type of university was vocational; the degree was a licence to practice and the PhD a licence to teach (Waterhouse 2002).

The French Revolution brought the Hautes Ecoles with their practical, technical learning in astronomy, geometry, mechanic, applied arts, natural history, medicine, veterinary science and rural economy which Roodhouse argues "were the industries of their day - comparable to media studies or business and management" (Roodhouse 2009;188).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in England, the University of London was born, the first of the civic universities driven by public needs for health and training in medical schools. In Europe, technical schools and colleges developed to train teachers, nurses, artists and designers. These institutions could not award degrees but created various professional diplomas. “Vocational” and “professional” were terms used to give credibility and status to technical activities (Roodhouse 2009; 189). Waterhouse (2002) asserts that that these institutions moved from teaching to assessing learning and to becoming awarding bodies. Becoming awarding bodies moved these institutions to selling their learning and with it, society (individual, employers etc) willing to pay for it.

Roodhouse (2009;190) claims that this leads “naturally to the consideration of the knowledge transfer functions of universities as a means of contributing to the economy”; knowledge transfer being defined as a version of human capital theory where intellectual capital becomes critical to economic success (Brennan 2005). New Labour embraced knowledge transfer in its higher education strategy and with it globalisation and the need for virtual universities, international alliances, expansion with diversity, wider participation, mass education and social cohesion (Roodhouse 2009).

Brennan (2005), also cited by Roodhouse (2009) argues that intellectual capital or the knowledge economy has brought learning into the global workplace as a valuable commodity. Globalisation, meaning the volume and diversity of cross-border transactions of goods and services, gives increasing economic value to new learning, continuous learning, the exchange of learning and learning development.

Brennan (2005) argues that the knowledge economy focuses on the importance of knowledge creation and the application and manipulation of this new knowledge in the workplace. She conceptualises this new knowledge as “practical, interdisciplinary, informal, applied and contextual rather than

theoretical, disciplinary, formal, foundational and generalisable” (Roodhouse 2009;191). The workplace itself is seen as a site for learning. Workers are expected to collaborate and participate in learning and create new learning, “knowledge production” (ibid). This knowledge was historically dominated by university research and teaching outputs but is now considered to be generated through collaborative activity and partnerships between employers, employees, industry, education and training providers (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).

It is the rise of the knowledge economy which has also brought a third mission to universities (the first two being teaching and research) with the commercialisation of knowledge transfer, “the transfer of academic activities to the economy” (Roodhouse 2009;192).

Charles (2003) claims that the move from elitism to mass education has moved universities from ivory tower blue sky thinking to the delivery of vocational training and employable skills. New Labour’s policies for mass education embraced competition between universities to produce employable graduates (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009).

It is important to emphasise that Labour minister Mandelson in a radio interview, was keen to stress the tandem function of higher education, “for civilisation and competition” in Labour’s ten year plan (The Today Programme 2009). As well as producing employable graduates ready for a competitive global market, Labour viewed higher education’s purpose as important for civilisation; becoming a good citizen implies higher level thinking, sophisticated action, tolerance and democracy. The Coalition in keeping with neo-liberalism drops the notion of civilisation and focuses solely on the competition, with emphasis on the marketisation of education, human capital theory and the growth of the economy (Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).

# Cultural and Creative Industries and the European Economy

Throsby defines the difference between the creative industries and the cultural industries as “*creative industries* are those industries in which creativity is an identifiable and significant input and *cultural industries* are those industries providing specifically cultural goods and services” (Throsby 2012;10). In the 2000s the term “creative industries” has been used widely in academia, as well as within policy, in preference to using “the cultural industries” (Hesmondhalgh 2007;146). The various definitions are hotly debated in cultural studies (Flew 2009).

The European Commission mentions the cultural industries as well as creative industries (CCIs) as having great importance. The cultural and creative sector is identified as an area for economic growth but also one that is diverse, collaborative and adds value. This literature reflects an interest in the social and the public good and is not narrowly defined to only private goods and commercial rewards. “Europe must pioneer new ways of creating value-added, but also of living together, sharing resources and enjoying diversity” (Commission 2010;2).

The Commission has embraced cultural and creative industries as a means of potentially meeting a range of economic and social challenges. They contribute to 2.6% to the EU GDP, are still growing and provide quality jobs to around 5 million people across EU-27 (Commission 2010;3). The European Commission believes it is through partnerships with education, that CCIs can be nurtured and developed to reach their true potential and give European citizens “the



creative, entrepreneurial and intercultural skills they need” (Commission 2010;3).

The Commission identifies areas to develop CCIs and to address the challenges of cultural diversity, globalisation and digitalisation. The first is to increase the capacity to experiment, innovate and succeed as entrepreneurs, and provide easier access to funding. The second is to support CCIs to grow in local and regional contexts, but in tandem to develop their global presence through exchange and increased mobility. The third area is to move towards a creative economy by capitalising on the spill-over effects of CCIs, on other economic and social contexts (Commission 2010;3).

The recognition of the wider creative and cultural value and benefits, not just to the economy but to the public good, through identity, citizenship, diversity, and cultural life, is seen in the UK through the cultural and creative ecosystem promoted in the report by the Warwick Commission (2015).

The Warwick Commission report (ibid) is comprehensive and advocates the broad value of the creative and cultural industries to the UK and to its place within the world. It scopes a creative ecosystem that is not narrowly defined, but diverse and inclusive. The next section summarises recent and current definitions of the creative industries and the creative industries’ contribution to the UK. It also explores the drivers that are influencing the teaching and learning of creative, undergraduate degrees.

### 3 The UK Economy and the Creative Industries

The concept of the creative industries emerged in Australia in the early 1990s but was given much wider emphasis by policy makers in the UK, in the late 1990s (United Nations 2004). The term “Creative Industries” was embraced by Labour in 1997 (Flew 2012;9) when establishing a Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) in the new Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) which began mapping current activity in the sectors believed to be part of the creative industries. The creative industries were referred to as the cultural industries, in government policy before the late 1990s (Pratt 2005). The creative industries represented particular sectors identified as having economic value to Britain with capacity for development and further growth (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998). The 1998 document mapped creative activities and identified 13 discipline areas (ibid). The Minister for Culture and Heritage, Chris Smith launching the second DCMS mapping document, argued that “The creative industries have moved from the fringes to the mainstream” (DCMS 2001;3).

#### Conceptualisation of Creative Industries

From the outset of this research in 2009, I adopted the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) definition of the creative industries from 2001. DCMS defines the creative industries as:

...those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

(Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001;5).

The DCMS 2001 document recognised thirteen sectors in the Creative Industries:

Advertising, Architecture, Art and Antiques Market, Crafts, Design, Designer Fashion, Film and Video, Interactive Leisure Software, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Software and Computer services, Television and Radio.

(Department for Culture Media and Sport 2001;5).

This DCMS definition is used in Labour and Coalition government policy documentation relating to the creative industries and education and training (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2008; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009; Cameron 2010; CBI 2010; CBI 2011; CBI 2011; Department of Culture Media and Sport 2013). In 2014 the DCMS definition was adapted to include the measuring of the wider creative economy (DCMS 2014). The creative industries became a subset of the creative economy which is much broader; covering the contribution of those in creative occupations outside the creative industries as well as those employed in the creative industries (ibid). This provides a much broader representation of the creative sectors.

The term cultural industries had been used prior to the 1990s introduction of the creative industries. The cultural industries refer to a similar domain of policy (O'Connor 2004; Garnham 2005; Pratt 2005). It was an amorphous term and commercial activities were implicit (Pratt 2008). Pratt argued that creative industries were problematic, "...it would be difficult to identify a non creative industry or activity" (2005;33) as all innovations, including scientific and technical innovations, are creative. Potentially everything could be defined as a creative industry. Howkins (2001) claimed that the DCMS definition restricted creativity to the domain of the arts and culture and did not recognise other

sectors. Miller argued that creative industries as a concept embraced neo-liberalism, corporate culture and abandoned the cultural studies tradition of radical critique (Miller 2009 cited in Flew 2009).

O'Connor viewed the creative industries discipline areas, ranging from the performing arts to publishing, architecture and computer games, as adhoc, incoherent and ineffectually argued (2007). He posits that having the economic market as the sole purpose for the creative industries merely recognised consumers' preference to satisfy their wants, it did not address the quality of processes, services or products (O'Connor 2009). Cultural values must be used to inform cultural goods and services because they are developed for public use and are espoused for helping the community "become better people, living a more autonomous and fulfilled life (O'Connor 2009;392). His comments illustrate that the policy for the creative industries focused on commercial value, rather than any social benefits.

The DCMS approach does seem to have been a politically pragmatic one. The mapping documents of 1998 and 2001 brought economic respect and Treasury funding (Pratt 2004; O'Connor 2012). The word 'culture' was avoided as it was associated with the arts, rather than with the economy (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005; Selwood 2006). Pratt demonstrated that organising the creative industries into separate industries, provided a way to classify, collect and measure data that made the industries appear new and successful (2004). It was a pragmatic way to lose the public funded image of the cultural industries and be seen as a "real economy" (Pratt 2004;19). The term cultural industries had "always existed in tension with the arts"; the commercial sector separated from the public funded and the non-commercial arts sector (Pratt 2008;113). In cultural studies there are heated debates around the terminology of cultural or creative industries (Flew 2009), however in cultural economics both labels are accepted without issue (Trowse 2003; Flew 2009).

Cultural policy has been brought into the ubiquitous, “modern forward thinking policy agenda” and economic policy development strategy (Throsby 2008;228). Culture is seen as a resource for “cultural capitalism” (Yúdice 2003;9) and economic discourses have become normalised in arts and cultural policy (Flew 2012). Throsby claims the arts have been reframed to be “part of a wider and more dynamic sphere of economic activity” linking into the information and knowledge economies with new technologies, “feeding innovation” and “fostering creativity” (Throsby 2008;229).

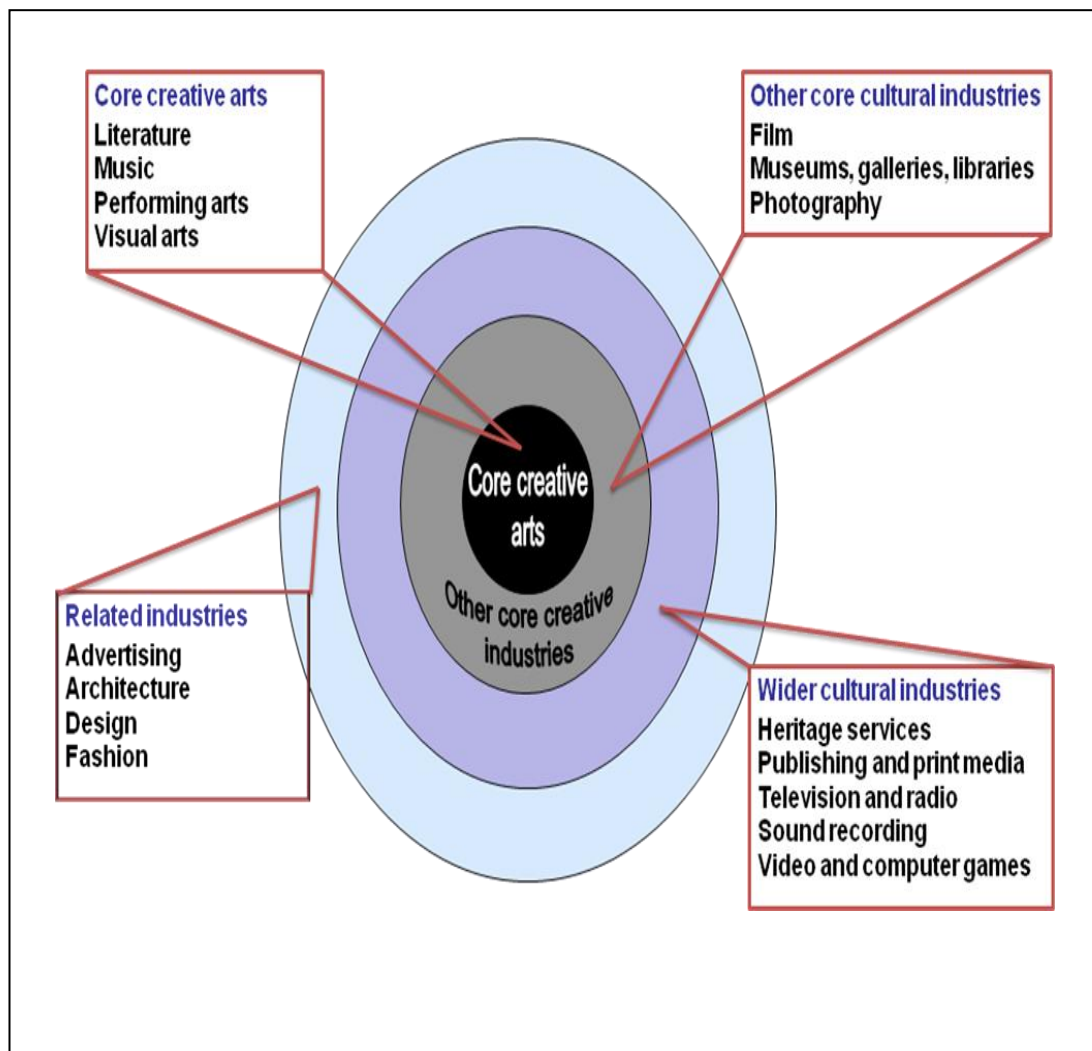
Throsby makes seminal contributions to cultural economics. He does not take a narrow view of neoclassical economics, but uses a wider “palette” including welfare economics (Trowse 2002;1284). Throsby proposes a definition for cultural activities as those:

...involving some form of creativity in their production; and concerned with the generation and communication of symbolic meaning; and whose outputs embodies, at least potentially, some form of intellectual property.

(Throsby 2001;4)

Throsby, using the definition above, reflects on the two characteristics of cultural content and industrial organisation through the concentric circle model of the cultural sector (Throsby 2001; Throsby 2007). The creative industries are conceptualised as a series of concentric circles representing the sector. Artists and arts organisations are at the centre. The circles represent increasing commercial industries, with creative ideas, skills and talents originating at the core, (see Figure 3 page 70 Concentric Circles Model of the Cultural Industries (Throsby 2012;6).

**Figure 3** Concentric Circles Model of the Cultural Industries (Throsby 2012;6)



Throsby argues that public value is the value that society as a whole gains from public spend. It is greater than the measurement of economic benefit and measures the wider indicators such as wellbeing (Throsby 2010; Throsby 2012). Consequently, there is economic value and there is cultural value (ibid). The value of art cannot be determined through fiscal terms (Throsby 2003).

Cultural value is the aesthetic, the spiritual, the social, the historical, the symbolic and authentic (Throsby 2010; Throsby 2012). Economic value is measured in money. Cultural value because it is multi-faceted, is problematic to quantify; cultural indicators, expert appraisal and attitudinal analysis of public preference are used (Throsby 2010). He argues that in developing the creative sector and moving forward, both markets and non-markets of the arts and culture need to be fully understood. Cultural value needs to be recognised as significantly important to the public. A positive climate for private sector engagement with the arts must be cultivated and cultural policy must be a core government remit, being implemented through culture, heritage, education, social welfare, trade, urban and regional development (Throsby 2012;16). Throsby's theoretic approach I welcome as more holistic, encompassing interlocking areas of policy; his work argues that cultural policy should enrich, rather than be "debased by economic logic" (Petrova 2011;239).

O'Connor disagrees with Throsby's model above. He argues that the activities within the model relating to the traditional arts, are conceived to have a "purer" creativity than the others, and are seen as those which provide the original input (O'Connor 2012;396). This suggests a hierarchy of creativity through the disciplines, with originality mostly being present at the core. More or less "pure" creativity is measured by the extent of its commercial application, and the arts represent an intrinsic, rather than instrumental value. The hierarchy also reflects the extent of public subsidy within the activities. O'Connor argues there are ambiguities: it is unclear why literature is a core creative art, while publishing is a wider cultural industry and why the visual arts are separated from museums, film or fashion. Artistic creation has been separated from reproduction and commercialism in the model. Throsby fails to give an adequate account of real processes in the sector and the tensions between creative labour and commercial processes and production (ibid).

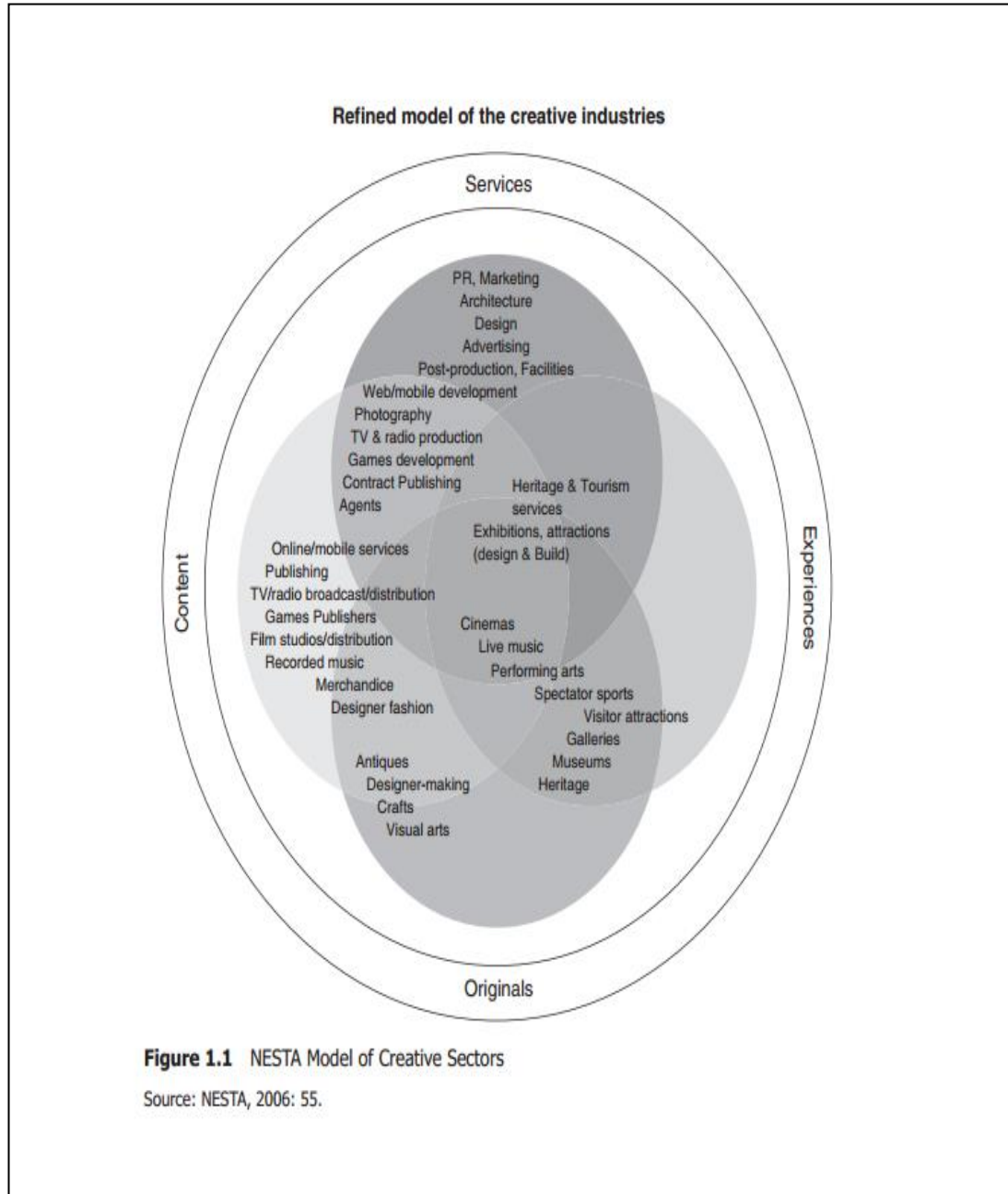
The KEA model (2006;3) was used in the 2006 European Commission report and explicitly distinguishes between the core arts, the cultural industries and the

creative industries. The distinction of the arts and the cultural industries are defined through reproduction and to a certain extent copyright. Creative industries are seen to employ people trained as artists but are non-cultural. The Work Foundation working with the DCMS, brought a model (Hutton et al 2007;5) that was developed from Throsby's concentric circle model (Throsby 2001; Throsby 2012;6). In the Work Foundation model (Hutton et al 2007;5), the creative core is not exclusively within the domain of the arts, and the concentric circles do not give a hierarchy of creativity based on pure and applied arts. Instead they arrange products along a continuum of expressive and functional value (O'Connor 2010;60). Expressive value is most undiluted at the core and becomes increasingly mixed with functionality as it moves out to the periphery (ibid). The latter model brings culture back into creativity.

The most sophisticated model appears to be the Nesta (2006;55) model (see page 73) because it suggests a complex overlap that can be seen as a creative ecosystem, where each area is related to the other. This last model is useful to this research, as it acknowledges the creative ecosystem as diverse, multifaceted and intricate. The interconnectivity of cultural and creative activities show blurred boundaries, which expresses a more accurate illustration of the creative sectors. Pratt and Jeffcut (2009) claim it represents specific organisation of production and attempts a taxonomy.



**Figure 4** Model of Creative Sectors (Nesta 2006;55)



O'Connor (2010) offers an excellent literature review on the history and theory of the cultural and creative industries. It draws on the last 60 years, exploring the idea of the cultural industries and how they have adapted and developed

into our contemporary interest in a creative economy. O'Connor discusses terminology and moves from the *culture industry*, through the *cultural industries*, to the *creative industries*. The review addresses the thinking in the area and the reasons for the changes in terminology (O'Connor 2010;9). His commentary is engaging, sophisticated and comprehensive. O'Connor is one of many academics that argue the conceptualisation of the creative industries remain problematic (O'Connor 2007; O'Connor 2010; O'Connor 2012). The DCMS definition "simply did not describe the complex structure of the creative industries sector" (O'Connor 2010;52). DCMS policy was presented as a small business strategy which completely overlooked key structural questions of access and participation, space and technology, new markets and growth and links to other sectors (Pratt 2005).

The 2001 DCMS definition of the creative industries had been strongly criticised as being unsystematic, as it underestimated the true creative workforce in the UK and did not allow statistical comparison across the European Union countries. Selwood argued that the measurement of the creative industries tended to be adhoc, incoherent, political and based on very little scientific analysis (2002; 2004). As an alternative definition, National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (Nesta) proposed "creative intensity": the proportion of total employment within an industry that is engaged in creative occupations" (Nesta 2013;3).

Nesta argued that intensity data meant that comparisons of like with like could be made, giving accurate statistics in the UK creative industries. Nesta claimed the DCMS definition was unclear and that their coding excluded areas of significant creative work that should have been included. Nesta proposed a more rigorous method; "scoring all occupations against a 'grid' of five theoretically grounded criteria" (Nesta 2013;4).

Nesta took forward the work of researchers (Bakhshi, Cunningham et al. 2008; Bakhshi, Schneider et al. 2008; Freeman 2008) who were already pursuing more systematic methods to gain reliable data, in order to estimate the true size of the creative economy. Higgs and Cunningham et al (2005) had designed the 'Trident Method' to define the impact of the creative industries in the overall workforce. This identified three areas: specialist jobs within the creative industries; embedded creative jobs outside the creative industries, within other sectors; and support jobs, additional jobs within the creative industries that were not within creative occupations.

Freeman's (2004) work calculated the creative intensity of creative industries and argued that there was a greater intensity of work in London and the South East. Further collaborative research from Higgs et al, Freeman and Bakhshi conceived that the creative industries were "a specialist branch of division of labour which uses this resource to produce specialist products" (Nesta 2013;9). In this last definition the creative industries are viewed as labour, which is a resource and the sector's output are seen as the product. In this definition, creative industries' labour can be measured in other workforce sectors, in addition to the creative industries' occupations and creative industries' products.

In 2014 DCMS retained the 2001 definition of the creative industries but used the Nesta methodology (Bakhshi, Freeman et al. 2013) to determine what was classified as 'creative' (DCMS 2014). This was welcomed by many organisations working in the creative sector, such as The Creative Industries Council, the Sector Skills Councils and of course Nesta, because it acknowledged the wider impact of creative work across Britain. The methodology takes three areas: the first, the set of occupations identified as creative; second, creative intensity calculated for all industries in the economy; and third, all industries with a creative intensity "above a certain threshold" are classified as creative industries (DCMS 2014;4). The DCMS claim data remains uncertain around the threshold level and so have drawn on feedback

and consultation with users, for the final clarification (ibid). Museums, galleries, libraries are also included. The contemporary estimates consequently cannot be compared to any statistics published prior to 2014 (ibid).

A discourse promoting shifting work and career patterns, individual responsibility in exchange for autonomy, rewards for individual creativity and innovation, work disassociated from class and big corporate industry and a focus on the growth of SMES within the local economy, has meant Labour and the cultural industries have been natural partners (O'Connor 2010). Replacing cultural industries with creative industries, brought an invention of a new economy, driven by digital technologies, linked to the knowledge economy and exploiting intellectual property (ibid).

Since the first mapping documents in 1998, there has been a successful mainstreaming of creative industries into much government policy discourse (Flew 2012). Creative industries policy has adapted (ibid). Researchers in human geography have provided empirical investigation of networking and clustering in different locations and sub sectors of the cultural industries (O'Connor 2010). Regional strategies have been developed with local variations to cultivate socio/economic networks. The top down, one size fits all approach, has been critiqued as unsuccessful, as it promoted regional inequality (O'Connor 2004; Pratt 2004; Flew 2012). There has been a reassertion of the distinctiveness of the arts in cultural and creative policy because the commercial aims of creative industries are in conflict with the aims and purposes of the arts and established arts organisations with public subsidy, such as the Arts Council of England (Pratt 2008; O'Connor 2009).

## Creative Industries Contribution to the UK

A report from the Warwick Commission in February 2015 took a very significant step in bringing the UK's arts, creative industries and cultural education together to promote their value. The Commission set out some important challenges for

the arts and creative industries. It argued that cultural and creative industries are one entity, an ecosystem that is imperative to British life, the British economy and Britain's place in the world. The cultural and creative industries are the fastest growing industry in the UK. The Gross Value Added of the Sector was estimated at £76.9 billion in 2013, representing 5% of the economy (DCMS 2015). The creative economy's share maybe close to 10% of the UK's economy if the contribution of creative talent outside the creative industries is included (Nesta 2013).

The Commission argues that the synergy across the ecosystem is dependent on the whole ecosystem working together, as each affects the other part. The flow between the commercial and cultural ends of the ecosystem "generates economic value, audiences and consumers" (The Warwick Commission 2015;21). The current ecosystem is siloed and disconnected in terms of policy, strategy and funding. There is an urgent need for a national plan drawn up by DCMS, BIS and Department for Education (DfE) that recognises the interconnectivity of the parts and brings coherence and unity. Vikki Heywood CBE, writes there must be "equal access for everyone to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life" (The Warwick Commission 2015;8). The Commission argues that without a synergetic approach, business and society will suffer as currently there are barriers and inequality preventing a cultural life being a universal right. The DfE and Ofsted should ensure that all children up to the age of 16 receive a broad cultural education, bringing a national vision for England's education aspirations in line with those in Wales and Scotland. An arts or media subject should be included in the English Baccalaureate and no school should be awarded 'outstanding' without demonstration of excellence in their cultural and creative education. An Artsmark award for 50% of schools should be supported by Ofsted and DfE. An Arts and Culture Pupil Premium and a national Creative Apprenticeship Brokerage Scheme should be introduced to increase access and participation in a cultural and creative education (ibid).

The Commission (2015) also recommend that Government ensure access for all in cultural and creative industries programmes, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. All areas of education (compulsory and non-compulsory), talent development, research and development are impacted by other parts of the system. All must allow access and ensure diversity. A lack of public investment will undermine the ecosystem because there will be less creative risk, less talent development, less investment and less financial and creative returns. New investment is needed from the public and private sector to maximise the ecosystem's potential and to increase commercial success. 8% of the wealthiest, better educated and least ethnically diverse are the most culturally active (The Warwick Commission 2015;33). A cultural life should be available to all, 70% of children whose parents have no education qualifications, spend less than 3 hours on cultural activities a week (The Warwick Commission 2015;57). Today, Britain is culturally and economically impoverished because access and participation is not experienced by all.

The Commission (2015) makes further recommendations to policy and strategy makers to ensure everyone has access to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life. A free digital public space (DiPS) would enable people to access Britain's culture and have access and participation regardless of status, income or ability. A *cultural library* would be created only for the public good without political or commercial interference. Public organisations and public projects in receipt of public funding will have to demonstrate their economic sustainability, their diversity, their creative quality and their social value in terms of reaching a diverse audience and representing Britain's diverse population. A *Cultural and Creative Industries Clusters Fund* should be set up to answer local need and provide targeted strategies through public and private investment (ibid).

The Warwick Commission's report (2015) should be used by the next Government, as a foundation for developing the creative ecosystem in Britain to be more inclusive, diverse and accessible to all. The Coalition government is

not making use of this report, nor are they acknowledging the importance of culture in their promises for *A Good Life for All* (BBC 2015). Indeed, Jonathan Neelands implies that culture is being ignored by the British Government (Preston 2015). This research strongly argues that culture should be inclusive and accessible to all and that it is intrinsic to a 'good' life.

## The Drivers Influencing the Teaching and Learning of Creative Education at Undergraduate Degree Level

As previously indicated, 'the creative sector' as a definition is open to debate. In the UK, Europe and Australia the main focus of academic research has been on the creative sector termed "the creative industries" (Comunian and Faggian 2014;281). In North America the emphasis has been more on the role of creative people, "the creative class" (Florida 2002;1). The former focuses on creative firms, and the latter on individuals, in spite of their slight differences in focus "they are two sides of the same coin" (Comunian and Faggian 2014;281). Many researchers have tried to define "the role, patterns and scope" of the creative sector but the literature has ignored the role of higher education in its development (ibid).

In the UK, creativity became "a ubiquitous" term in cultural, educational and economic policy of the New Labour government (Neelands and Choe 2010;287). "Creative industries, creative education and creative economy are frequently used and widely accepted" but there is no consistent government definition of how "creativity" or "creative" has been constructed (ibid). The absence of unifying models in the rhetoric regarding creativity is problematic (Neelands and Choe 2010).

Government strategy for developing the creative industries in the UK has been criticised as being over ambitious. Elliot and Atkinson believe the creative

industries policy is “smoke and mirrors” (2007;33). In *The Guardian* they write that the creative economy is “a nebulous fantasy” (Elliot and Atkinson 2007;17). Later, Smith talks about the future of the creative economy as only hype, “The world’s greatest hub or “bullshit” Britain” (Smith 2010;2). Wilson (2010) too claims that the British government’s creative industries policy and emphasis on skill development and strategy (DCMS 2006; London Government Association 2009; CBI 2010) is evangelical and over ambitious. Wilson argues it has been and continues to be merely a panacea (ibid).

Comunian et al (2011) claim this hype has influenced a growth in creative undergraduate degrees to meet the needs of a burgeoning creative economy, which in fact was not a reality. They draw attention to Labour policies that perhaps over emphasised the creative industries as the UK flagship to economic growth. They claim that Labour was over confident (2011) and this confidence moved into the policy of the Coalition government (Cameron 2010). Comunian et al (2011) cite some academic studies that reveal the creative industries real growth and expansion in the UK and show that the impact was a London-centric one (Taylor 2006; Knell and Oakley 2007). Comunian et al (2011), also cite (Heartfield 2005) and argue that the hype of Labour creative industries policies, with ten years of economic stability, brought the flourishing of higher education creative industries degrees and increased student numbers.

Comunian et al (2011) assert the national and regional economic hype was exaggerated. However they do recognise that students and universities believed in the growth of creative careers in the UK. Comunian et al (2011;8) quote as evidence, The Higher Education Statistical Agency’s (2009) data showing steady growth in creative subject degrees between 2003/2004 and 2007 and 2008 as significant in Architecture, Building and Planning 34.2 % , Creative Arts and Design 14.2 % and Mass Communication 7.3% compared to 4.8% across all subjects.



In the UCAS 2015 cycle, there is evidence that some creative courses are thriving. HE applications for undergraduate programmes for computer science increased by 12% (total 108,640 applicants), architecture, building and planning 8% (total 37,200 applicants), creative arts and design 2% (total 249,640 applicants), mass communication and documentation 6% (total 58,360 applicants). In contrast, some arts areas have declined (UCAS 2015), combined arts decreased by 13% (total 46,440 applicants), technologies decreased by 8% (total 8,540 applicants) and social sciences combined with arts lost 7% (total 45,790 applicants). It is important to note what impacts on students choosing art subjects; the British education system encourages early specialism and arts subjects are excluded from facilitating subjects in Russell Group university admissions (The Warwick Commission 2015). In 2012 - 2013 only 8.4% students combined arts and science disciplines in their AS levels (Gill 2012). There appears to be a perception that there is a lack of demand for students or graduates who have studied both STEM and arts subjects. A multi-disciplinary approach bringing arts and sciences together is not favoured in UK universities (Nesta 2015). A fusion of subjects is needed (STEAM) and the wider applicability of the arts in terms of the creative attitudes and skills that it develops, must be recognised (The Creative Industries Council 2014).

There are lower than average numbers of women and BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) students accessing courses that feed the creative and cultural industries (The Warwick Commission 2015;46). The Warwick Commission argue that HEFCE should review funding provision to increase the diversity of access and participation within more expensive, specialist, creative programmes. One national scheme should administrate bursaries and scholarships to ensure access to training for all talented students, regardless of their financial means. HE and FE should be working in partnership with the cultural and creative industries and increasing opportunities for work experience (ibid).

Creative careers are complex and do not conform to a one job or one employer format. Ball (2003; 2010) stressed the portfolio nature of creative jobs where graduates work in a variety of ways, as freelancers, pay as you earn and self-employed workers, sole traders working to contracts, commissions and projects. They have hybrid careers. Researchers have documented this kind of portfolio work and the unstable, work environment in various creative careers (Carey and Naudin 2006; Brown 2007; A New Deal of the Mind Report for Arts Council England 2009; Triantafyllaki and Smith 2009; Walker 2009; M Evans 2010; Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011; Higdon 2011). Comunian et al (2011), building on Comunian (2009) argue that the Labour policies have masked the realistic, poor career prospects of the many creative graduates behind the positive economic gains of a few, highly commercial activities.

Comunian et al (2011;296) use the 'Destination of Leavers from HE institutions' (DHLE) from 2004/ 2005, to look at the career patterns of creative graduates in relation to their study choices. They argue that the positive outcomes of the creative economy in the UK, are actually only experienced by particular disciplines. The data is not recent but it is useful because it highlights differentiation across the creative disciplines and argues that potential salaries in the creative economy are wide-ranging. The opportunities for graduates to access and sustain creative work are not consistent across the creative sectors. Contemporary anecdotal evidence with creative practitioners, creative graduates and academics working on creative programmes, whose views I have sought throughout this research, concur with Comunian et al (2011). Graduates experience creative work as having wide differentiation across the creative disciplines.

Creative subjects are taught predominantly in colleges and post 1992 universities. Only architecture and music have a strong presence in Russell Group universities (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011). Creative graduates are 53.7% less likely to have full-time paid work than non-creative graduates

(57.39%). The former also are more likely to work in a voluntary or unpaid capacity, are less likely to study at postgraduate level and twice more likely to be unemployed than their non-creative peers (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;297). However, when the aggregate figures are broken down into creative sectors, they reveal some better performing subjects than the non-creative graduate group.

Those better performing are advertising, writing, publishing and architecture (65.88% and 59.19%), against the non-creative group of 57.39% (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;298). Part-time work is very high for crafts and fine arts, but very low (lower than the non-creative group) for advertising and architecture (ibid). For 2004/2005 graduates, unemployment is low for architecture, craft and music graduates but very high for film and television, creative technologies, design and fine art graduates (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;298).

Overall only 37.60% in 2004/2005 of the creative graduates enter the creative professions, the subjects faring the best being architecture with 81.03% of the class finding work, 40.19% of the class for design, 42.81% for advertising (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;298). Unfortunately only 22.60% of fine arts graduates and 24.71% of craft graduates found creative work six months after leaving university (ibid). London dominates the location for creative work for all the creative graduates (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011). Salaries are inconsistent. Architecture and creative technology graduates have the highest earnings (a mean of £18,000 and £17,000 respectively) with craft, performing arts-drama, dance and music, film and television graduates earning the lowest (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;299).

Comunian et al conclude that graduates in advertising, architecture and publishing fare reasonably well with a healthy, sustainable job market, however craft, performing arts, film and television, and fine arts graduates have an

uncertain future, making them very vulnerable to poor working conditions and unemployment (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

The researchers (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011) argue that British policy about the creative industries and the creative provision within higher education institutions need to honestly address 'the creative industries hype'. There are increasing unrealistic expectations by creative undergraduates choosing creative subjects and they need to be made aware of the realistic, employment expectations for most creative graduates (ibid). "HEIs still find it hard to engage with the creative job market in an effort to improve employability" (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;305).

In summary, Comunian et al (2011) argue that HE and industry must work with integrity and honesty. They cite Matheson (2006) who argues for a virtuous circle between HE provision and the creative industries which aims for mutually beneficial collaborative partnerships. Matheson's research (2006) within the design industry and design provision in higher education, argues the need for a virtuous cycle that brings honest, coherent collaboration between education and industry and pulls them together. This virtuous cycle aims to support the creative industries to expand and become the model for a new economy based on change and social, cultural and economic entrepreneurship (Matheson 2006).

## Recent Employment Data

The Warwick Commission was surprised that no in-depth statistical analysis of cultural and creative workforce data has been published in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, despite it being available through the Office for National Statistics (2015). The Commission recommend that industries should be working to increase their representation, in terms of gender, race, disability, age

and so forth, in all areas and be identifying obstacles that prevent diversity (ibid).

The total creative economy increased by 8.8% between 2011 and 2013 (DCMS 2014;12). In 2013, 2.62m jobs were in the creative economy, this included 1.71m in the creative industries and 0.91m creative jobs in other industries (DCMS 2015;7). Between 2012 and 2013 the creative economy grew by 66 thousand jobs (2.6%), a higher rate than the UK economy as a whole (1.6%) (ibid). British Film earned worldwide gross \$4.1 billion. Film, TV, video, radio and photography employment in the creative economy increased by 11.8% or 27,000 jobs between 2011 and 2013 (DCMS 2015;12).

The creative industries have particular characteristics: 43% are freelance workers; 78% of businesses employ fewer than five employees and 57% are qualified to level 4 or above (32% being the norm). There are 65,200 creative businesses (Tambling 2015). Tambling claims young people need to be 'T – shaped', having a deep technical skill which is enhanced by a broad range of other attributes, such as an ability to collaborate and apply learning to new challenges. She argues jobs are not readily available but have to be made, created through freelancing, apprenticeships and through entry level jobs (ibid). Nesta suggests that creative occupations are at low or no risk of automation and that creative work will keep evolving (2015). Nesta's comments must be reassuring for creative workers. However, employers have an obligation to look at the methods they use to employ their creative workers and make their creative work more accessible to a diverse workforce. In reality 78% of creative businesses are SMEs and lack resources. Therefore support needs to be given to them from Government to enable them to take on apprenticeships.

Creative work is vulnerable and artists can find cash flow unpredictable, 71% of artists received no fee for work exhibited in public funded art galleries (The Warwick Commission 2015;35). The cultural and creative workforce has been

hit badly under the austerity cuts of the Coalition government. This makes access and participation even more challenging (ibid). Organisations, such as the BBC, Channel 4, Sky and ITV have begun campaigns to increase the diversity of access and participation to their workforce and to their audience. Although these initiatives are welcomed, the diversity of the British population is not being represented in cultural and creative practices (The Warwick Commission 2015;37). The cultural and creative sector must also fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in regard to protected characteristics (2010;4).

In Britain, the diversity of the creative workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability has significantly lowered between 2010 and 2015 (Creative Skillset 2010; Creative Skillset 2012; UK Data Service 2013; The Warwick Commission 2015). Access to opportunity for creative, self-expression is socially stratified and restricted for many women, ethnic minorities and disabled people. This “is bad for business as well as for society” (The Warwick Commission 2015;35).

The creative economy and creative industries employ a lower proportion of women than the wider UK economy (DCMS 2014;13). 35.8% of jobs in the creative economy were filled by women in 2013, 37.1% of jobs in the creative industries were filled by women. This compares with 46.9 per cent in the UK as a whole (ibid). Women are heavily under represented in certain sectors like games, visual effects and animation. Over half of video game players are women but only 14% make up the industry’s workforce. The games industry contributes to £1.7 billion to the UK’s economy (Creative Skillset 2012). 40% of the animation workforce is made up of women; three quarters of them work in sales, marketing, legal and management roles, with only a quarter working as animators (ibid).

BAME workers represent 15% of workers in IT, software and computing. 11.4% are in publishing, 4.5% in crafts, 6% of workers in design, 9.1% in film, TV and radio, 6.7% in music and performing and visual arts (DCMS 2014;53). In the

creative media industries, BAME people declined from 7.4% of the total workforce in 2006, to 5.4% in 2012 (Creative Skillset 2012;4). There was an increase of 2% in employment in this sector through growth in interactive media, facilities, animation, game publishing and game development support. Radio, studios, equipment hire, film production, commercial production and pop promos and game development lost jobs in the creative media industries.

The proportion of the workforce described by their employers as disabled has remained the same at 1% since 2006. In Creative Skillset's 2010 Creative Media Workforce Survey, 5.6% of the workforce reported they have a disability (Creative Skillset 2012;6).

It is a concern that access and participation within the creative and cultural industries is not reflecting diversity, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic factors. Developing diversity within all sectors makes social and business sense. Access to a cultural life and access to a creative career must be inclusive.

## **4 Recent and Current Employability Research**

The next part of the literature focuses on recent and current research into graduate employability. The research is extensive on generic, graduate employment but underdeveloped in relation to creative graduates. More funding is needed to increase research into the latter area.

Employability is "contested" (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005;197). It has become a ubiquitous word with many meanings (Hillage and Pollard 1998; McQuaid and Lindsay 2005). Employability is a catchword and not properly understood (Philpott 1999), or it is "a fuzzy notion, often ill-defined and sometimes not defined at all" (Gazier 1998;298). Harvey and More argue that employability is

not just about getting a job. It also does not mean that a vocational course leads to automatic employability. They argue employability is more than attributes and experience. It is about learning with an emphasis “less on “employ” and more on “ability” and about “empowering and enhancing the learner” (Harvey and Morey 2003;1). The CBI in 1999 offered a definition of employability which focused on individual qualities, competencies and aspirations to meet “changing needs of employers and customers” (CBI 1999;1). The CBI still conceptualise employability with an emphasis on the employers’ needs (CBI 2013). These perspectives reflect the contested nature around what employability means and what meaning it should have.

It is challenging to research what is needed for graduate work, i.e. the concept of employability and with it, the place of this concept of employability within the undergraduate experience. The concept of employability is a contested construct, having many definitions and layers. Researchers and theorists have used varying methods to generate some supporting data to meet their conceptualisation of employability and argue its place within the undergraduate curriculum. Some key methods and data are outlined below.

The most dominant method is to canvass employers directly on their views of graduates and undergraduate provision (Hesketh 2000; Archer and Davison 2008; CBI/Universities UK 2009; High Fliers Research 2011; High Fliers Research 2012; High Fliers Research 2013). Carey and Matlay (2007) analysed job advertisements, comparing the creative industries sector and business schools to gauge what HE employers look for. They identify faculties of art and design having more focus on practitioner skills sets, with business school job advertisements having a predominance of academic qualifications. Carey and Matlay’s (2007) research suggests that HE use different prerequisites when recruiting their employees from multi-disciplines. High Fliers research (2011, 2012, 2013) suggests that all employers recruit graduates for their skill sets which implies a meritocracy for graduates. Higher level skills are



rewarded with more opportunities for work. Cultural and Economic capital are not part of this meritocracy discourse.

Some researchers have used statistical evidence on graduate outcomes, such as the first destination survey or graduate level employment classifications to attempt to link graduate employability with undergraduate programmes (Mason 1999; Mason, Williams et al. 2003; Cranmer 2006). However they emphasise that using only first destination surveys to measure graduate employability is problematic. First destination surveys are the largest annual study to measure graduate employability; they take a snapshot of graduate destinations six months after graduation (Higher Education Statistical Agency 2012). Every institution is required by government to survey its graduates and collate their destinations through a common questionnaire. It has a target response rate of 80%, with an actual one around 90%. Mason, Williams et al (2006) argue that first destination surveys are problematic as graduates from different disciplines take longer to find jobs, for example design students need time to build portfolios for their recruitment. The survey has been criticised for being taken too close to graduation, consequently in 2007, three and a half year longitudinal surveys were started to enrich the six month one. From 1995, 4500 graduates from 38 institutions have been tracked every three to four years (Purcell and Pitcher 1996; Purcell, Hogarth et al. 1999; Purcell and Elias 2004).

Many researchers have focused on the acquisition of skills and the generic use of those skills across graduate jobs. They have termed them 'transferable', 'key' or 'employability skills'. In short a list of skills that graduates need to possess to enter and to sustain graduate work (Smith, Wolstencroft et al. 1989; Harvey and Green 1993; Harvey and Green 1994; Association of Graduate Recruiters 1995; Harvey, Moon et al. 1997; CBI 1999; Fallows and Steven 2000; CBI 2012).

In 2015 engaging with 'employability skills' and making this type of learning explicit in the curriculum has become common practice in British universities. Gibson (2006) embedded enterprise into the curriculum and became the first National Teacher Fellow for Enterprise Education in 2007 (The Higher Education Academy 2014). Gibb (1993; 2005) drove the instillation of an entrepreneurial culture into the whole university. He explored entrepreneurship in society, bringing entrepreneurship models to higher education leadership and focusing on understanding and developing entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes across the university.

Most universities are responding to the Browne Review and White Paper (Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) by recruiting personnel to coordinate employability activities across the university (Jiscmail.ac.uk 2011). "Many university departments now use a mix of embedded and stand-alone teaching methods in their efforts to develop employability skills" (Mason, Williams et al. 2009;2). The Higher Education Academy, which supports HEIs, is collecting case-studies for teaching methods to develop employability and is promoting pedagogy for employability within the higher education curriculum and wider student experience (Pegg, Waldox et al. 2012).

Although employability strategies in universities promote the benefit for the student to be involved in all kinds of work opportunities like part-time work, placements, internships and holiday work experience, as evidence of their accumulating skills on their CVs, in reality, some work experience can be detrimental to the student. Access to funding has an effect on whether a student has time to join in activities or has to find paid employment to pay for living and studies (Purcell, Elias et al 2009). Purcell et al (2005) and Humphrey (2006) researched those students who have to work to support their studies and find evidence of achievement of lower marks and less participation in social life affecting the student's ability to compete in the graduate labour market. Purcell,

Elias et al (2009) cite Humphrey's research showing that students who worked during term were overwhelmingly from state schools rather than from independent privately funded schools which also indicates that "structured inequality, an inherent feature of a divided secondary education system, is being pulled firmly into HE" (Humphrey 2006;286).

Mason, Williams et al (2006; 2009) found structured work experience has clear positive effects on the ability of graduates, firstly to find employment within six months of graduation and, secondly, to secure employment in graduate level jobs. Jobs at graduate level were associated positively with employer involvement in degree course design and delivery. However Mason, Williams et al found there was no evidence that the emphasis given by university departments to the teaching, learning and assessment of employability skills has a significant effect on either of the labour market outcomes considered here (2009;23). "There may be little to be gained from universities seeking to develop skills that are best acquired (or can only be acquired) after starting employment rather than beforehand" (Mason, Williams et al 2009:23).

Employability as skill acquisition has been influenced by Dearing (1997) who identified a set of key skills which were "relevant throughout life, not simply in employment" (1997;para 9,18). Dearing defined these skills as Communication, Numeracy, IT and 'Learning how to Learn' at a higher level. He believed provision of these skills should become central to higher education. Coopers and Lybrand (1998) emphasised the importance of understanding the world of work, gaining knowledge about the ways organisations work and how people in those organisations do their work. Harvey and Morey (2003) highlight more long term skills, rather than job specific ones, which graduates need to manage their careers and continue learning throughout their working lives. Gilleard (2010) too focuses on keeping employed through long term skills, arguing that graduates can fully expect to still be in the world of work in 2058, "applying skills that we haven't even thought of today" (Gilleard 2010;5).

Mason (1998; 1999) argues that employers in reality look for work ready graduates rather than long term skills. Mason's research with engineering and science graduates found employers favouring work experience and evidence of commercial understanding in their graduate recruitment, in order to avoid newly employed graduates requiring a long learning curve (Mason, Williams et al. 2009). Mason, Williams et al (2006:19) argue a probability of being employed to be "significantly and positively related" to graduating with a First Class or Upper Second degree or with students who have taken a long placement (one year or sometimes two or three months) in their degree.

Allen and van der Velden (2001) found evidence that employers can be biased, as they may select graduates based on work experience, sex and social background. This may account for why individuals with similar levels of formal certification may gain varying degrees of success in the graduate job market. Smith, McKnight and Naylor (2000) suggest the probability of students being employed six months after graduation and in a graduate level role is not related to undergraduate skill acquisition but is affected by class of degree, subject studied, prior educational achievement and social class. This evidence disputes the meritocracy discourse.

Lindsay (2005;200) cites Gazier's (1998) history of the concept of employability which gives a valuable overview of how employability has been conceptualised since the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This summary is useful to understand the ways that employability has been defined across the world. In recent British government policies, *Initiative* and *Interactive* employability, conceptualised by Gazier (1998) seem most prevalent. *Initiative* employability emerged in the North American and European human resource development (HRD) literature of the late 1980s. It reflected on an acceptance amongst individuals and organisations that successful career development requires the development of skills that are transferable and the flexibility to move between job roles. The focus is on the individual, with the onus on workers to develop their skills and networks in the

workplace, so strengthening their position when they wish, or are required, to move. *Interactive* employability emerged first in North America and then internationally from the end of the 1980s, and maintained the emphasis on individual initiative, while also acknowledging that the employability of the individual is relative to the employability of others and the opportunities, institutions and rules that govern the labour market. This can be seen as implying the importance of the role of employers and labour demand in determining a person's employability. Gazier identifies two main operational implications arising from this approach to employability: the targeting of long term unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups by policy-makers; and the resulting focus of many Western governments on activation policies which seek to intervene to prevent long-term unemployment. Along with Initiative and Interactive conceptualisations of employability, in Britain the emphasis is on a neo-liberalist society, post-Thatcher, where the individual is increasingly seen to be taking responsibility and accountability for their own employability through the acquisition of competitive skills. This discourse is evident in the dominant employability model of Labour and Coalition governments, discussed in the earlier part of this chapter.

The neo-liberal discourse emphasising the marketisation of skills, can be challenging for graduates. Helyer (2011) claims the pressure on HE graduates is greater than ever. The British government supports skills with the greatest economic value and graduates prepared to work in industries that do not exist yet. Graduates are viewed as needing to be changeable and adaptable to meet the challenges of the jobs' market and willing to continuously develop themselves. Helyer suggests that being a university student is no longer about being able to focus only on academic learning (ibid). "Employed students have multifaceted lives, and commitments (family, work, community)" (Helyer 2011;101). Students' economic and social circumstances will have an effect on their ability to specialise through postgraduate training, to participate in low paid work experience and to physically move for work.

Contemporary British students are well documented through media stories and academic journals as being a diverse, international cohort, having multiple identities and multiple needs throughout the student experience. Contemporary students therefore need multifaceted support to access university, complete their programmes and to successfully graduate and move on. Contemporary British workers are depicted by government policy and by media news as needing to adapt to meet employers' needs, needing to constantly change and manage their own employability skills throughout their own lives and to survive economic recessions. Contemporary learning and contemporary work within these paradigms are depicted as pressured and stressful with constant challenges to balance work, learning, development and leisure and a subsequent blurring of them together.

Moving on from generic work to creative work, less research is published. Creative employability is an area that needs funding to ensure development. Undertaking robust research is clearly a resource issue for academics, employers, practitioners and organisations involved in creative work (Ball 2010; Ramesh 2013; The Warwick Commission 2015). To give a flavour of the approaches already taken in creative employability research, some researchers have interviewed the graduates themselves about their own perceptions of graduate skills (Blackwell and Harvey 1999; Crebert, Bates et al. 2004; Brown 2007; Ball L, Pollard E et al. 2010). Others have interviewed academic staff in HE institutions (M Evans 2010) to map institutional practice and to share case studies particularly around creative entrepreneurship. A number of have researched the employment of creative people; Freakley and Neelands (2003) have talked with creative artists to explore the kinds of trading relations that artists engage with. Throsby has explored how economic constraints affect artist engagement in creative work (2007).

Despite some excellent work in the research area, more is still needed. Ball et al, over a decade ago identified a significant need for research around creative

employability (2003). Since the beginning of this research, there has been an increase in published academic papers, reflecting the increasing pressure that universities are under to address explicitly graduate employability outcomes of their undergraduate degrees. Recent research focuses on creative undergraduate programmes, often conducted by academic staff keen to improve their employability outcomes (Ball L, Pollard E et al. 2010); yet overall academic research into creative work is under-developed because of the lack of funding opportunities.

In sum, extensive research into creative undergraduate degrees, and their links to contemporary creative work are not well worn paths. Research opportunities need to be increased, to inform funding and to publicise both the commercial and social value of the cultural sector. Research into access, participation and diversity in creative work also needs robust investigation.

## **Challenging the Neo-Liberal Employability Discourse**

Leonard Holmes' (2013) work on the British employability agenda is refreshing and critically thoughtful. He looks specifically at generic graduate employability, rather than creative employability, but his conclusions have many similarities to mine. For this reason, I will refer to his work in detail which I came to in 2013 after I had analysed my data and had already begun to write up my initial conclusions.

Holmes' discourse echoes much of the discussion within this thesis, particularly the conclusions that employability does not fit with dominant models of skill acquisition but instead takes place through interaction with gatekeepers, in an interactive relationship between those that hold work and those that want it. Holmes too focuses on the importance of identity and the graduates' perception of themselves and others. He too agrees that the notion of skills and attributes dominate policy and practice debate with flimsy foundations in various surveys

with employers. He too asserts that employers and government agencies have the dominant voice.

Holmes (2013) argues that the skill acquisition of graduates is problematic because the plethora of skill lists that graduates are requested to acquire at university seem arbitrary and long, i.e. there is no real evidence of the relevance or worth of these lists apart from an ever growing list of employer surveys, government reports and government policy documents post-Dearing. Skill lists and categories cannot be transferred across institutions, across employers and across employees. The use of the same categories does not necessarily mean that they share the same meaning between the different stakeholders and within different contexts. Holmes quotes Hirsh and Bevan (1988) who looked at management skills. They find there is a shared language of the phrase 'management skills' as a term of expression but the level of meaning across stakeholders is contested, so therefore cannot have equal or comparable meaning.

My own research approach may have been influenced had I access in 2008/2009 to Holmes' critical commentary at the outset of this research project. This is a little disappointing. However reading his critique well into the writing up of my research findings, has been surprisingly reassuring and has given validity to my own research conclusions and debates around creative employability. Holmes too critiques contemporary government strategy with its emphasis on skill acquisition in education and work, as flawed policy development, with no rational, research evidence. Holmes also sets his debate of contemporary discussions of HE against a backdrop of globalisation, human capital, knowledge economy and financial and economic crisis. Holmes argues there is constant policy intervention from Government into HE, that has no logical legitimacy (Holmes 2013;538). He asserts that if it can be critically argued that HE is the conduit for the sustainability of the economy; robust research in this area must be conducted to inform HE strategy and action.



Holmes considers how research, policy and curriculum development must be approached rationally to be effective, both separately and together. He explores human capital investment rationale in the expansion of HE and skills provision, the dwindling of public spending and the move to the individual taking responsibility for tuition fees. He believes employment outcomes have become the crude indication of educational outcomes, or at least what contemporary society values as educational outcomes with their emphasis on economic measurements. Employment outcome is a “significant factor in the distribution of economic and social benefits, and of social and economic advancement for individuals and their families” (Holmes 2013;539). Consequently an ethical government or university will need to have a concern for social equity in the employment outcomes of higher education.

Holmes (2013) categorises the approaches to employability. *Possessive* approaches are the dominant model which is prevalent in policy and practice. Skills are acquired to meet stakeholders’ needs. He argues this perspective should be abandoned as it is fundamentally flawed. Next, he evaluates *Positioning* approaches which are based on social positioning theory, evidenced by links between different groups, cultural capital and employment outcomes. Social hierarchy is perpetuated through certain prerequisites. To give an example, social and economic trajectories are replicated through cultural capital; people born into privileged families, frequently have a privileged education and gain employment outcomes that can be predicted to reflect the employment of privileged people. Holmes’ agrees this perspective has merit but does not accept the approach in its entirety as it does not allow for any social mobility, does not take into account the huge expansion of HE to the masses and is simply too fixed in its prediction of employment outcomes. I too came to similar conclusions. The research informed section of this *Literature Review* explores how bridges and holes in apparently closed networks are formed or opened in social and cultural capital, allowing potential workers to access work opportunities or benefits, bringing social mobility. Holmes argues

that *Processual* approaches are best practice because they focus on graduate identity. He asserts that this is because they are theoretically robust, supported with empirical evidence and provide a sound basis for intervention in both policy and the HE curriculum. HE is but one stage of a person's trajectory and the notion that a graduate leaves with what is required for employment, takes little account of their overall biographical trajectory and their graduate identity.

In the following section of the *Literature Review* which is informed by research data from graduates and final year undergraduates, I too came to similar conclusions that narratives and identities, individual journeys and biographical trajectories are significant themes within creative employability.

While acknowledging that diversity in trajectories exists, Holmes looks for a more complex or multi-layered conceptual or theoretical framework. He looks at the notion of becoming a graduate, he looks in particular at identity as emergent, i.e. not fixed or what he calls "identifying" (Holmes 2013;259). Identifying is claimed by a graduate and also by significant others in the social setting.

Identity is therefore socially constructed, negotiated, part of a process of interaction and subject to contestation. An individual may lay claim to an identity which may or not be matched or affirmed by a significant other. Because the process is negotiated and interactive, identities can be constantly changing and the significant other may be ambivalent and need more evidence before they judge, affirm or reject. This interaction is a fluid, temporary relationship between graduates and gatekeepers to opportunities. The terminology of skills and attributes may be elements in the generalised discourse about practice within the interaction but they are only a part of the claimed identity. Within the negotiation the language used about skills may help or hinder the claim for identity. In an extended discussion about their skills for example, the graduate may be seen by the significant other, to be losing her

claim to her identity. The graduate may not meet the gatekeeper's notion of graduate identity or they may feel the graduate is not fluent enough in their articulation of their particular identity. Holmes believes in social interaction and negotiation, it is unlikely that language will include the set of limited terms such as presented in graduate lists. There will be a plethora of terms.

Holmes' "graduate identity approach" develops ways of

...presenting your claim on the identity (of being a graduate worthy of employment) in such a way that it stands a good chance

of being affirmed by those who make the selection decision on job applications that you make.

(Holmes 2013;551)

Once in employment, the graduate can develop the richness of vocabulary that helps warrant the identity to be worthy of being employed there.

## Summation of the Literature Relating to the Themes of Higher Education, Employability and Creative Industries

This initial part of the *Literature Review*, has explored the three main themes of higher education, employability and creative industries which link to the research questions: How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees? These three themes are enmeshed in much of recent Labour and Coalition strategy and

policy which document the aim of increasing economic growth through building the skill acquisition of the creative workforce through training initiatives in education and work. There is increasing interest in social enterprise and the social and cultural benefits of the cultural and creative industries as Europe opens its borders and becomes more culturally diverse. However, because of the ongoing financial instability in Britain, most research linking graduate work and employability has had an economic focus. The Warwick Commission seeks to address this imbalance, to focus on a coherent strategy for Britain that is both good for society and good for business (2015). The literature reveals multifaceted conceptualisations of employability and their influence on higher education degrees in the UK. In recent years, there has been increasing emphasis on the marketisation of higher education, government policies linking higher education, industry and economic strategy together and the commercial relationship between students and learning.

## **5 Creative People and Creativity**

The next section of this chapter explores what we know of creative people thus far. It looks at how creative people have been defined and how creativity has been conceptualised over time. The initial part of this section offers contemporary definitions of creativity and of creative people. It then discusses the conceptualisation of creative people through various research paradigms and addresses how creativity is developed in education and for work.

### Contemporary Definitions of Creativity

Creativity is a slippery concept, “a paradox” (Boden 2004;1). It is a challenging research area (Sternberg 2006). Creativity is vast and cumbersome; covering a wide scope relating to the individual, society, learning, work, employability,

innovation, job creation, competitiveness and economic prosperity (Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Kaufman and Sternberg 2006).

A definition of creativity which has some consensus with scholars is “creativity involves thinking that is aimed at producing ideas or products that are relatively novel and that are, in some respect compelling” (Sternberg 2006;2). Sternberg argues that creativity is neither entirely domain specific nor completely domain general. It has elements of both. Potential for creativity may have some domain general elements, but making a significant creative contribution usually reflects knowledge and understanding within a particular creative domain, rather than from generic areas. Sternberg maintains creativity can be to a certain extent, both measured and developed. He also believes that countries claim they want creativity, but in reality creativity is never greatly rewarded. Governments do not want to be critiqued by creative people, because they pose a threat to a government’s survival and the implementation of policies and practices (ibid). Creative people may threaten the status quo and can be challenging to lead (Kirton 1976; Belbin 1981; Amabile 1983; Sinetar 1992; Sternberg 2006). Creativity is not viewed as mainstream or explicitly linked to rigorous scientific study (Sternberg 2006).

Creativity from a Western perspective is the ability to produce work that is novel. Its products and processes are distinct from previous work and are seen as original. Creativity fulfils a need. It can occur in “virtually any domain, including the visual arts, literature, music, business, science, education and everyday life” (Lubart 1999;339). The Eastern view of creativity is viewed differently. It is concerned less with innovative products and more with the idea of personal fulfilment and creative expression. Creativity is not an innovative solution to a problem but a spiritual expression (ibid). It is seen less individualistically and more collectively in Eastern societies (Nui and Sternberg 2002). Chinese theories of creativity value goodness, morality and the connections between old and new knowledge (ibid). Indian theories involve social responsibility, leadership and task persistence (Panda and Yadava

2005). In sum, Eastern definitions of creativity are more social, spiritual, collective and holistic. In contrast, Western perspectives relate more to the individual and innovative products and processes. Taking into account both perspectives of creativity gives a wider understanding of its global conceptualisation, and perhaps why it has become such a ubiquitous and political word.

## The Creative Person

Personality traits and behaviours have been explicitly named in creativity research and these have been widely documented. Critiques of personality studies recognise the similarities in these traits but argue there is too much focus on the great or unique person in their investigation, rather than on the ordinary one (Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012).

The following seeks to catalogue the characteristics and features of the creative person, which have been identified in many of these studies of creativity. The studies document: independent judgement; self-confidence; a draw towards complexity; acceptance of ambiguity; aesthetic awareness; openness; risk taking; playfulness; joy; experimentation; metaphorical thinking; perfectionism; persistence; resilience; self-efficacy; willingness to overcome obstacles; defying the crowd; motivation, curiosity, emotional involvement in work; having a calling or a purpose and endurance (Amabile 1983; Sternberg 1986; Gardner 1993; Pollicastro and Gardner 1999; Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Falconar 2000; Sternberg, Kaufman et al. 2002; Hennessey 2003; Kraft 2005; Baer and Kaufman 2006).

Sternberg (1997) argues for creative intelligence which develops creativity which is needed in learning and work. Creative intelligence is the ability to call upon existing knowledge and skills to successfully facilitate new and unusual situations. It involves past experience. Creative intelligence is often overlooked by intelligence tests. It is the ability to create, invent, discover, imagine, suppose and predict (Sternberg 1997). Sternberg (1985; 1997; 2002;

Sternberg, Kaufman et al. 2008; 2012) identifies areas where creative intelligence is needed to succeed. These areas are useful for developing creative employability. The salient points are outlined in the following. Talent is irrelevant, if there is a lack of motivation to succeed. Impulsiveness may hinder creative ideas, as first ideas are not always the most appropriate. Some people give up too easily, while others persevere by looking for alternative ways. Focusing both on the product and the process are equally important. Having a preoccupation with the details, rather than having a larger perspective of the whole, can be detrimental. Procrastination is not helpful, good ideas need to be put into action. Failure within the creative process should be viewed as a normal part of developing ideas. However, being unable to initiate or complete an activity is not acceptable in the workplace. Excessive self pity, dependency and self blame are not conducive to professional success. Creative work has highs and lows and this perspective should be seen as normal in creative life. Confidence is needed. However too little, leads to creative blocks and too much, leads to arrogance, with a belief that their ideas are always the best in comparison to others and an inability to reflect on their own actions and behaviour.

Creative people are often viewed as being intrinsically motivated (Amabile 1983; Amabile 1996). Those who are intrinsically motivated can produce higher levels of creativity, than those who are externally motivated. The intrinsically motivated people do what they love and focus on the creative work, rather than on external rewards (ibid). Creative people find work to be both a solitary and social pursuit and so need a productive environment to develop their creativity (Sternberg and Lubart 1999). An external environment which is supportive and rewarding should be cultivated, for the exchange and growth of creative ideas.

Sawyer gives guidance on how to become a more creative person by first dispelling the myths that thwart creativity. He asserts that the Western world has ten “creativity beliefs” within its Western cultural model (Sawyer 2012;12). He claims these beliefs are not supported by scientific research and are not

necessarily true; however they are espoused by Western society as creative truths. Sawyer seeks to review these beliefs by evaluating them against scientific research. He identified ten beliefs that can be defined as follows. Creativity is seen as “a flash of insight” which then must be executed. This execution can even be delegated (Sawyer 2012;12). Creativity is mysterious and lies in the unconscious. Creative people are independent and tend to ignore convention and tradition. They reject the art experts, their arts education or what they have learnt or could learn in arts school. Creativity is more likely to come from an outsider, than an expert. The most successful creative people know least about the field. Creative people are usually visionary and work best when they are alone. Their creative contribution is often posthumously, because it takes others much longer to recognise their value and their insight. Creativity is accepted as a personality trait, rather like IQ, being seen as based in the right brain. Creative brains are seen to be biologically different to uncreative brains. Creativity is recognised to have a very close link to mental illness; consequently treating mental illness may lower creativity. However paradoxically, creativity is viewed also as being life affirming and integral to the human experience. It is seen to have an important role in the human condition, contributing to our well being, our psychological health and our personal fulfilment (ibid).

Sawyer reviews these cultural beliefs by drawing on historical and contemporary research across a range of disciplines. By taking each of the beliefs in turn and evaluating them against the research, Sawyer makes claims about how creative people can become more creative (2012;405). These areas are relevant to employability and development for creative work. He asserts that scientists now recognise that creativity is mostly conscious and requires hard work. People who want to increase their creativity should be conscientious and work to master a domain. They should listen to the experts and seek all the learning available in that field. They should develop divergent thinking and problem finding. Sawyer advises creative people to network and go to the places where they are able to get to know significant people. They should find



out what others are doing and learn how they do it. They should seek out a mentor to teach them and guide them. They should interact with others, who are doing what they want to do. They must become specialised but not so much that they ignore everything, outside their domain. They need to always keep up with the latest developments in their area. They must collaborate and work with others, as creativity is shown to be heightened with a mix of social and solitary ways of working. Creative people should share and advertise their ideas to ensure success in their lifetime. Creativity is not a personality trait but can be learnt. Individuals must seek to master their domain and find a way of developing/learning/living that works for them. Creative people use their entire brains and creative training increases the bilateralisation of brain activity. Thus creative people are more balanced across the personality traits. Well-balanced people are more likely to be creatively successful. Creative people are actually seen as healthier, than non-creative people, because they are engaging in creative pursuits which lead to better health and psychological well being. People viewed as highly creative do not necessarily have strong links to mental illness. The correlation between mental illness and creativity has little consensus within creativity research (ibid).

Sawyer's (2012) claims on how people can become more creative, are pertinent to the undergraduates and graduates in this research and their experiences of creative learning to develop for creative work.

## Creative Education and Creative Work

Sawyer asserts that research has evidenced that creativity can be taught (2012). This has significance to this research. Industry consequently has become increasingly interested in creative training to stimulate industrial innovation and economic growth (Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Sawyer 2012).

As early as the nineteenth century there has been interest in creative training (Becker 1995). Creativity is highly valued in education and work and there have been many attempts to increase creativity in "every imaginable student

population” (Baer and Kaufman 2006;16). Educational programmes are varied but many have elements in common which seek to increase divergent thinking; brainstorming and creative problem solving (ibid). Innovation and creativity are used synonymously (Kahl, Da Fonseca et al. 2009). Cohendet and Simon (2008) define creativity as the creative process and ideas themselves, and innovation as the marketing of the ideas and the application to a commercial world. Sawyer (2006) stresses teaching students to be able to engage in enquiry and building knowledge collectively, with the importance of being able to improvise, to adapt within global working. Sawyer suggests that lesson structure, curriculum design and preparation should reflect the development of this practice (ibid).

Common goals within creative working are developing creative attitudes, gaining understanding of the creative process and creative people, practising creative thinking, behaviour and action, and teaching specific creative techniques (Davis 2003). Basadur suggests that different kinds of work, reward different kinds of creativity, which bring innovation and productivity (2005). Organisations may identify creative workers and match them to appropriate work; they may seek to develop their creativity and may seek to structure work to encourage intrinsic and extrinsic reward (ibid).

Creativity is the raw material of innovation. Innovation is the transformation of the ideas into commercial results. Creativity, design and innovation are integrated and span across many boundaries (Von Stamm 2008). She argues it is the people, who have a particular frame of mind and find ways to work across these boundaries, who make a company successful. It is not any new processes or systems (Von Stamm 2008). Flexibility and creativity for problem solving and decision making are needed for the changing needs of today’s organisation (Williams and Yang 1999). The market place now covers the world, so organisations need to reflect this (ibid). Experimentation should be encouraged and mistakes and failures should be allowed (Hisrich 1990).

Collaboration and team work is important for many creative ventures to be successful (Abra 1994).

## Research into Creativity

Most recent research into creativity and its relationship to education is explored through the discipline of psychology (Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012). Historically creativity has been taken seriously by many 20<sup>th</sup> Century psychologists such as Freud, Piaget, Rogers and Skinner who have explored what it means to be creative. It is only in latter years that the professional and commercial world has become fixated with the creative area which has been linked to creativity coverage in professional journals (Albert and Runco 1999).

Sternberg, building on this work with Lubart, scopes eight paradigms that can be seen as relevant to creative people and creativity research: mystical; psychodynamic; cognitive; psychometric; pragmatic; social-personality; evolutionary and confluence (Sternberg 2003). Humanistic is added as a ninth important paradigm (Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012). These nine approaches are discrete but have overlap.

The next section of this *Literature Review*, considers these paradigms in turn to seek understanding of how creative people are defined and how the boundaries of creativity have been shaped. These various approaches bring valuable insight to the development of the creative person and how creative people can nurture creativity for creative learning and creative work.

## Mystical and Ancient Approaches to Creativity

Creativity has its early roots in mysticism (Sternberg and Lubart 1999). Creative people were perceived as empty vessels filled with inspiration through divine intervention. Plato claimed a poet could only be inspired by what was dictated by the Muse (ibid). Inspiration is seen to come through rather than from people. Creativity and its links to spirituality and mysticism brought a

detrimental effect on any growth of scientific study in the area (Sternberg and Lubart 1999).

## Psychodynamic

The idea of creativity is “the tension between conscious reality and unconscious drives” (Sternberg and Lubart 1999;6) and arose from Freud’s work about the expression of unconscious desires which used eminent creative figures such as Leonardo da Vinci to support his ideas (1908/1959; 1910/1964). Using the psychodynamic approach, Kris introduced adaptive regression and elaboration theories for the study of creativity (1952) which explored the unmodulated and fantastic thoughts of the unconscious, with the reworking and controlled thinking of the conscious. While Winnicott (1971) using a psychodynamic approach, saw the true self as “the creative self”, with the false self trying to “please, appease and be compliant” (Higdon 2012;182). If a baby is able to find an identity of his (sic) own, away from his mother and away from compliance, then he can be free to be creative. Mother’s spaces can be filled by others, such as teachers, work colleagues, friends, husbands and wives and through nurturing and play creativity can grow (ibid).

## Cognitive

The cognitive paradigm interrogates creative thought. Mental processes are categorised and explored. Wallas (1926;85) identifies four stages: preparation; incubation; illumination; and verification in the creative process. Preparation gathers internal information together with external information from the environment; incubation is a period of unconscious association; illumination allows the unconscious to become conscious and verification chooses and selects (Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012). In the 1940s Guilford founded a four stage model and the importance of convergent and divergent thinking (1957). This work has had a strong influence on contemporary concepts of creativity (Baer and Kaufman 2006) and the characteristics of divergent thinkers, such as fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration

(Guilford 1957). Guilford argued IQ tests do not favour creative thinkers (ibid). However Sternberg et al reviewing the literature around the relationship of IQ to creativity, suggest that it is more intricate and depends on what aspects of each are seeking to be measured (2001). The relationship of creativity with intelligence, when interpreted by gender and ethnicity, are “minimal” (Baer and Kaufman 2006;27) and fewer ethnic and gender differences are identified in measures of creativity, than other cognitive abilities (Kaufman and Sternberg 2006).

Creative thinking has been evaluated for its qualitative components as well as its quantifiable ones. Weisberg (1993;1999) tries to show an association between insights within conventional thoughts, with thoughts already in the memory. Weisberg argues that “creativity is ordinary cognitive processes yielding extraordinary products” (Sternberg and Lubart 1999;8). Later the Genevieve model, represents two phases of processing in creative thought, a generative phase and an explorative phase (Fink, Ward et al. 1992). Boden (2004) more recently explores the link between the human mind, creative simulation and computers and investigates whether computers can appear to be creative, without the presence of conscience or desire.

## Psychometric

Guilford (1950) believed creativity should be researched in everyday situations rather than through eminence. Psychometrics could be used to explore creativity, e.g. the different uses of a brick (ibid). Torrance (1966; 1990) built on these with the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) which were tests encouraging divergent thinking and problem solving skills. The tests of Guilford and Torrance brought creativity into focus, as being an important factor to learning, however they were criticised for being too simplistic and for failing to measure or to capture creativity (Amabile 1983; Sternberg 1986). Some researchers believed creativity should only be studied with eminent research participants, because research with non-eminent samples was unable to identify creative excellence (Sternberg and Lubart 1999).

## Pragmatic

The pragmatic paradigm is viewed as the popular discourse that discusses how to understand creativity and how to develop it. This research lacks critique or validity (Sternberg and Lubart 1999). The pragmatic approach covers the literature directed at popular consumption and books within the 'self-help' commercial markets. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) cite Edward De Bono (1971; 1985; 1992) as a researcher who has had popular success with books that explore creative practice, such as problem solving and lateral and vertical thinking but which neglect theoretical evaluation or testing of its findings. Sternberg and Lubart are disparaging about others (1999;5), whose creative, pragmatic approaches have popular success without robust interrogation: Osborn (1953) brainstorming in a positive environment to encourage creative problem solving; Gordon (1961) who stimulates creative thought through analogy; Adams (1986) who seeks to remove mental negative blocks and Von Oech (1983; 1986) who suggests playing roles such as explorer, judge, artist or warrior to increase creative productivity. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) argue that this kind of literature maybe useful to the public but has little relevance in terms of legitimate theory.

## Social-personality

Maslow comments that boldness, courage, freedom and spontaneity help an individual reach their potential (1968). Rogers (1954) identifies self-actualisation and the importance of support and a value free environment. These researchers focused on personality, motivation and socio-cultural contexts. Maslow and Rogers looked at creativity in both 'little c' (the everyday, small changes that improve the status quo) and 'big C' (the paradigm shift circumstances or the revolutionary products, processes or systems). Fasko (2006) outlines a creativity continuum between two poles, one end is Big C, with extreme forms of originality, and at the other end is little c, and everyday creativity. Big C researchers are more likely to study the creative person or

creative product. Little c researchers are more likely to study the creative activities that non experts can use every day. For example, Simonton looks at greatness and explores Big C (1994), while Baer and Kaufman research samples within little c areas (2006).

## Evolutionary

This creativity approach explores the evolution of ideas. The theoretical approach claims two steps involved in creativity, blind variation and selective retention. Blind variation is the generativity phase where ideas are generated without consideration to their potential success in an applied world and selective retention focuses on novelty and value and decides what to use (Perkins 1995; Simonton 1995; Simonton 1998; Sternberg 2000; Sweller 2009). The two stages lead to creative outcomes. This approach has been criticised as a crude interpretation (critique includes Perkins 1995) and fails to take into account the expertise, knowledge and understanding that is needed to generate the ideas in the first place (Perkins 1995; Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012).

## Confluence

Confluence theories argue that multiple factors must converge for creativity to happen (Amabile 1983; Czikszentmihalyi 1988; Amabile 1996; Czikszentmihalyi 1996; Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Baer and Kaufman 2006). Confluence literature is particularly useful for employability and understanding the creative process. Amabile describes a three factor model that is needed: first task motivation; second domain-relevant skills which include knowledge and skills in a specific domain, and third creativity relevant skills which move across domains and produce creative performance in any or all domains (1983; 1996). Gruber et al (1981; Gruber and Davis 1988; Gruber and Wallace 1999) explore how the ideas, knowledge, aims and affect of the eminent creative, develops over time, then gathers together and combines all the small steps into a revolutionary idea such as Darwin's theory of evolution.

Other theories that define the multiple factors which are needed to generate creativity are the system based theories. These theories focus on interaction between individuals, socio-cultural contexts and domains (Amabile 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Lubart 1999; Baer and Kaufman 2006; Sternberg 2006). Csikszentmihalyi (1988; 1996) and Gardner (1988; 1993) take a complex systems approach that explores the interaction between individual, domain and field.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996; 2002) has been highly influential in the description of the creative person and how a creative person develops. He suggests that a domain has its own rules, its own ways, its own notation, its own discourse and defines its own discrete area. A field determines whether a new idea is accepted into the domain. A creative person needs to gain access to a domain; luck, affluence and access to good mentors and so forth help this. Access to a field is also needed, to interact with peers or a community and to access the relevant people and the latest information in the field or domain. Individuals who are creative have much complexity; they are able to express the whole range of personality traits, feelings and emotions. They have tremendous physical energy, are able to endure long hours with concentration and are enthusiastic. They are playful in their work and curious. They are passionate but also objective. Passion is needed to sustain hard work and objectivity is needed to see the use of that work. Pain and enjoyment are part of the act of creation. They enjoy what they do. They are convergent and divergent in their thinking. In flow, there is no worry of failure. Self-consciousness disappears and time distorts, because mind and body are integrated. In flow we are not aware of being happy, it is after flow that we may become aware that we have been happy. Plato talks about teaching the young to find pleasure. Csikszentmihalyi seeks to conceptualise this state in creative work (ibid).

Sternberg's three facet model of creativity addresses the interaction between the intellectual, stylistic and personality attributes (1988). In short the ability to see ideas in new ways, to see ideas worth pursuing and the ability to sell them



to others. Sternberg and Lubart (1991; 1995; 1996) building on Sternberg's work argue that being creative is to buy low and sell high. The creative pursues an idea that is unpopular or unknown. Then, like an entrepreneur, they identify the growth potential and later sell the idea or product at a profit, before moving on to the next idea. These areas are needed in tandem. One needs to know enough about a field, in order to see what is missing or can be utilised to move it forward, or into another field (Frensch and Sternberg 1989). Knowledge about only one field, can lead to a parochial attitude and fixed thinking within that field or stagnation (ibid). The ability to think globally, as well as locally and see the macro, as well as the micro picture, is very important for the creative. Confluence theories reflect the diversity of creativity and creative people (Sternberg and Lubart 1999).

## Humanist

Arising from therapeutic frameworks, the humanist approach sees making something of one's life and self realisation (Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012). The emergence of creative impulses has implications for pedagogy interventions and creative learning (ibid). Maslow and Rogers drew on psychodynamic theory to understand human capacity and enable creative change. The change is made by the individual themselves, rather than by another or by a god, as in early interpretations of creativity. Taking responsibility for one's life and having a strong sense of self is very important for creative employability.

## The Importance of the Creative Environment

An area not covered by the nine paradigms above, is the importance of environmental factors in nurturing creativity. The environment includes the physical, the social and the cultural, impact on creative learning (Creative Little Scientists Consortium 2012). The role of school and teachers are emphasised as important in the development of creativity (Czikszenmihalyi 1996) and the role of a supportive family in nurturing it (Feldman 1999; Czikszenmihalyi

2002). It is “taken for granted that teachers, mentors, schools and other sources of preparation for later creative work are critical” for creative success (Feldman 1999;175). The talents, skills, understanding, awareness and emotions needed for great advancement in a particular field, can be ephemeral. They can change with time and can be particular to a specific period of time (Feldman 1999). Education systems in many countries pursue the development of pupils’ creativity. It is seen as important within a knowledge economy and for the development of the nation’s economic growth (Davies, Jindal-Snape et al. 2014). Teachers and practitioners are encouraged to develop creativity within the classroom through promoting positive relationships, modelling creative behaviour, striking a balance between freedom and structure, allowing the flexible use of space, understanding and responding to learners’ needs and learning styles and creating opportunities for group collaboration (Davies, Jindal-Snape et al. 2014).

Edwards et al argue that developing creativity is crucial for employability post HE because employers claim creative working is becoming increasingly important (2006). Edwards et al advise that the HE curricular should develop critical thinking, lateral thinking and problem solving. The transition between university and life ‘outside’ can be explored through: outside speakers; case-studies and study visits; giving space for group work; increasing student confidence and having fun through experiential learning (2006;64). Creative people have wide and varied career trajectories and diverse portfolio careers (Davies and Sigthorsson 2012). The commercial sector, the public sector and the independent sector of the creative economy work together as a creative ecology; each needs to be understood in relation to the other (Shorthose and Maycroft 2012). Therefore in teaching creative people about potential, creative work environments, all these areas would need to be covered. Mumford (2003) cites (Czikszentmihalyi 1999) economic resources, contact with other cultures, power dispersion, wealth concentration and social conditions as salient for creativity growth. In developing creativity, these issues need to be made

explicit, so that individuals understand the creative environment and understand what is required of them within it.

The latter approaches to creative research, particularly Confluence and Humanistic paradigms; and the importance of the creative environment are significant in gaining contemporary understanding of the development of the creative person. These approaches would be most useful to undergraduates and graduates who seek to continuously develop for creative work. This section of the literature has reviewed our understanding of the concept of creative people and of creativity from its mystical beginnings to the current day. It has conceptualised the creative person and made links between the development of creativity and creative employability for creative work.

The final section of the literature review is the *findings informed* review of literature that arose out of research material garnered through listening to the graduate and undergraduate voice. This is a contrasting discourse to the first part of this literature review which explored the themes around employability, higher education and the creative industries through government and industry led arguments.

## **6 Findings Informed Literature**

The final section of the *Literature Review* arose out of the three research questions: How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?

It explores the themes arising from the analysis of the field data from the 68 graduates (represented from all the creative industries) and the 10 first and the 10 final year students of architecture and dance undergraduate degrees. Consequently the rest of the chapter focuses on the literature related to the significant themes rooted in the research data of graduate and undergraduate voices, and provides a contrasting discourse to the initial literature review.

This research employed both a positivist and a grounded approach. The grounded approach looked for actions and themes rooted in the undergraduate and graduate data which were maybe being overlooked or under represented in recent British government policy and documentation. The grounded approach searches for alternative perspectives which may generate different approaches for creative work and creative undergraduate degrees. The themes which the research participants identified as important were creative identity and belonging; creative learning through communities of practice; and the types of capital which undergraduates and graduates perceive as increasing the opportunities for creative work. Some of the areas that the research participants identify, link to the previous section and discussions of creative people, particularly in developing creative collaboration (Sawyer 2012) and nurturing a creative environment, with mentors and creative networks (Czikszenmihalyi 1996; 2002).

These key themes serve as the cues for the last part of this *Literature Review*. The Key Research Findings areas are *set out in italicised text under each subheading* before a discussion in plain text of the literature pertaining to those particular findings is provided.

## Exploring Identity, Belonging and Communities of Practice

*Graduate and undergraduate responses desired meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work in. They believe creative identity develops from being part of a group that learn together, create together and share a craft, and a profession. (page 271 and page 289)*

These groups can be referred to as 'communities of practice'. Communities of practice were developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991; 1998) as the basis of a social theory of learning.

New communities of practice are formed when undergraduates come to university and become part of a student cohort on a specific undergraduate degree programme. However, undergraduates and graduates want to access other communities within and beyond university. Undergraduates and graduates say they are keen to be a part of the communities of practice in the industry they aspire to work within. They want to interact with practitioners within their disciplines, learn from them, collaborate and share their practice. Undergraduates want to develop their understanding of creative work and have opportunities to develop their own professional creative identity by participating in communities within their discipline, such as those of professional practitioners, professional companies, creative employers and significant others, working in creative areas and spaces. The undergraduates and graduates in the research data want to access these communities of practice because they believe they learn from them, they learn about the industry and they gain deeper understanding about how the industry works. Through interaction with creative communities they learn from each other, build their own

creative identities, find confidence, gain contacts and are able to access potential work opportunities. There are some key questions around undergraduates' and graduates' participation in communities of practice that arose from the data analysis: 1. What benefits do communities of practice offer to undergraduates and graduates? 2. How do undergraduates and graduates access communities of practice? 3. When do communities of practice operate as communities of privilege?

The term 'communities of practice' has become commonplace in creative discourse and anecdotally many practitioners, lecturers and students in HE use the term when talking about their practice, practitioners and students in undergraduate programmes. Wenger's (1998) ideas on social learning theory developed from previous work with Lave, (1991) where the concept of communities of practice was launched. Their work has been hugely influential in the HE context. Academics value the notion of communities of practice, in many disciplines, for interactive learning, collaboration and research. Wenger (2009) argues that learning is a social phenomenon and is situated in our lived experience of participation in the world.

...a process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these

communities...Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do.

(Wenger 1998;4)

Wenger's process, outlined above, echoes the research data where graduates describe their interaction in creative communities within the curricular, ex-curricular and co-curricular. In these interactions, they are able to construct creative identities and gain confidence in their own artistic worth and in their potential within the industry they aspire to work in.

This next section of this chapter explores Wenger's (2009) argument for social learning. Wenger believes that compulsory and post compulsory educational institutions have formalised learning into highly structured processes which are linear, with a beginning and an end, and executed by the individual. He argues that learning in these educational institutions is lonely, because students are taught in isolated rooms to alleviate distractions from the outside world, their learning is packaged and compartmentalised into units and modules and their learning is deliberately separated from their other activities. Consequently, he believes students find this kind of learning boring, irrelevant and arduous because it is so removed from the rest of their lives. He believes a different perspective should be adopted, one which places learning "in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world" (Wenger 2009;209). He argues that learning is continuous, integral to our experience and as much part of our lives as eating and sleeping. He asserts that learning is life sustaining and inevitable because learning is a social phenomenon and part of human interaction.

Wenger argues the following premise: We are social beings; knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises such as singing in tune, discovering scientific facts, fixing machines and writing poetry; knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises; meaning is our ability to experience the world; our engagement with it as meaningful is ultimately what learning is to produce (Wenger 2009;211).

His theory of social learning; is learning as social participation. Individuals participate in certain activities with certain people, these make up practices of social communities. From these communities of practice, individuals and groups construct identities in relation to these communities. Informal and formal cliques and clubs are therefore made in the playground, at college, at work, through interests, hobbies and participation. These communities of practice give both action and a sense of belonging to those that participate in them. Learning is about experiencing through participation and learning with and through others. Learning through experiencing and participating in communities of practice, gives the individual a sense of meaning, of belonging and an identity.

**Figure 5** Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory (Wenger 2009;211)



The processes of learning and knowing through social participation, a social theory of learning, are integrated into the following components which are mutually defining and deeply interconnected (see Figure 5 above).



Meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful

Practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action

Community: a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence

Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities

(Wenger 2009;211)

He sees 'communities of practice' as one entry point into a broader conceptual framework, where all the components are interlinked and each of the four peripheral components can be placed at the centre of the model as a focus because they are all enmeshed within a familiar experience.

Wenger claims we all belong to communities of practice. These can be communities in virtual space as well as in real space and are not necessarily explicitly identified, however they are quite familiar to us, because they are an integral part of our interaction. These familiar communities are in all parts of our lives and we belong to several communities at one time. They are not static but ever changing within and throughout our lives.

Students have these communities of practice within their educational institutions in the classroom and within their lives outside the classroom; within formal groups and within informal cliques. Wenger argues that despite a formal curriculum or programme, “most personally transformative turns out to be the learning that involves membership in these communities” (Wenger 2009;212). He argues that these communities of practice do not issue membership cards. However, we can probably identify the communities of practice where we are core members, the communities of practice where we have peripheral membership and the new communities of practice which we would like to join.

Wenger’s communities of practice could be criticised for being open to the abuses of power and privilege. If groups have no membership cards and can be both formal and informal communities, they often have no formal rules and regulations. They develop their own set of rules and identities based on the interactions of the community. Some individuals in the community may have more power than others. The actions of the powerful can manifest in communities of practice being open to everybody or closed to some. The term ‘clique’ suggests that some individuals are excluded from membership or an individual needs a particular identity to join. Power relations within the group also affect the overall actions of the group.

Wenger argues that communities of practice are a familiar concept to us and therefore a useful perspective to look at our learning with fresh insight. Using this concept we can explore systematically where and with whom we are choosing to learn (communities), what we are doing (practice), how we see ourselves and want to see ourselves (identity) and what we are experiencing (meaning).

He believes that by using this perspective we can shed new light on how we participate in learning as an individual, as a community and as an organisation. Individuals to learn need to participate in learning and participate in

communities. Communities to learn need to refine their practice and ensure new generations of members. Organisations to learn need to cultivate and sustain their interconnected communities of practice to share knowledge, collaborate and therefore be effective and valuable.

Taking Wenger's (2009) perspective of learning and applying it to work and in particular creative work, I argue that this theory of learning is helpful in seeing how undergraduates and graduates want a creative community to give meaning and validation to their creative work, to share experiences, to learn from each other, to give a sense of belonging and for the development of their own creative identity. An undergraduate curriculum that moves away from individual learning, to peer learning, peer teaching and collaboration helps nurture an ethos of interactive and experiential learning. The graduates in outlining the success factors (see page 291) point to many areas where communities of practice are being cultivated within their undergraduate experience such as working to a group brief, working with practitioners, project work with employers, peer assessing in groups, work placements etc. It is telling that the graduates focus on the interaction with the industry and within the discipline, rather than the acquisition of graduate skills.

This perspective of learning can also be helpful in understanding creative industries and the wider creative economy. Diversity is seen as prominent in the flourishing of creativity. Creativity does not organically grow in a monoculture. For creativity and innovation to thrive, variety, pluralist perspectives and enrichment is needed. To cultivate growth, a creative economy needs diversity, creativity and innovation (Florida 2003; Hutton et al 2007; The Warwick Commission 2015). Taking Wenger's (2009) perspective of learning and applying it to creative learning and creative communities, it can be argued that, to ensure the creative industries are able to develop and grow, the individual, the group and the wider community need to be open and collaborative. Individuals to *work* need to participate in learning and participate

in communities. Communities to *work* need to refine their practice and ensure new generations of members. Organisations to *work* need to cultivate and sustain their interconnected communities of practice, to share knowledge, collaborate and therefore be effective and valuable.

These communities of practice can be both real and virtual. In the advancement of global communication, individuals contribute to many online communities of practice in many areas and across many disciplines. McLure Wasco and Faraj (2000) find that organisations tend to treat knowledge as a private good, owned by the organisation or the organisation's members. They propose knowledge promoted for the community; knowledge which is available for all members, "a public good, owned and maintained by a community", has far more rewards (McLure Wasko and Faraj 2000;155). From their research data about participation in electronic communities of practice, McLure Wasko and Faraj find that people participate out of shared interest, reciprocity and pro-social behaviour. Communities for public good can be motivated by moral obligation and community interest, rather than self-interest. Later in this chapter, I explore the importance of networks and the exchange of social capital to access job opportunities and how networks, like communities of practice, are perceived as having both public and private goods.

Creative communities of practice need to refine their practice and ensure new generations of members can join them. In order to develop flourishing creative industries, communities need to open their doors, work across disciplines, cultivate each other, share knowledge and collaborate. Communities of practice need to explicitly address any abuses of power and privilege to ensure they remain inclusive, diverse and accessible. In the interests of the public good and to cultivate creativity and innovation, creative communities of practice need to be experimental, dynamic and fluid. Undergraduates and graduates should be supported to be able to access creative communities of practice (real and virtual), where they can participate and learn experientially. Through

participation and interaction, communities can cultivate members to help them to find their own identities, meaning and worth. They can allow the undergraduates to become involved, to successfully live their discipline at a physical, emotional and philosophical level. In the research findings, the importance of 'living' the discipline was expressed by the first and final year undergraduates as being very important.

## Exploring Privilege

*Third year architecture undergraduates in my research had a perception that there were "stars", singled out early on in their course, who had been accorded privileged benefits. These students were part of an "in crowd", working closely with lecturers and professional architects, who were more likely to get firsts and to gain creative work. Most of the graduates and undergraduates expressed the importance of contacts to access work opportunities. (page 287 and 289)*

The theme of privilege is significant within the undergraduate and graduate research data and this theme informs the examination of privilege within this literature review.

How do individuals join or participate in creative groups, communities or organisations? Do these communities require certain capital from individuals who wish to gain membership? Do they contain privileged rewards for those that interact within them?

As a concept privilege is defined in relational terms and in reference to social groups, and involves unearned benefits afforded to powerful social groups within systems of oppression.

(Case, Luzzini et al. 2012;3)

This conceptualisation challenges the dominant held belief of the existence of meritocracy and focuses on macro level systems of privilege, within oppressive structures, which go against the conceptualisation of privilege as only an elite few in society (Case, Luzzini et al. 2012). Case, Luzzini et al (ibid) provide a range of definitions for privilege. They cite Pratto and Stewart (2012;28) who argue that individuals in marginalised groups view group membership as important and are aware that they do not have the identity of those in privileged groups. However, those in the privileged groups are not aware of their group's identity and power, because they have the "half-blindness of privilege".

This invisibility often prevents dominant group members from understanding the salience of group membership for individuals with marginalized identities.

(Case, Luzzini et al. 2012;5)

"Privilege functions within a matrix of oppression" (ibid) so therefore extends further than the usual focus of White privilege, to include many other socio and economic factors, such as fiscal capital, sex, sexuality, gender identity, religion and social class. They cite Crenshaw (1989) and Cole (2009) who show that group identity and social locations having significant connections to privilege and Dill and Zambrana (2009) who argue complexity within privilege. Intricate understanding of privilege needs scholars to analyse "multiple identities and intersections" rather than one group membership (Case, Luzzini et al. 2012;6). These definitions of privilege reveal that privilege is a complex matrix of many interwoven socio/economic factors which may be challenging to unravel to find their individual threads.

Privilege is conceptualised succinctly by Stoudt, Fox et al “...those living on the ‘high end’ of the unequal distribution of materials” (2012;179). In terms of employment and work, those employed living on the ‘high end’ are privileged members of groups who have access to more resources, rewards, knowledge and materials than those in marginalised groups. These privileged groups most benefit from the macro systems that distribute power and resources. In a global economic crisis, it is the poor and working class people who are more likely to “lose jobs, homes, family stability and health care” (Stoudt 2012;179).

Smith (2010) brings privilege into the area of employability and work. She takes Kanter’s (1995) conceptualisation of employability, as the need to focus on long term employment with multiple firms, rather than seeking long term security with just one. Smith (2010;280) argues that employability appears a benign concept because in times of turbulence and economic uncertainty most would agree it is beneficial “to sharpen one’s skills, know where and how to look for jobs, and enhance one’s long-run marketability”. However Smith (2010;280) believes it may not be so benign and cites Kossek (2000) who asserts that employability is really only “viable” for those who possess “the requisite background, training, temporal freedom, and cultural capital to pursue it”. Long term marketability and employability is increased by having the financial capital and the time, along with the ‘right’ background, cultural capital and social capital to access opportunities, training and networks to gain access to privileged group membership and its subsequent rewards. In short, employability can be acquired, but only by the privileged. Workers in low paid and low skill jobs lack the time, resources and connections to engage in employability activities that will enhance their opportunities and rewards (Smith 2010).

Smith (2010) argues that the entrepreneurial and self-starting rhetoric about employability has influenced everyone across social groups and believes that most, including low income and working class people, are trying to increase their employability in class specific ways and settings. “Actively cultivating

human, cultural and social capital arguably has become essential for employment and mobility” as insecure work environments are now within every sector (Smith 2010;280).

Smith (2010) interrogates America’s preoccupation with entrepreneurial skills, citing Cooper (2008;1232) who claims the free agent, entrepreneurial risk model is inaccurate because “the ideal risk-society subject is highly educated, middle and upper class” with access to class constricted resources and opportunities. American employers benefit exponentially from the entrepreneurial model because it is so economical; having a cheap and flexible work force does not require investment through training, healthcare, pensions and job security. Packaging up work into contracts, passes the cost of investment to the contractor who has to manage their own career, development, training, pension and healthcare. Employers seek those individuals that are free agents, having the ‘right’ capital and identity. Within this insecure work place it is common for job seekers to work on their identities, to reinvent themselves and use identity as a resource and present themselves as being the ‘right’ person for the work. Job seekers “chart the course of self” (Giddens 1991;201) and work on reconstruction of self and interactions with others to enhance employability. Employability means “new skills and how to acquire them”, understanding how to access pathways to “good jobs, finding jobs and holding onto them” and relies on “unique” types of interactional and identity work (Smith 2010;284). Identity work builds and develops cultural capital in order to fit with what employers want, in terms of identity, behaviour, language and dress. Different occupations and professions require specific interactions (ibid).

Smith argues that being able to participate in organisations where one can work on one’s identity, is a “collective and privileged activity” that strengths an individual’s social capital (Smith 2010;285). Maintaining employability is not new. Historically, teaching and law have required professionals to develop



continuously throughout their careers and maintain agency in their professional fields. Professional bodies have required ongoing training and development from their membership. However current employability is increasingly driven by market forces and uncertainty, rather than by professional bodies or associations. People now spend more time on preparing for work, whether they are employed, unemployed or underemployed (ibid).

Smith's (2010) work is pertinent and although it focuses on the US and generic work, it also has much resonance for the UK. My research with graduates and undergraduates evidences that gaining actual employment in creative work is reliant on industry contacts because they act as gatekeepers to work.

Entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming part of the discourse of university and government definitions of employability, particularly within creative disciplines. In the UK, there has been growing emphasis on bringing an entrepreneurial culture to all areas of universities through the influential ideas of Gibb (1993; 2005) in *Towards the Entrepreneurial University* and establishing The National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education (2014) from the former National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship that began in 2004.

Entrepreneurial interventions in HE have become mainstream with an *Entrepreneurial University of the Year Award* and many development programmes for university leaders, academic staff and students being run in partnership with The National Centre for Entrepreneurship in Education (2014). At a micro level, the students and graduates within this research did not show evidence of engagement with entrepreneurship. They certainly did not see themselves as entrepreneurs. Many said they would like their own companies as a way to gain control of their creative work and gain power over the restrictive employee/employer relationship or model. They acknowledged that contacts were needed for any creative work whether they tried to work for an employer or for themselves. What ever the contractual way they chose to work,

they would still need many industry contacts to 'win' paid work, whether they were looking to an employer for work, or to a client to pay for work. They acknowledged that clients and employers had many guises, from the private, public sector and independent sectors.

*Having talent and drive is seen by some first year undergraduates as the prerequisite to success and fame. This belief is not shared by third year undergraduates or recent graduates. The latter's experiences of their degree or of creative work seems to dispel this perception.*

British and American media has embraced reality television which romanticises celebrity and fame. Reality television programmes such as *Pop Idol*, *The Voice*, *Britain's got Talent* and *The X Factor* showcase talent and are maybe sending out messages to viewers that talent 'wins out' and that anyone can be rich if they are talented, creative and determined. Other television programmes in the UK such as *The Apprentice* and *Dragon's Den* have focused attention on the financial rewards for those from marginal groups who have entrepreneurial spirit. These television programmes of course provide the connections needed to access these opportunities and rewards. However the significance of these powerful connections remains hidden from the viewer, giving the appearance that fame and fortune can be found through a meritocracy of talent.

Smith (2010) concludes that successful development of entrepreneurship, training, employability and identity work is a privileged activity. Individuals need money, time, cultural capital and access to interaction with significant others. My research data reveals that current graduates and undergraduates in British universities perceive that personal industry contacts and access to economic funding increases the opportunities to break into the creative industries. This is because contacts are needed to enter and sustain creative work. In addition to contacts, money is needed to sustain a creative working life. Money is needed to subsidise long periods of low paid work experience, to manage a creative,

portfolio working life where payment is unpredictable and to keep up to date with the continuous professional development needed to compete in the ever transforming, creative economy. Graduates are aware that creative employers are also looking for a certain identity from their graduates. Graduates believe it is worth pursuing the development of how others see them in order to increase their potential for work. They need to look, sound and act in 'the right way'. The graduates and undergraduates in pursuing success within this creative economy, focus on cultural, social and economic capital.

Recent British governments pursue success within the global economy through specific skill needs for industry. They conceptualise employability through human capital theory and the need to constantly upskill the country's workforce for economic growth. The findings of Ball et al (2010) with art and design graduates concur with this research; art and design career progression is hindered by the lack of money, the lack of contacts and the lack of relevant work experience in the industry rather than by the lack of relevant skills. The process of graduates gaining employment in the creative industries is complex and many socio and economic variables come into play. Graduates' need for cultural, social and financial capital is not a key part of British government employability rhetoric and is not explicit in its documentation (Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). The importance of specific cultural, social and economic capital to gain and sustain graduate creative work is absent from government policy and practice regarding graduate employability, higher education and undergraduate degrees.

## Constructing Identity and On-line Interaction

*Undergraduates and graduates use social media sites to blog, share information, exchange news, meet people, collaborate and share opinions.*

There is much debate about social networking. There is eulogising on blogs about how easy it is to meet and share with likeminded people, how easy it is to share interests, arts and media and how social media has levelled the 'playing field' bringing networks and collaboration. There are social sites like *Facebook* for sharing life and there are professional sites such as *LinkedIn* for sharing career profiles and work contacts. There is much media publicity about how sharing information can be ethically problematic, how digital identities can be viewed, perceived and critiqued in the public arena and how privacy and contact information can be abused, all leaving individuals vulnerable.

Employers are vetting potential employees. Should the academy support students to use public profiles wisely and develop their on line profiles for potential employers in mind? Bryant argues that we may have to teach students explicitly about managing their internet privacy, taking professional headshots and promoting themselves as a brand (2013). He argues that the online vetting of employees has legal and ethical implications. The practice of the employers in this area is not challenged by the academy; it has become normalised by the academy. The academy accepts employer vetting as a kind of tolerated 'big brother', a reality in modern careers (ibid). Briefings by teachers/lecturers and other support agencies in schools, FE and HE education are now being given to students to make them aware from a young age of the pros and cons of digital networking. Students are being made aware of the significance of their own digital identities on private and public life and on their future lives; their biographical trajectories. Data on the internet is not easily removed, which allows individual back stories to be easily traceable by others.

## Exploring the Importance of Social Interaction and Personal Contacts: Social Capital Theory

*In my research the graduates and undergraduates dismiss skill acquisition; instead they favour participation within creative communities of practice to gain*

*industry contacts, to understand how the industry works and to gain insight into how paid work is accessed. (page 243 and 289 )*

The pursuit of cultural and social capital has a significant relationship with paid creative work. Ratten and Susenso (2006) argue there is a lack of understanding about how different types of knowledge are developed through the interactions between actors. They use social capital theory to explain the different types of knowledge that develop through organisations and their alliances and partnerships. They claim that too much emphasis is placed on human capital theory and the importance of human beings as the repositories of knowledge.

Human capital theory had a renaissance in the 1950s and 1960s (see page 58). Human capital theory focuses on the investment in skills and education that people make, and looks at the returns on this investment. Humans work hard to acquire expertise and education in an attempt to meet their career aspirations. These types of personal resources are possessed by individual actors and they can be acquired, transferred, used, and even disposed without being disruptive to the social structure. Under this theory, graduates can acquire the right skills in their undergraduate degrees and can expect a return on investment for the financial cost of their education by successfully meeting their career aspirations. According to this theory, employees, or the organisation's human capital, are the most important resource (Ratten and Suseno 2006;61).

Ratten and Suseno (2006) maintain this important resource can be defined differently to include the organisation's networks, alliances and partnerships. "Extensive knowledge" can be through the interactions of actors in the network who are "trusting and trustworthy" Ratten and Suseno (2006;67). They reason that relationship ties within networks that have developed trust can provide social capital to the actors involved. These ties can provide value and benefits to the members embedded in the networks (2006;66). Rather than stressing

the importance of human capital and the importance of acquiring skills, this argument stresses the importance of social capital and the acquiring of resources or benefits, through social interaction.

Relationships through family ties, or gained socially with personal friends are more likely to build trust. Trusting professional relationships can be gained by working very intensely together or are developed over a long period of time where the parties get to know one another through sustained networks. When trust exists in the relationship, those involved are more willing to cooperate and share resources (Tsai and Ghoshal 1998).

Ratten and Susenso (2006) argue that 'social capital' was used by social theorists as early as the 1900s, but the emergence of discussion among writers and academics only occurred in the middle of the century, for example Jacobs (1961) in discussing the importance of relationships and cooperation in the survival and functioning of communities. Since then, the concept of social capital has received an overwhelming abundance of academic interest and correspondingly, a multitude of definitions.

Coleman (1988) views social capital as a system of relationships among and between individuals in a social network. Coleman argues that human capital theory is narrowly focused by only looking at individual labourers and the investments in people alone. He argues social capital, by contrast, is cultivated in networks, in the actor's relationship structure which facilitates actions to the actor. Networks have two elements in common, they all consist of "some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain action of actors whether personal or corporate actors in the structure" (Coleman 1988;98).

From the 1990s onwards, social capital definitions began to include an organisational dimension in their conceptualisation. Leana and Van Buren (1999;540) define organisational social capital as "a resource reflecting the

character of social relations within the organisation, realised through members' levels of collective goal orientation and shared trust". Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as valuable resources that a firm obtains from its network of relationships, while Hitt and Duane (2002;5) claim it is "the relationships between individuals and organisations that facilitate action and create value". Dess and Shaw (2001) and Adler and Kwon (2002) develop further distinctions and see social capital as a public good (organisational resource), rather than a private, individual one.

Sandefur and Laumann (1998;484) argue seeing social capital as a public good takes a "sociocentric approach". This standpoint views the social structure of interpersonal contacts as important. The sociocentric perspective of social capital, emphasises the structures of the collective actors, either groups, organisations, communities, and nations, rather than individual concerns (Sandefur and Laumann 1998). Putnam's (1993) research on the flourishing regions in Northern Italy argues that social capital is the feature of social organisation like trust and networks, that benefits the local community and society as a whole.

Lin asserts that social capital is an investment in social relations with the assumption of "expected returns" (1999;30) and that these returns may refer to a collective body or to key individuals. Sandefur and Laumann (1998;484) refer to this latter kind of capital, as the egocentric approach of social networks, where "an individual's social capital is characterised by her direct relationships with others" and with those she is "directly tied". Those with direct ties to powerful people can open up and access privileged areas which remain closed to those who do not have the ties. Social capital can therefore be used by individuals and firms in a competitive environment to actively gain success over their competitors (Ratten and Suseno 2006).

Lin (1999;28-29) provides a thoughtful overview of social capital from its origins of capital in Marx, to the 1960s human capital theory of Johnson, Schulz and Becker, to the cultural capital work of Bourdieu and finally to more recent debate. Human Capital Theorists (Johnson 1960; Schultz 1961; Becker 1964) view capital as investment (e.g. in education) with expected returns (earnings). Individual workers invest in technical skills and knowledge so that they can negotiate with those in control of the production process (firms and their agents) for payment of their labour-skill. This fits with recent British government policy, viewing the undergraduate degree as an individual investment with a financial or higher salary reward (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011).

Cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1983; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) represents investments on the part of the dominant class in reproducing a set of symbols and meanings which are misrecognised and internalised by the dominated class as their own through pedagogic actions such as education. Lin argues that Bourdieu states acquisition of cultural capital from schooling and education permits or licenses the labourers to enter the labour market, earn payments and sustain expenditure for their own lives (Lin 1999;30). Lin criticises Bourdieu as he does not address the process of social mobility and the possibility of agency (ibid).

Lin argues that his notion of social capital as an investment in social relations with expected returns (1999;30) has consensus from scholars (Lin 1982; Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Flap 1991; Burt 1992; Putnam 1993; Erickson 1995). "Individuals engage in interaction and networking in order to produce profits" (Lin 1999;31).

Lin outlines explanations of four elements as to why embedding resources in social networks enhances the outcomes of actions. They are summarised as follows (Lin 1999;31):



1. Networks facilitate the flow of information. Knowledge is not explicit and can be hidden in social ties, strategic locations and hierarchical positions. They can “provide the individual with useful information about opportunities and choices otherwise not available” (Lin 1999;31). The ties can alert an organisation to the availability and interest of an otherwise unrecognised individual. This information would reduce recruitment costs to gain this ‘better’ resource (be it skill, technical or cultural knowledge) for the organisation and for the individual to find a ‘better’ organisation which rewards their capital.

2. These social ties may exert influence on recruiters or supervisors in the organisations who play a role in decisions of hiring or promotion involving the actor. Some social ties, because of their strategic locations and authority, carry more valued resources and exercise greater power. Therefore ‘putting in a word’ carries a certain weight in the decision-making process regarding an individual.

3. Social ties and their acknowledged relationships to the individual may be conceived by the organisation as certifications of the individual’s social credentials. The resources behind the individual, their social networks and relations, reassures the organisation that the individual can provide ‘added’ resources beyond the individual’s personal capital, some of which will be useful to the organisation.

4. Social relations are expected to reinforce identity and recognition. Being recognised for one’s worthiness as a member of a social group sharing similar interests and resources not only provides emotional support but also public acknowledgement of one’s claim to certain resources. These “reinforcements are essential for the maintenance of mental health and the entitlement of resources” (Lin 1999;31).

The four elements of Information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement “are all reasons why social capital works or controls” (Lin 1999;31). The explanations (1 to 4 above), reinforce some of the themes within

my research findings. The recent, creative graduates within the research data identify the need for influence, information, identity, membership and recognition gained from membership of creative networks as salient for finding, entering and sustaining work in creative industries.

Theories of Capital (Lin 1999;30) is a helpful table (See Figure 6 on page 139) as it gives an overview of the types of capital and theories, mapping them together.

**Figure 6** Theories of Capital (Lin 1999;30)

|                   | The Classical Theory  | The Neo-Capital Theories                     |  |  |  |
|-------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
|                   |   | Human Capital                                | Cultural Capital                                       | Social capital   |  |
| Theorist          | Marx  | Schultz, Becker                              | Bourdieu   | Lin, Burt, Marsden, Flap, Coleman                          | Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam                          |
| Explanation       | Social relations: Exploitation by the capitalists (bourgeoisie) of the proletariat  | Accumulation of surplus value by labourer    | Reproduction of dominant symbols and meanings (values) | Access to and use of resources embedded in social networks | Solidarity and reproduction of group               |
| Capital           | <p>A. Part of surplus value between the use value (in consumption market) and the exchange value (in production-labour market) of the commodity</p> <p>B. Investment in the production and circulation of commodities</p> | Investment in technical skills and knowledge | Internalisation or misrecognition of dominant values   | Investment in social networks                              | Investment in mutual recognition of acknowledgment |
| Level of Analysis | Structural (classes)  | Individual                                   | Individual/class                                       | Individual   | Group /individual                                  |

Putnam's work (1993) also reinforces my research findings. Putnam (1993) looks at the collective assets, or social capital for the public good. Dense or closed networks can maintain collective capital and the reproduction of the group can be achieved. Norms and trust, as well as other properties, such as sanctions and authority of a group are essential in the production and maintenance of the collective asset.

This explains the creative networks which are closed or difficult to access by new members. A creative community develops through sustaining trust and authority by keeping the network relatively closed. There is safety within the network, members work with or recommend those whom they trust or know already to have talent and are seen as reliable. The network seeks to reproduce its membership through referral to gain assurance of a particular identity and membership.

Bourdieu's (1983) work on cultural capital also fits with the themes of membership and privilege which the recent graduates and undergraduates in my research refer to. The architecture undergraduates mention "posh" students who use their family networks to find work experience. They do not have to apply for jobs, as jobs are created for them. The undergraduates claim these "posh" students are able to work for "free" because they are financially supported by their families. Bourdieu (1983;248 ) argues that social capital is a process by which individuals in the dominating class, by mutual recognition and acknowledgement, reinforce and reproduce a privileged group which holds various capital (economic, cultural and symbolic).

The architecture undergraduates talk of an "in crowd" who meet for "posh dinners" and "hang around" with others from the same social class. Bourdieu (1983) argues individuals interact and reinforce mutual recognition and

acknowledgement as members of a network or group. This gives members a badge or identity.

Coleman (1988) too stresses the advantage of closed networks, but without the class perspective, because it is this closure that maintains the trust, norms, authority and sanctions. This kind of network relates to the dance networks that dance undergraduates and graduates refer to in creative work. Dance companies use the same dancers in many of their performances and these dancers are passed between them. The dancers move from company to company within a closed membership. These dancers rarely audition because they are known in the network and are 'trusted'. Dancers who are not within the closed network try to access dance work through auditions, in an attempt to 'break into' these closed networks. Auditioning is fiercely competitive. Dance undergraduates do not mention class, but do see the dancers in the closed networks as privileged because they are protected and cosseted. The architecture undergraduates view privilege as related to class because it provides social, cultural and economic capital.

Lin (1999;32) defines social capital as class (privilege) goods. Lin (1999;33) criticises both Coleman (1990) and Bourdieu (1983) for analysing social capital at different levels, causing confusion, e.g. the volume of capital possessed by its members or the size of the group. Lin sets out his concerns in the table on page 142.

**Figure 7** Controversies in Social Capital

| Issue   | Contention   | Problem   |
|---|--|---|
| Collective or individual asset<br>(Coleman, Putnam)     | Social capital as collective asset                               | Confounding with norms, trust                   |
| Closure or open networks<br>(Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam) | Group should be closed or dense                                  | Vision of class society and absence of mobility |
| Functional<br>(Coleman)                                 | Social capital is indicated by its effect on a particular action | Tautology (cause is determined by effect)       |
| Measurement<br>(Coleman)                                | Not quantifiable   | Heuristic, not falsifiable                      |

Lin (1999) is critical of Coleman’s definition of social capital as any “social-structure resource” that generates returns for the individual in a specific action (Coleman 1988;98). Coleman (1988;98) argues that social capital is defined by

its function; it is not a single entity but a variety of different entities having two characteristics. One that they all consist of some aspect of a social structure and two, they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within that structure. Lin (1999;34) believes this is a tautology, social capital is identified when and if it works, the potential cause of social capital can only be captured by its effect or return for a specific individual in a specific action. Lin (abid) argues that the cause factor is therefore defined by the effect factor. Social capital becomes indistinguishable from its outcome.

Lin (1999) disagrees with Bourdieu's (1983) argument for networks which replicate themselves and preserve only the dominant class. Lin argues social mobility is absent from Bourdieu's discourse and instead stresses the importance of bridges (Lin 1999). Granovetter (1973) and Burt (1995) emphasised bridges in networks for facilitating information and where influence flows. Lin (1999) argues that fixed closure of networks misses the importance of bridges, holes and weaker ties. Preserving and maintaining networks (expressive actions), denser networks or closed networks may have advantage. Closed networks are linked to certain outcomes of interest. Better to have a closed network, so that resources can be preserved and reproduced (Bourdieu 1983) or so that mothers can try to ensure safety and the protection of their children, within the community (Coleman 1990). However for searching, accessing or obtaining resources not already possessed, (i.e. instrumental actions) such as looking for a job or better job, bridges in the network should be more useful (Marsden and Lin 1982; Flap 1991; Burt 1992; Lin 1999).

The notion of holes, bridges and mobility fits with the themes of my research and how undergraduates and graduates believe they can 'break into' certain networks. An access to networks and communities of practice (gained for example through work experience or work placements) and by knowing influential gatekeepers (industry contacts gained for example through personal, family and social relationships or gained through a degree programme) may

help graduates enter privileged networks and gain membership through 'breaking in' through bridges, ties and holes. Graduates can access the inner circle by moving through the holes, bridges and ties of temporary membership. They are then able to break into the closed and seeming impenetrable circles of privilege, in order to gain knowledge and rewards.

Portes (2000) explores how new knowledge, resources and social mobility may be gained. He agrees with Burt (1992) that it is the "relative absence of ties, labelled structural holes, that facilitates individual mobility" (Portes 2000;6). Portes believes dense networks only hold redundant information, while weaker ones hold new knowledge (ibid).

Lin (1999) explored how social resources or social capital enhance an individual's attained statuses such as occupational status, authority, and placement in certain industries. "Through these attained positions, social capital enhances economic earnings too" (Lin 1999;42). Portes (1998) offers a different slant and stresses the functions of social capital in various contexts. Portes also sees too a direct link to gaining rewards through significant others, particularly relatives, "it is others" who are the source of advantage (1998;9).

Portes argues that a review of the literature makes it possible to distinguish three basic functions of social capital, applicable in a variety of contexts: as a source of social control; as a source of family support; as a source of benefits through extra familial networks. He says we see studies that focus on rule enforcement in the first category, tight networks that are useful for parents, teachers and police to maintain discipline (1998;10). In the second category we see studies looking at parental and kin support where the children are the key beneficiaries of the social capital (1998;11) and in the third area we see social capital in the field of stratification, social capital used to explain access to employment, mobility in careers and entrepreneurial success (Portes 1998;12).



Portes (1998) brings into his argument a historical context. Adam Smith (1979 [1776]) complained that meetings of merchants in 1776, inevitably excluded the public, being all those not included in the networks and knowledge linking the colluding groups. Portes (1998;15) argues that by substituting “merchants” for white building contractors, immigrant entrepreneurs etc, that we can see the contemporary relevance of Smith’s concerns. Ethnic niches are created by members colonising a particular sector of employment for a privileged few and restricting access by outsiders. For example Portes (1998;13) cites Sassen’s (1995) power of network chains, where entry level openings are filled by contacting kin and friends in remote foreign locations, rather than through local opportunity. This seems very similar to anecdotal evidence in entry level work in creative jobs. Friends and kin are used in all locations to gain access to entry level creative jobs or work experience through kith and kin. Members of the creative networks teach the apprentice “the necessary skills and supervise their performance” (Portes 1998;13) giving them both the niche experience and privileged network ties, needed to gain permanent entry into the membership.

Using family, friends and associates is echoed by others, Gravovetter (1995) highlights that teenagers find jobs through the mediation of their parents and close networks in the community. Redmond (2010) notes that parents are becoming more involved in the working lives of their offspring, using their own networks and social capital to find and negotiate career opportunities for their children. Redmond refers to modern, middle class parents as “helicopter parents” who hover over their children and use their social influence and capital power to give them the advantage over their peers (MacLeod 2008;18). Parents are using their networks to find work experience for their offspring (Redmond 2012).

Although there are no statistics for specific creative work, High Fliers report in 2012 that work experience has become increasingly important in the graduate recruitment market. High Fliers (2012) reveals that virtually all UK’s leading

graduate employers are now offering paid work experience for students and recent graduates (11,296 in total). 75% provide industrial placements typically for 6-12 months and 50% paid vacation internships. Nearly 75% in investment banking and 50% in law are given to the graduates who have already completed paid work experience with their employer (High Fliers Research 2012). Those in the creative industries, 91% said they had worked for free but only 28% who worked for free, said they were later given paid work (Low Pay Commission 2013).

Holgate and McKay found having good contacts leads to secure recruitment, as informal recruitment methods are used across the audio visual industry. More BME workers than white, had used friends (35% to 28%) and word of mouth (27% to 18%) for finding current jobs (Holgate and McKay 2007;6). Grugulis and Stoyanova found BME use their networks more than non BME but these tend to be in low level jobs in Film and TV (2012).

It is poignant that along with discussing the functions of social capital and its various contexts, Portes (1998) identifies four negative consequences of social capital: exclusion of outsiders; excess claims on group members; restrictions on individual freedoms; downward levelling norms. Portes (1998;16 -18 ) explains these in more detail. Looking at each one of these negative consequences in turn and seeing them within a context of my research which investigates creative work and creative workers, potential problems can be identified.

In the first instance, the ties that bring benefits for membership for one group are likely to mean exclusion for another. For example those graduates looking for creative work that are not already involved in creative networks, may feel excluded from gaining any work opportunities. This feeling of exclusion has been evidenced in the data with both undergraduates and graduates and refers back to the earlier literature outlining the links between networks and communities of practice with privilege. It demonstrates the lack of diversity and

inclusion identified in contemporary, creative employment data and in the report from the Warwick Commission (2015).

In terms of creative workers in the second area, a closed membership may mean that those in the group are bombarded by others who want to gain access to the rich resources held within the group. The closed shop of Equity membership was an example of this. Actors could not work without an Equity Card in stage, television or film. The very few theatre and dance companies who offered Equity Cards for membership into Equity were constantly inundated by performers trying to get into creative jobs. Members of externally funded creative companies can also be inundated by those outside of the network, looking to improve their own vulnerable work conditions because these organisations are perceived by outsiders, as having more stable work environments. Lecturers anecdotally talk of being embarrassed on calling for favours to the same contacts from industry over and over again, in order to ask them to support students with work experience, or be involved in the creative undergraduate experience.

Thirdly, group participation and membership means conforming to the group identity or rules. This can mean restriction for group members and the more independently minded may feel frustrated. Close knit creative communities can be very intense and incestuous, with members knowing each other very well and conforming to a fixed way of working. Diversity may not be tolerated as conforming to the group's identity is paramount. The individuality and freedom of individuals may be reduced significantly and some may leave as soon as they can. Architecture and dance undergraduates in the data talk of conforming, in order to increase grades in assessment and produce creative work that fits to the identity of the lecturing staff or employer. Fashion designers, artists, musicians and architects talk of being creatively stifled by the restrictions of commercial enterprises or brands.

Finally downward levelling norms may bring an emergence of an oppositional stance towards the mainstream through a common experience of solidarity. This embeds and the normative outlook helps perpetuate the very situation it initially fought against. The mobility of a particular group becomes blocked through discrimination. Those members who are less ambitious or unassertive are kept in place, while those who are more confident, imaginative or innovative are able to get out. Those who leave have the confidence to move on and are able to create their own networks. Lecturers anecdotally talk about graduates leaving low paid, exploitative brands where workers stay because they collectively believe that is the 'real world', and there is nothing better 'out there'.

In my research most of the undergraduate students see the word 'employability' as meaning the need to conform, to be the 'good employee' and what the employer 'wants' and is looking to hire. The undergraduate first year students have a definite belief that the relationship between the employee and employer has an inequality of power. This fits with Portes' notion of "restrictions on individual freedoms" (1998;16). Undergraduates seem to want their own business because it gives creative freedom and autonomy. They reject the 'employer/employee' model because the 'authority figure/subordinate relationship' is not inviting.

Human capital theory views inequality as reasonable because those who do better are more skilled, have better qualifications, are more intelligent and attractive (Burt 2001). The explanation of inequality in social capital theory is that those who do better, are "somehow better connected" (Burt 2001;32). The graduates and undergraduates in my research data recognise the importance of being connected and talk of class, money and privilege as increasing potential for success. They seem to associate with the social capital metaphor, rather than the human capital metaphor. The third years of both architecture and dance see making contacts, as the opening or bridge to enter and sustain work. Using contacts are ways of opening doors, pushing in, letting participants into a

closed area of work. Words are used like “open doors”, “get noticed”, “get the face known”, “getting your name out there”, “get your foot through the door”, “put your foot out there”, “it’s who you know”, “finding the right contact”, “having to throw yourself into networks”, “if you know somebody they’ll get you in” and “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours”. This undoubtedly suggests graduates and undergraduates actively seek connections into networks believing they must break through or gain access in order to reap the coveted rewards of paid work. This echoes Granovetter (1973; 1995) and Burt (1992; 2001) who emphasise the bridges in networks which facilitate information and where influence flows, bringing benefits to the individual.

## Exploring the Attributes Needed to Break into Networks

*In my research, the graduates from all disciplines and the undergraduates from dance and architecture, claim that confidence is the key personality attribute needed to be successful in creative working. Confidence is needed to network successfully and to gain others’ trust. Confidence is needed to keep going, believe in one’s worth, handle rejection and have long term resilience. Confidence however, they seem to accept, may not come naturally and also may not be easy to gain. Students believe that confidence to network and find contacts brings more rewards than being discovered through talent alone. They have to “get in” with those who hold the power. (page 243)*

The data also fits with Nahapiet and Ghoshal’s work around social capital. “Social capital cannot be traded easily” and is not passed “readily” from one person to another (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998;244). Social capital is believed to increase the efficiency of action. If there is trust within a relationship, information is likely to pass more quickly, have less censorship and invite further action or collaboration. This interaction creates the potential for further action and more opportunities.

Students in my research data accept that social capital may not be easily traded but also recognise that the social ties through meeting ‘the right’ people increase the speed and efficiency of any action in relation to job opportunities. This is why graduates reflect back to the usefulness of the success factors in the undergraduate curriculum (see page 291) and view them as increasing their creative employability because they meet the right people, interact with them and work with them with a clear, creative purpose and justification. Undergraduates and graduates find these curricular, co-curricular and extra curricular interactions with the industry far more accessible and less stressful, than having to create their own opportunities to get through the door and meet the right people.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) called the different aspects of social capital; the social context, the structural, the relational and the cognitive dimensions. The structural dimension of social capital includes social interaction. The social structure people use contacts to get jobs, information and resources (1998;465). The relational dimension of social capital, in contrast, refers to assets that are rooted in these relationships, such as trust and trustworthiness and would not be possible in a situation where trust does not exist (1998;465). The third dimension, called the cognitive dimension is embodied in attributes like a shared code or a shared paradigm that facilitates a common understanding of collective goals and proper ways of acting in a social system (1998;465).

Through the process of social interaction, actors realise and adopt their organisations’ languages, codes, values and practices. This is what undergraduates and graduates talk about as having “the right identity”. The right identity is looking, sounding and acting in the right way and having what creative employers are looking for. Social ties are channels for information and resources flow. Through social interactions, an actor may gain access to other actors’ resources (ibid). Actors through social interaction and active networking

can become trusted by contacts who are willing to share information and resources “without worrying that they will be taken advantage of by the other party” (Tsai and Ghoshal 1998;467). Social interaction is “consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (Bourdieu 1983;52).

Lee’s (2011) qualitative research into the independent television industry highlights the importance of networks and the need for networking to sustain work. One participant in the research states,

Networking becomes a way of life, something that you have to do in order to survive in this industry.

Lee (2011;560).

Successful networking means time outside contracted hours. This means those with children have to find out-of-hours childcare or accept they will be less successful than their peers. There is also a culture of drinks after work. This all implies that youthful or single workers are more likely to succeed in effective networking (Lee 2011). Networking is a part of employability for creative people. These television freelancers are expected to be constantly available during their contracts and are aware that this kind of lifestyle does not balance easily with families and children (Lee 2011).

Lee concludes that unlike the celebratory hype of the glamour of networks and clusters in creative policy discourse, in reality, at micro level, networking is neither enjoyable nor glamorous. For many, it is seen as a challenging necessity to keep in work (Lee 2011). These networks by their very nature are closed and exclude members. These networks negate cultural diversity (Lee 2011).

Lee argues that in order to network successfully freelancers need particular personality attributes which are related to high levels of cultural capital. This means that the networks flow between work and personal lives, consisting of likeminded and similar participants. However certain views, positions and values will fail to be represented because the networks are not culturally diverse (Lee 2011;562). If networks favour socially privileged middle class participants, this cultural diversity must also impact on the creative diversity in what the networks creatively produce (ibid).

Florida argues (2003) that the drivers of innovation and regional and national growth are diversity and creativity. He asserts that Jacobs (1961) and Park (1984) influenced social scientists to see cities as “cauldrons of diversity and difference, creativity and innovation” (Florida 2003;3). He claims that in the last few decades, we have forgotten this and focused on the contributions of major firms and industry clusters in cities, rather than ask why these firms cluster and how the contributions of the people and their diversity brings innovation. Place and community are critical factors.

The economy forms “around real concentrations of people in real places” (Florida 2003;4). Florida believes the firms cluster, because they want to draw from the talented concentration of people who live there and power innovation and growth. Florida argues that historically “strong-tied communities” (Florida 2003;6) were considered beneficial. However strong-tied communities with their tight bonds between family, neighbours and friends “shut out newcomers, raise barriers to entry and retard innovation” (ibid). Cities harbour a high population and a diversity of people. Industry can choose the best talent from this large diverse and creative group.

Lee’s (2011) work evidences that the television industry although working within highly populated cities are not drawing on the wealth of diversity but replicating their own monoculture. They are becoming tightly knit communities that



insulate themselves, exclude others and stagnate (Olson 1986). The television workers able to participate regularly in social networking after work, gain the advantage of further work. The monoculture may benefit individuals able to access the 'in crowd' at a micro level, but at the macro level, the television industry's innovation has the potential to become stagnant.

Places with strong ties and high level of traditional social capital provide advantages to the community and maintain the status quo. Employers can create strong ties by recruiting people like themselves and people that they know or are recommended by people that they know. In this way, a status quo is maintained and the social capital provided through this traditional perspective gives advantages to those in the clique, the privileged and protects them. The innovation and economic growth which comes from the cauldron of diversity, difference and creativity is not utilised. The industry in terms of its economic growth can slow down or stagnate (Florida 2003; Hutton et al 2007).

## Exploring the Significance of a Philosophy

*The first and third year dance students and the first year architecture students seem to live the discipline. They do not see a demarcation between work and leisure; the two are entwined.*

*Some architecture and dance students refer to their discipline as a philosophy (page 274).*

Hannon (2006) has discussed generic practitioners' philosophies within HE in relation to the implementation of entrepreneurial activities but his work has not addressed the creative curriculum explicitly. Shuaib and Enoch (2013) look to creativity and argue that this is the conceptual age of the creative worker. They argue that work has moved on from an information age, where knowledge transfer was the main work philosophy and we now need an alternative philosophy. The creative worker needs a philosophy that is nonlinear, intuitive

and holistic (ibid). Shuaib and Enoch (2013;57) argue that the six senses identified by Pink (2005) are needed to flourish in the conceptual age: 1. Design which makes things beautiful, user-friendly energy efficient, ergonomic and useful. 2. Story passes information from one generation to another with a context that has emotional impact. 3. Symphony makes relationships and sees connections between seemingly unrelated areas and finding synthesis. 4. Empathy sees the world through other's eyes and in their shoes. 5. Play combines work and play together. The focus of play is on the process, activities and relationships, rather than only on the products or outcomes. Enjoyment and fun in work benefits people's health and their well being. Work feeling like play, makes people feel good and work is linked to pleasure. Work and leisure become entwined. 6. Meaning finds purpose and significance in one's life.

Shuaib and Enoch (2013;58) build on Pink's (2005) work and outline the attributes (stressed in italics) needed to be successful in creative learning and work. Creative people are *passionate* in learning and work. Creative individuals find creative learning and work rewarding and they experience satisfying feelings and emotions in connection to their learning or work. Being *empathetic* to others and seeing their points of view makes them able to collaborate and get the best from significant others. *Knowledge Seekers* seek new knowledge and are always developing what they know and are able to do. Being *futuristic* looks to what is next and prepares for it, while caring about the well being of current and future humankind. By being *holistic*, identity, meaning and purpose is found in life through connections to the community, natural world and humanitarian values. Holistic people consider all factors, not only the financial, before making decisions.

Pink (2005) and Shuaib and Enoch (2013) show their creative working models as holistic life experiences involving play, empathy, humanity, collaboration and creativity. These models are very different to the neo-liberal or marketisation

models which promise individual monetary rewards through competition, lean organisation, undercutting and long working hours. The creative models could be criticised as being unrealistic, i.e. how can any industry or worker make decisions based on social and ethical gains as well as financial ones?

The Coalition government seems to value financial wealth more highly than social or cultural wealth. Policy reflects this with education outcomes becoming increasingly economic ones. Policy suggests we should expect students to be driven too by these financial gains (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). It can be surprising when students show they are not so highly focused on material gains.

The creative models of Pink (2005) and Shuaib and Enoch (2013) fit more with the undergraduates' talk about what excites them, particularly enjoying work that feels like play, working in collaborative communities, being creative, finding a creative identity in their discipline and feeling supportive to peers and being supported by creative communities. They also concur with research on the creative person (page 102) explored in the previous section (Amabile 1983; Sternberg 1986; Gardner 1993; Pollicastro and Gardner 1999; Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Falconar 2000; Sternberg, Kaufman et al. 2002; Hennessey 2003; Kraft 2005; Baer and Kaufman 2006).

It is easy to see why these types of students may reject the neo-liberal model. Money is important to them but they are not driven by it and see work more holistically as bringing them pleasure and fulfilment. Many of the dance students talked of being motivated to work selflessly on community projects and use their discipline to support others. Final year architects spoke about wanting to participate in social housing, charity working and businesses that build homes in the Third World. The students in my research see their disciplines more holistically, covering many elements of their own and others' lives. Although they want to be successful and flourish in their discipline, their

philosophy is not one to work exclusively for their own monetary gain. In terms of the sustainability of society and its resources, this is immensely reassuring.

Ventegodt, Anderson et al (2003) completed a revealing study with 10,000 Danish people about what is the meaning of life and what makes up our own personal philosophies on how we want to live our lives. According to their study, what is important to experience a 'good life' is: How we relate to ourselves; How we relate to others; and to what extent we are able to do something we really like. These elements are seen, by all those in the study, as important in their philosophy for life. Having these elements gives feelings of pleasure or 'good' feelings. Only those that experience them all positively, experience the 'good life'. Those that have not obtained them yet, continue to try to achieve them or they may give up and be resigned to their 'bad life'.

We perceive good and bad through our mental map (Ventegodt, Andersen et al; 2003). There are many terms for this mental map "philosophy of life, self-image, worldview, weltanschauung, ontology – all terms for very much the same thing" (Ventegodt, Andersen et al 2003;1168). It is the description of how we bring together our inner life with the outer world and our own self-image in that process (ibid).

Those with self-confidence seem to overcome obstacles when everyone else has given up. They appear to have luck on their side and get through each hurdle. "A steady flow of successes gives the self-confidence that is required for you not to give up" (Ventegodt, Andersen et al. 2003;1167). This can be seen by others as unfair. Ventegodt, Andersen et al (2003;1167) quote Ponty (2002). The meaning of life is making a connection between our inner selves and the world around us. Life is about being aware of what you want and about having understanding of your innermost dreams. It is to know the opportunities around you, and to know the world you are living in, and to have the values that

make it possible to unite your dreams, with the opportunities that reality presents.

Ventegodt, Andersen et al (2003) and Ponty's (2002) description, fits with my research data about what is significant in personal philosophies for creative working. What seems important is 'living the discipline', holistically mentally, physically and aesthetically. But it is not an individual experience. The philosophy involves others in the actions. Work and play are interactive and collaborative, they involve significant others. The philosophy is work is play and confidence in ourselves, helps to overcome obstacles in pursuing that dream.

It is important to note that Ventegodt, Andersen et al (2003) emphasise that any reality, is only your perception or description of it. Your reality is a construct of your map or philosophy. As it is a construct, it can change through interaction with others and through experience you may adapt your philosophy accordingly. This can give you both good and bad experiences which affect your philosophy. Those who have been influenced in seeing the world as benign and full of opportunity are more likely to find it so. Those who have been brought up to see the world as a threatening and challenging, may anticipate many obstacles and difficulties.

It appears important to look for opportunities within the undergraduate experience to help undergraduates and future graduates to develop their own positive philosophies and maps for creative working. Encouraging students in their undergraduate years to develop philosophies that become useful to them in their future lives and work seems valuable for their holistic health and wellbeing. Drawing on the literature outlined above, the process to develop a philosophy for the discipline needs to be supportive, collaborative, interactive, empathetic, holistic and creative.

However a balance needs to be found. What learning do we offer students about the realities and challenges of creative work after graduation, based on constructs informed through research in the discipline and industry involvement in the student experience? Are we ethically obligated to help students understand what kind of work they may expect and support them to develop their potential to access it? Can we paint too bleak a picture so that students believe obstacles may be insurmountable and decide to give up?

The graduate and undergraduate voices in this research can be used to pursue a meaningful philosophy to support undergraduates to prepare for a creative working life. Undergraduates in the discipline of dance and architecture make suggestions that would be useful to other creative disciplines (see page 259 and page 255).

*They talked of passion for their discipline that drives them to work creatively and create work without the motivation of monetary payment. They recognised a need for ongoing personal development, self-drive and self-motivation. They wanted to gain an understanding of all the parts of the industry. They wanted a holistic, experiential curriculum. Learning about the philosophical side complemented the physical side of the discipline. They had been encouraged to see the diversity of the discipline and this gave them more understanding of many different communities. Working in a trans-disciplinary way, they felt they had been transformed during the course. The interaction of people and spaces brought confidence. Work experience brought “openings” and many contacts. Pluralistic perspectives helped them to learn about difference, diversity, philosophies and methodologies in the discipline. They felt they had had a holistic experience. They found their own personal development through their degree. Learning was taught by experiencing which became the dancers’ approach to creative working. Finding the purpose to everything gave the students meaning and motivation and a personal philosophy.*

These graduate and undergraduate voices again echo the characteristics of the creative person (page 102). The importance of a holistic experience,

developing confidence, playfulness, experimentation and endurance to overcoming obstacles and becoming resilience, are factors identified also in the creative literature (Amabile 1983; Sternberg 1986; Gardner 1993; Pollicastro and Gardner 1999; Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Falconar 2000; Sternberg, Kaufman et al. 2002; Hennessey 2003; Kraft 2005; Baer and Kaufman 2006).

James, a third year dance undergraduate talked about Parkour (page 267). His description of the Parkour philosophy fits with the literature of the characteristics of the creative person and brilliantly complements what the graduates and undergraduates in this research, say they need. Parkour became a significant metaphor within this research. The Parkour approach is a good philosophy for an alternative perspective for creative working and creative life. Parkour is about individual journeys, resilience and overcoming obstacles. Parkour is a philosophy of emotional, physical and mental training, developed in an environment where people can be part of a community, learning and working together. This community of practice is diverse, it is not closed, people can drop in, join in, from within or from outside of their own geographical area, to learn together, to teach each other, to support each other and to overcome creative obstacles..

## Parkour

*The students' paradigm of creative working and creative life appears holistic, rather than primarily focused on the financial rewards of gaining a 'good' graduate job. The paradigm of creative life within this research has been expressed as 'living the discipline'.*

*Networking is viewed with ambivalence, it is stimulating to be involved in communities of practice but demoralising to have to constantly network and use contacts to keep in those communities (page 243).*

Taking on board the student voice about what was needed, a holistic philosophy was sought for creative working that was motivating and engaging. The philosophy would combine all the elements of the creative discipline (like in dance or in architecture), with fundamental principles that underpin it. Drawing on the research findings, literature review and the need for a creative philosophy for learning and work that is supported by a community of practice, which explores the many routes and journeys in pursuit of a creative, good life; the principles that underpin Parkour were borrowed and adapted to develop the philosophy of *Creatour*. The philosophy of Parkour fits well with the needs of the students and graduates in my research.

Parkour is a mainstream physical activity that has spread globally and is practised in rural and urban environments and enjoyed by both children and adults. It has developed through both formal and informal communities of practice and has increasingly become a staple of leisure and development activities for all ages. Putting 'Parkour' into an Internet search engine reveals a saturation of activities, events, courses and practice taking place across the globe.

The community that practises Parkour describes the activities in ways that suggest a philosophy or a way to living or seeing life. To those that have not participated or observed a Parkour training session, it is difficult to imagine its friendly sharing of practice, its supportiveness, community and openness to anyone who wants 'to have a go'. Parkour participants show a diversity of social and economic backgrounds and its community has developed at a local amateur level, as well as at a global, professional one.

Parkour relates well with both dance and architecture disciplines because it is a practice of movement, often developed in urban spaces. Parkour has been linked to the performing arts and to urban sport, particularly to engage young people into exercise for social and health advantages. Parkour is of interest to



the discipline of architecture, because buildings and spaces are designed for a purpose and for particular communities. Buildings and spaces can be used in different ways to the original designs, and areas of space can be reclaimed by communities that feel they want to explore them or have been closed from them.

Parkour has a range of definitions which I will outline for context. These variations of conceptualisation show how Parkour has developed and diversified through their many communities across the world.

In the following definition of Parkour, Parkour practitioners argue for its philosophical meaning. Parkour (Parkourpedia 2012) is a method of physical training that develops one's ability to overcome obstacles, both physical and mental. It develops the holistic agency needed to escape a challenging or emergency situation. Underpinning this approach is a philosophy of collective support which develops self-improvement, self-understanding, useful strength and longevity. Parkour (ibid) is an activity that can be practised anywhere, in an urban environment or in a rural one, in cities, towns, villages, parks, forests, deserts or mountains. It is not just the movement which makes a practitioner of Parkour. To be a practitioner of Parkour means movement is always combined with the philosophy. Movement may be taken out of Parkour and its tricks, flips and jumps used for spectacle but the physical display cannot be accurately called Parkour because it is only being used for entertainment purposes. Parkour is the holistic combination of the movement with the philosophy (ibid).

Saville (2008;891) describes Parkour with a mix of definitions "a type of play, the art of displacement, the discipline of moving from A to B as fast and efficiently as possible, and even as a way of life".

Brown (2009;1) argues that,

...practitioners have found Parkour to be an activity which requires many qualities but also one which leads to insights into their mental, emotional and physical states; bringing feelings of freedom, ownership and expression not previously encountered in every day lives.

(Brown 2009;1)

Brown's emphasis on the mental, emotional and physical is pertinent to my research students as a means of bringing ownership and meaning to their creative lives. Brown (2009) believes that as individuals shape society, Parkour offers possibilities for change within the nature of culture, in the direction of freedom and respect (ibid). Mind and body "can find a greater connectedness through Parkour; leading to a sense of a fuller consciousness" Brown (2009;1).

Parkour is "bringing forth or revealing dimensions of the physical and spiritual self through a particular type of urban gymnastics" (Atkinson 2009;169). Atkinson sees Parkour as a communion with the practitioner's habitat for a goal of "exploring how one's body is shaped by the political geography of a late modern city" (2009;170). The link of the individual with the urban space and the modern city relates to the discipline of architecture. How people feel about their environment and how it makes them feel, echoes the data from the final year architecture undergraduates. Atkinson describes running with traceurs, the name given to those who practise Parkour or Freerunning as "fluid" and running as a "tribe" (ibid). The tribe takes turns in leading one another through the city, across the changing terrains and focusing on the both the destination and the journey and one's own body to overcome the varied obstacles.

Atkinson (2009;170) describes the feeling of being in "flow" (Czikszentmihalyi 1975) and working in the present moment, focusing on both the physical and

psychological to manage the physical terrain and the fear and exhilaration that comes with beating the diversity of urban obstacles, high walls, small spaces, wide jumps and sharp or dangerous materials. Atkinson (2009;170) believes the traceurs in Toronto run to experience flow, to feel free and to challenge the dominant social constructions of their urban environment, that have been sanitised and overrun with corporate spaces.

Atkinson (2009) contextualises Parkour as having its roots in “Herbertism”. Herbertism emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century from French naval officer George Herbert as an athletic philosophy. Herbert believed in the importance of intense physical exercise as a means of developing the personal self. He looked to the indigenous population of African communities to shape his philosophy. Herbert was stationed in St Pierre, Martinique and during this time, was heavily influenced by local villagers’ actions when he led an evacuation of a village to escape a volcanic eruption. From his evaluation of the emergency, Herbert concluded that physical strength, athletic skill, courage, mental risk and altruism made members of a community civically useful. Herbert’s philosophy became the pursuit of physical perfection and communion within one’s local environment and its surroundings. A philosophy to develop “one’s sense of place in the physical and social environment and as a vehicle for bringing forth the underlying essence of one’s own humanity” (Atkinson 2009;171).

When returning to France in 1903, Herbert pioneered a new physical, cultural lifestyle taught within the community and at the College of Rheims. He designed exercises and equipment to teach his ‘Natural Method’ of physical disciplining, advocating that training should take place outside, in the natural environment. The training brought obvious physical attributes for its participants, but Herbert believed his methods also developed personality attributes, such as confidence, courage, calmness, oneness and the ability to navigate over and around obstacles. He believed he was able to give all the participants the ability to manage any geographical environment with running,

walking, balancing, jumping, swimming, defending oneself and climbing through natural habitat. The variety of emotions experienced to do this, such as anxiety, aggression, courage, doubt and fear brought overall self-assurance and “inner peace” (Atkinson 2009;171). Herbert claimed his training encompassed all that was needed to successfully manage every day life.

Since this time, the French have continued to build on Herberts’ work of physical and social pedagogy with Parcours (obstacle training). Herbert’s Natural Method was used in the training of Vietnam soldiers to be physically and emotionally trained to sustain the horrors of jungle warfare. Belle, a soldier who encountered this training, on returning to France encouraged his own son, David, to follow the principles of the Natural Method. David Belle together with his friend Sebastien Foucan developed their own style of the Natural Method working in urban Paris, as they did not have access to open spaces, woods or parkland. Their work developed into the contemporary understanding of Parkour (Christie 2003).

Parkour has brought media attention focusing on the daredevil and anarchic elements of Parkour, the danger, the jumping at great heights and the invasion of corporate spaces. Critics of Parkour have focused on these elements of Parkour and have ignored the social and psychological pedagogy and benefits of the training (Atkinson 2009).

Parkour with its many definitions and permeations reflects its dynamic nature and its breadth of expansion. Atkinson identifies a schism between Belle and Foucan which has been influential on the development of Parkour ideologies. Belle moved to a youth movement ‘Urban Freeflow’ with an all encompassing youth culture; and Foucan moved to a formalised, commercial form, marketing Parkour through mainstream television, advertisements and education sport programming. Atkinson (Atkinson 2009;173) argues this has led to three ideological camps. The *first* is the small cohort who train in woodland and rural

areas and work closely to the Herbert's original Natural Method. The *second* cohort believes training does not have to take place in the wild to bring the physical and psychological benefits. They look to their local terrains and spaces to develop and explore. This group see the physical and psychological elements of development as having a beneficial social function. The *third* group, led by Foucan, are the "free runners". These are competitive individuals seeking the thrill and adrenalin of Parkour, through events against each other in the sport arena. They are predominantly interested in the spectacle, the performance and the superhuman physical display, rather than the spiritual, moral and psychological perceived benefits.

In sum, it is the second focus which interests me. I believe this approach has pertinence for the undergraduates and graduates in this research. By applying the Parkour philosophy to the creative disciplines and their needs for a holistic experience that focuses on people, places and spaces and personal journeys, a philosophy for creative working might be developed. To pursue a holistic, creative philosophy combining the creative disciplines (such as dance or architecture), with the underpinnings of particular principles would have relevance to those who can be defined as creative people. This creative philosophy develops holistic learning and develops the ability to overcome creative, physical and mental obstacles for a 'good' creative, working life.

## **Summary of Literature Review**

The first part of the chapter investigated literature around the creative industries, employability and higher education. It identified the dominant models which influence British policy and practice. The *Literature Review* evidences how both Labour and Coalition governments have similar conceptualisations of employability. These governments tend to be influenced heavily by positivist surveys researching the employer voice and economy/employer led strategy, which in turn influence the policy in education

and industry to pursue outcomes of skill acquisition. Graduate employability is conceptualised as acquisition of specific skills to meet employers' perceived needs and the development of national/global skills, underpinned by human capital theory. The undergraduate degree is viewed as a guaranteed, long term, financial return for an individual who invests three or four years in higher education. There is an expectation in this conceptualisation, that a graduate secures a job within six months of leaving university.

The next section of the literature reviewed explored creative people, how creativity is defined and how creativity maybe developed for creative learning and creative work. This section aimed to enrich the narrow concept of creative industries to explore a much broader area of what was understood by creative people thus far.

The final part of the chapter, by means of a research informed literature review explored employability from a wider perspective, developing further layers in the construct of employability, in particular creative employability. The field data harvested from undergraduates and recent graduates of creative undergraduate degrees, reveals a belief that the acquisition of skills, or skills capital, is only the baseline for potential employment. These undergraduates and graduates perceive success in graduate, creative work, as defined through social, cultural and economic capital.

The final section of this chapter argued that open communities of practice, allowing collaboration, creativity and innovation, are needed across and between diverse, creative groups, allowing learning and work to flourish. It progressed to address how creative groups worked together through their creative philosophies and found meaning and identity in their lives.

The *Literature Review* ended with an introduction to Parkour. The environmental, spiritual, performance and competitive elements of Parkour maybe utilised to provide a metaphor or philosophy, for an alternative approach to the dominant models of employability within higher education and

government policy. This contemporary philosophy will be pursued in chapter five, *Synthesis – Developing a Contemporary Perspective of Employability*, where the three research questions are used to provide an alternative approach to creative employability. The next chapter offers the Methodology.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter offers a critical narrative of the iterative, research process in terms of its methodological approach from the initial positivist stage, when the research questions were first investigated with graduates, to the use of a grounded approach and the analysis of undergraduate experiences within the context of Creative Industries, Employability and Undergraduate Degrees.

The chapter is in two parts:

**Methodology Part One** - This section outlines the initial research process using a positivist paradigm and a mixed methods approach. It provides the argument to embrace bricolage (Lincoln and Guba 2003;264) and to borrow from other paradigms to facilitate research in a complex world.

**Methodology Part Two** - This section explores the decision to seek a more grounded approach in order to look for different processes and seek new perspectives within the research focus of higher education, employability and creative industries.

The chapter concludes by evidencing how the grounded approach generated new themes that were rooted in the data. These themes were explored further in the *Literature Review* and underpinned new research findings that were not anticipated.



# METHODOLOGY PART ONE

## Taking a Positivist Paradigm and Using a Mixed Methods Approach

This research seeks to record the voice of students currently studying on undergraduate degrees in the creative industries and of those that have recently graduated from these courses. Stage One of the research focuses on the experiences of recent graduates, followed by Stage Two, focusing on the voices of students currently on undergraduate degree programmes. Developing universities' sustainability involves the whole university; engaging with student and graduate perspectives can help transform curricula, teaching and learning to meet graduate needs (Jones et al 2010).

At the outset of this research, I considered how I would investigate the research questions, namely: How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?

I initially sought to answer these questions from the graduate perspective. I wanted to access a population of recent graduates to investigate the links between their work and their undergraduate courses.

British employers had been surveyed to see what they 'wanted' in their graduates (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2006; CBI/Universities UK 2009; High Fliers Research 2009). My first stage of the research was to compare existing data from employers, with new data from a student perspective. I decided to question students using the same methods of research that had been undertaken by government agencies with employers.

Employers had been surveyed using positivist approaches, researching their views of graduates and undergraduate degrees. Positivism is an epistemological position that “advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences” (Bryman 2008;13). Phenomena or knowledge is seen as only genuine, if confirmed by the senses. Knowledge is sought through the gathering of “facts” that provide the basis of laws, known as “inductivism”. The purpose of theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested, “deductivism” (ibid). Typically positivist approaches are quantitative, experimental and manipulative and seek to generate and test hypotheses (Creswell 1998;Guba and Lincoln 1994). The positivist paradigm claims an objective reality, which assumes there are general patterns of cause and effect. The aim is to discover patterns and variables that may predict and control natural phenomenon. Empirical evidence assumes that reliable data is gained. Strict protocols are used in the pursuit of objectivity and data is perceived as value free because subjectivity is rigorously avoided. The researcher seeks validity in order to accurately measure an objective reality and reliability assesses how far this measurement and its conclusions can be relied upon, if the research were to be repeated (ibid).

Silverman (2006) argues that the researcher must unpack each methodology to find the best fit for the research purpose. Silverman (ibid) cites Bryman (1988), *Methods of Quantitative Research* to help this process. Bryman explores social survey, experiment, official statistics, structured observation and content analysis as methods in quantitative research.

In reaching my decision to use a survey, I systematically considered other approaches. I obviously dismissed using experiments with this graduate cohort. Experiments have strong internal validity but to set up an experiment it is necessary to isolate independent variables to determine their effect on the dependent variable (Bryman 2008). To investigate a graduate population and explore their perceptions of the links between their work and their creative

undergraduate degrees many variables would have to be isolated such as gender, class, wealth, family background and this would not be practicable.

Official statistics are available. The DHLE statistics of first destination surveys attempt to make links between graduate jobs and undergraduate courses through the collection of information six months after graduation (Higher Education Funding Council 2010). They are used to demonstrate the success of the 'employability' of an undergraduate course. Research, around creative industries graduates and employment, have shown that these graduates take longer to find graduate work because many have to gain unpaid experience first, to gain entry into their chosen professions (Brown 2007). I wanted a specific study that was contemporary and addressed *all* the creative industries and aimed to reveal more than these crude, official statistics. There are now 40 month longitudinal surveys of graduate destinations as it has become accepted that a six month survey does not give a sufficiently accurate picture of graduate work across disciplines, because the survey is undertaken too soon after graduation.

Structured observation was also rejected because the technique of observing and recording the behaviour of a specific sample (Bryman 2008) would not answer the research questions which required the investigation of the graduate voices and perceptions within the sample. Content analysis was also discarded for this reason. The research questions did not seek to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories but to ask a sample of the population what they thought and had experienced. It aimed to reveal their perceptions of the links between their work and their degrees. It aimed also to see what place they believed 'employability' should have had in their degrees.

I wanted to see if graduates gave similar answers as their graduate employers around employability and higher education degrees. I decided to gather data from graduates, using the same positivist methods that claimed 'facts' and

'consensus', from employers in previous surveys (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 2006; CBI/Universities UK 2009; High Fliers Research 2009). A social survey (Bryman 2008) seemed appropriate, as it allowed the researcher to access a population of recent graduates and to investigate links between their work and their undergraduate courses. I chose a survey that would draw on both quantitative and qualitative data through undertaking research with recent graduates. The survey questions would reflect the research questions:

- Why do students choose a creative industries undergraduate degree?
- What are creative industries undergraduate expectations of employment after graduation and what do they believe is demanded in terms of 'employability' to secure this work?
- What are undergraduates and graduates' experiences of 'acquiring' employability while an undergraduate?
- How useful do graduates find their work experience/work placement in improving their employability for graduate work?
- What do undergraduates and graduates believe has been successful in preparing them for graduate work during their undergraduate experience?
- How do undergraduates and graduates believe employability could be developed in the student experience?

In summary, Stage One of the field research was a snapshot of the contemporary student voice and surveyed a group of recent graduates from 23

universities and gained qualitative and quantitative data about their undergraduate experience and their potential for graduate work. Stage Two of the research, built on the analysis of Stage One and developed a methodology gaining rich data from unpacking the undergraduate experience, interrogating the concept of employability within creative industry undergraduate degrees and sought to understand the place of employability within these creative higher education degrees.

However, while undertaking the survey, it became quickly apparent that using a positivist approach to investigate the student perspective had limitations, as the data lacked richness, nuance and intricacy. An alternative approach was needed which embraced the complexity of human experience.

When reviewing the methodology literature, I realised it was important to reflect on my own beliefs about how I view the world and whether there is a paradigm that fits with that view. A paradigm can be defined as “a set of beliefs”, or “world view” which defines the nature of the world and our place in it (Guba and Lincoln 2004;21). This belief about how our reality is constructed transcends any debate around quantitative or qualitative research. In fact, these considerations can be seen as the precursor to any decision about methodology or discussions of quantitative or qualitative approaches.

I explore these considerations in turn, in order to give a rationale for the research approach I have chosen to embrace complexity. Positivism is prevalent in the disciplines that relate most to my research area. However, Positivism is a term that encompasses more than merely an epistemological position. Its research findings are perceived to be objective, replicable, value free, valid and reliable and the researcher is seen as independent to the investigation. Positivism is seen to attempt to mirror the natural sciences in both theoretical and methodological considerations (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Denscombe 2004; Guba and Lincoln 2004; Bryman 2008).

Interpretivism covers the plethora of writers who are critical of the attempt to mirror the natural sciences when investigating the social world (Bryman 2008;15). Interpretists believe that the social sciences are fundamentally different to the natural sciences. Human beings cannot be understood solely as objects in the natural sciences. Human behaviour requires the social scientist to understand the subjective meaning of this social action. This ontological position is Constructivist (ibid) and asserts that the social phenomena and their meanings are continually constructed by social actors. It implies that meaning and action are dynamic and are continually revised by its social actors through interaction with each other and their social world

Figure 8, below, maps out Objectivist and Constructivist ontological positions. In looking at these two positions in the table below, to a certain extent I move towards constructivism and away from objectivism because I believe meanings are construed by social actors; that social phenomena are ephemeral; that an emic-focused inquiry which has emphasis on the participants' experiences and meanings is most valuable to my research area.

**Figure 8** Ontological Considerations Bryman (2010;18)

| Objectivism   | Constructivism  |
|---|---|
| <p>Ontological position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social phenomena as external facts that are beyond our reach or influence</li> <li>• Social phenomena such as organisation or culture discussed as tangible objects with rules and regulations</li> <li>• social phenomena is fixed</li> <li>• Etic – led inquiry (testing and proof of external hypothesis)</li> </ul> | <p>Ontological position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social phenomena and their meanings are continually construed by social actors</li> <li>• Challenges the suggestion that categories such as organisation or culture are pre-given or external to us</li> <li>• Social phenomena likely to be highly ephemeral</li> <li>• Emic-focused inquiry (emphasis on participant meaning and experience)</li> </ul> |

Along with these ontological considerations about social reality; epistemological factors need to be considered about how we perceive knowledge in our world and how we regard its value. When these greater issues are addressed, we begin to find the appropriate methodologies to fit our outlook (Denscombe 2004; Bryman 2008).

Bryman (2008;16) argues that Interpretivism's intellectual heritage comes from Weber and his notion of "Verstehen", meaning understanding, "the hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition and symbolic interactionism". Weber argued that sociology should attempt the interpretive understanding of social action in order to explain cause and effect (Weber 1947). In essence, what is important is that the causal meaning should come from an interpretive understanding rather than the external measures paramount in positivism.

However, Weber's view on objectivity can be rather confusing. Weber seems to include an explanation of social action, which suggests a positivist approach, with an interpretive approach focused on the empathetic understanding of social action (Bryman 2008). Nevertheless, Weber's emphasis on the interpretive understanding of causal explanation, rather than the external forces that have no meaning for those involved in social action, has been influential in the growth of an anti-positivist position (ibid).

Phenomenology has also been responsible for the anti-positivist approach. This perspective was first advocated by Husserl. The philosophy

...is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions concerning his or her grasp of the world.

(Bryman 2008;697)

Schutz (1962;59), influenced by Husserl and Weber, asserts there is a fundamental difference between the natural sciences and the social sciences. Social reality has meaning for human beings and therefore human action is meaningful. A separate epistemology is required to make that distinction. The researcher needs to look at social action, meaning and experience from the point of view of the subject studied. The researcher though interpreting from



the view point of those studied will access people's thinking, their social world and their social action and gain deeper understanding and meaning (ibid).

Weber, Husserl and Schutz are not the only influential thinkers in the history of interpretivism but their ideas have greatly contributed to the conceptualisation of paradigms and the two distinct epistemologies, positivism and interpretivism, dominate social research (Bryman 2008).

The two distinct epistemologies that Bryman (2008) describes seem too simplistic. Within my research, I see discussions of research paradigms, ontological and epistemological viewpoints with more complexity. The two paradigms of objectivism and constructivism appear frustrating in their limitations, restrictions and tensions between the social and natural worlds. I believe that the world is intricate, interwoven, interdisciplinary and interconnected. The social and the natural world are part of this interplay and complexity. Subjects are influenced by other subjects and also by objects, places and spaces, which are connected and influence one another. The internal and external worlds both connect and disconnect through nature, culture, the physical, the metaphysical, the natural, the artificial, the mind, the body and what is embodied as meaning or consciousness.

Lincoln and Guba help to make sense of this complexity. They distinguish five separate paradigms positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, critical theory and participatory within research (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Lincoln and Guba 2005; Lincoln, Lynham et al. 2011). Arguing these paradigms are discrete, they also claim that they can be utilised in a bricolage fashion, "great potential for interweaving of viewpoints for the incorporation of multiple perspectives, and for borrowing or bricolage, where borrowing seems useful, richness enhancing, or theoretically heuristic" (Lincoln and Guba 2003;264). Bricolage is an established approach, with many bricoleurs, who are piecing together

representations from different paradigms to “fit the specifics of a complex situation”. (Lincoln and Guba 2003;5).

The following table I have adapted from (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997;294; Lincoln and Guba 2003;264) and outlines the issues that I considered as I reviewed where philosophically the methodology is situated.

**Figure 9** Choosing a Research Paradigm - ontological, epistemological and methodological issues

(Adapted from (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997;294; Lincoln and Guba 2003;264)

| Issue               | Positivism  | Postpositivism  | Critical Theory   | Constructivism   | Participatory  |
|---------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| Ontology            | Naïve realism – “real” reality but apprehendable                                    | Critical realism – “real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable                              | Historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values crystallized over time | Relativism – local and specific constructed realities  | Participative reality – subjective – objective reality, co- created by mind and given cosmos   |
| Epistemology        | Dualist/objectivist findings true   | Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; finding probably true                                       | Transactional/subjectivist; value mediated findings   | Transactional/subjectivist; created findings           | Critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experiential and practical knowing; co created findings |
| Methodology         | Experimental/manipulative; verification of hypothesis; chiefly quantitative methods | Modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplicity; falsification of hypothesis; may include qualitative methods | Dialogic/dialectical  | Hermeneutic/dialectical                                | Political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language in shared experiential context                |
| Nature of knowledge | Verified hypotheses established as facts  | Non falsified hypothesis that are probably facts or laws  | Structural/historical insights  | Individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus | Extended epistemology; primacy of practical knowing; critical subjectivist; living knowledge   |

| Issue                                  | Positivism  | Postpositivism  | Critical Theory  | Constructivism  | Participatory  |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Voice                                  | “disinterested scientist” as informer of decision makers, policy makers and change agents | “disinterested scientist” as informer of decision makers, policy makers and change agents | “transformative intellectual” as advocate and activist | “passionate participant” as facilitator of multi-voice reconstruction | Primary voice manifest through aware self – reflective action, secondary voices in illuminating theory, narrative, movement, song, dance and other representational forms. |
| Realism<br>Objectivist<br>Experimental |   |   |  | Relativism<br>Subjectivist<br>Collaborative                           |  |

In reference to the table above, the first column Positivism, uses mostly quantitative methods and knowledge is presented as hypothesis and established facts. Attempting to establish facts fits with the approach taken in recent employer surveys; I sought to use this method to seek new data from the student perspective. However, the voice presenting the research is the “disinterested scientist”, who informs policy makers and change agents. My research intends to inform policy makers, but I see the researcher and the research participants as co-producing and part of the interpretations of data. Postpositivism, in the second column, also claims this voice. Critical theory does not seem appropriate in the investigation of the graduate and undergraduate voice, as its dialogic/dialectic methodology is theoretical, critiquing culture and society through considering social, historical and ideological forces, in relation to structures. Constructivism in the fifth column provides a passionate participant voice, seeking to present individual reconstructions and constructed realities, fitting more with this research. However, when I compare the Constructivism column, to Participatory in the final column, the essence of this research is reflected.

The participatory worldview offers a paradigm to embrace complexity. This paradigm seems relevant to my research questions and research approach. Arguing that constructivism does not explain experiential knowing (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997), the participative reality provides a subjective/objective reality co-created by mind and the universe or cosmos. "What can be known about the given cosmos is that it is always known as a subjectively articulated world, whose objectivity is relative to how it is shaped by the knower" (Heron and Reason 1997;280). A Participatory paradigm offers an extended epistemology. It encourages collaborative enquiry through communities of practice; co-researchers are part of the inquiry process learning through active engagement. This takes an objectivist-realist ontological viewpoint showing the social and natural world are not mutually exclusive.

"Interweaving" through bricolage is particularly relevant between "commensurable paradigms" for example critical theory, constructivist, participatory paradigms and between positivist and postpositivist (Ravenek and Rudman 2013;438). Yet the "interweaving of viewpoints" through bricolage where it is viewed as "useful, richness enhancing, or theoretically heuristic" suggests acceptable borrowing from any of the paradigms (Lincoln and Guba 2003;264).

This research seeks to understand phenomena in a complex world where the ontological, epistemological and methodological can be borrowed from a range of paradigms in a bricolage fashion. The next section of this chapter examines Stage One of the research which enters a positivist paradigm and uses a mixed methods approach. Part Two of this *Methodology* chapter, explores the research with undergraduates and outlines the shift to a grounded approach and moving into a participatory paradigm. This research is an iterative, collaborative investigation which is co-created with its research participants and their related communities and seeks a more holistic approach (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997; Lincoln and Guba 2003).

## Stage One - Research with Recent Graduates

It was arranged for the survey to be distributed through the graduate electronic networks of a national media company using 'Facebook' to gain data from a sample of 200 recent graduates with creative industries degrees from three universities using non-probability sampling. It was hoped that quantitative and qualitative data would be collected using cross-sectional design to detect "patterns of association" (Bryman 2001;43) and to gain a contemporary "snapshot" of graduate experiences of employability in undergraduate degree programmes in creative industries subjects.

Taking a positivist research approach in Stage One, I anticipated there would be a range of issues that affected the reliability of the data. Reliability is conceptualised as 'dependability' (Cohen, Manion et al. 2007). The participation in this research is self-selecting, so research data only includes participants who want to be involved in the research and subsequently their voices and experiences become important. This means the voices of those who do not choose to participate are absent. However by giving all potential participants the opportunity to participate in research and stressing the importance of each of their contributions, a rich sample of experiences should be gained.

The non-probability survey sample assumes that data cannot be collected from all those who have had 'similar experiences'. A non-probability sample cannot be generalised to the wider graduate population. However, I argue that this does not affect validity. For example, all the students who completed a specific course, at the same university and at the same time appear to share the same experience; however in reality their personal experiences would be different.

Stage One of the research intended to provide a 'rough' sketch or picture. The stage with a graduate sample recognises that this snapshot is contemporary and ephemeral. Nevertheless, the data from a contemporary, snapshot in time could generate themes and areas of importance that could benefit from further interrogation and inform a second stage, researching current undergraduate perspectives.

I realised that a survey would have difficulty in isolating measured variables, as there are many factors that influence the possible relationship between graduate work and a university course. In Chapter One, *Research Overview*, I argued that these variables (such as class, race, sex, gender) can intersect and are enmeshed. However, if I were able to obtain qualitative data and gain clarity through respondents' detailed answers; this would help me gain insight into possible significant factors. Only relying on closed questions in the survey may lead to arbitrary defined measurements by a researcher and invite simplicity or generalisation. By revisiting the research questions used in the study, I could address where qualitative data was needed.

Cohen, Manion et al (2007) argue it is impossible for research to be 100% reliable and valid. However in order to increase reliability, each respondent in the first stage, that investigated recent graduates, would be given a standard questionnaire with identical information about the research and instructions to complete it. I would limit researcher bias by both shaping and testing the questionnaire through a pilot and using the feedback from the participants to finalise the questionnaire. Standardising testing can increase reliability, but at the expense of validity and the relevance of the data to the researcher. There is tension between reliability and validity in qualitative research (Bush 2007). The triangulation using further research participants in Stage Two of the research, sought to address this (ibid).

The research met the university ethics regulations and was conducted in accordance with these (James and Busher 2009); for example, graduates were notified through online information which included a synopsis of the research and gained informed consent. Graduates were given the opportunity to withdraw at any point.

All data was made anonymous, i.e. all reference to students' names, HE institutions and courses would not be able to be identified. Any respondent from the research could request to have the data destroyed if they wished. I took all reasonable precautions to ensure no respondents were harmed or affected by the participation in this research project. All participants were treated with dignity and respect in all communication and professional etiquette for research was adhered to. Additionally the safety of the researcher was taken into account. Ethical approval was gained and the process of ethical and moral conduct was agreed with the supervisors.

## Interpretation

Since differing interpretations may be construed from the same data set, I intended to apply a 'fit for purpose' model. The purpose of the research was to discover through interpretation of the data any "commonalities, differences and similarities", "to understand groups" and to "generate themes" (Cohen, Manion et al. 2007;461) in order to look at patterns that may indicate key areas of significance in the way students define employability. After deciding the purpose of the research, the kind of analysis can be determined and how the analysis is written up comes from that decision (ibid).

My survey used both open and closed questions. When researching experiences, open questions are preferable to closed questions. Questions that generate qualitative data are likely to allow respondents to answer questions in



their own words (Sudman and Bradburn 1982;51) cited in (Cohen, Manion et al 2007). Questions that require qualitative answers are seen to be useful in reporting behaviour as they allow respondents “to talk” but care needs to be taken that the survey is not overly long, stressful or exhausting (ibid). I believed that in relation to the qualitative data within this research, it was important for graduates to use their own words in their answers and that they felt able to write candidly. This would ensure that the research process was useful and the objectives of the research were being met.

## Revising the Methodology

The questionnaire was sent to a sample of six B.A Honours graduates, all 2006 graduates from pre1992 universities to pilot.

Four of the sample had completed a Drama degree, one a degree in Music and the sixth, a degree in Architecture.

The pilot sample was sent an electronic version by e-mail and asked to give feedback on the questionnaire.

The six graduates were asked to read the questionnaire at least twice; the first time to imagine they were filling in the form as a real respondent and the second time to interrogate it as a critical friend. They were specifically asked to:

- comment on the survey, particularly the way the survey was introduced and the survey structure as a whole
- comment on the language used in the questions, their clarity and order

- give feedback on any changes they would make to the questions including any questions they would add or remove
- comment on the length of the questionnaire and whether it was manageable to complete online
- give feedback about anything that would stop them from completing the questionnaire
- comment on whether the questionnaire showed bias or influence in terms of questions or expected answers

The pilot was used to discuss the questionnaire and adapt it, in order to gain a final version. Following ethical approval, the final version was used for the online survey (See Appendix II *Have you Completed a Creative Degree?*).

## Identifying the Sample

A national media company distributed the online survey through e-mails and 'Facebook' to 4058 university students graduating from 2006-9 in the creative industry subjects from three UK universities (two were pre 1992 and one was post 1992).

Although a large sample was e-mailed (4058), the national media company generated only 29 replies, no more than a 0.7% return in terms of the initial sample size. However the sample of 29 did not come from the three universities e-mailed, but came from a wide mix of pre 1992 and post 1992 universities in England and Wales. This showed that the questionnaire had been passed on by those contacted by the media company, to other graduates from other universities, through the friendship networks of 'Facebook'.

## Contingency Plans - Gaining an Adequate Sample

In order to generate the size of the sample that had been planned a post 1992 university gave access to graduate emails (4348) from 2006 to 2009 in all creative industry degrees and graduates were invited to participate in the survey. This gained 32 participants, a 0.7% return.

*The Guardian* was approached to assist in providing a link for creative graduates from UK universities to participate in the survey. I was invited to be a guest blogger and a link was given to the survey from the online website. Although it only produced seven replies it brought publicity. Many individuals approached the researcher through 'googling' contact details on the Internet, to ask for the dissemination of the research in due course, as UK creative degrees had been greatly ignored in national/international research. *The Guardian* too asked for updates in the research process and invited me to podcast on creative degrees.

## The Graduate Sample

68 graduates responded over a period of six months. The respondents came from a mixture of both pre and post 1992 institutions in England and Wales. 23 universities (10 pre 1992 and 13 post 1992 institutions) were named. All creative industry disciplines were covered in the sample.

The sample was much smaller than anticipated but the reach of creative disciplines was much wider than expected, including Advertising, Architecture, Art, Crafts, Dance, Design, Drama, Fashion, Film and Video, Journalism, Music, Performing Arts, Software and Computer Services, Television and Radio and Other responses. Degrees named in 'Other' were interdisciplinary degrees that respondents did not feel fitted into one category, degrees covering Journalism

and Publishing, Game Art, Media Software and Art and Business. (See Appendix III for the overview of the creative disciplines and graduate responses)

The three qualitative questions generated interesting, rich and important data. I had an insightful moment as I analysed the material. Excitingly, it was these three qualitative narratives from the 68 respondents that seemed the most revealing. The quantitative data generated some useful background such as where the graduates had studied, whether they had completed work experience or whether they had thought about employability prior to university. But, more importantly, the qualitative narratives were in the graduates' own words which interrogated revealingly the multiple meanings of employability within the creative industries.

At the outset of this research project; a mixed methods approach was decided upon as being most appropriate. Data would be collected in two distinct stages, the first to gain a mix of quantitative and qualitative data from a large population and the second stage to gain qualitative data from a smaller population. A positivist framework was considered to be the most relevant for the initial stage of the research. This approach was useful and justified in order to gain a snapshot of graduate experiences from a larger cohort of participants.

## Critique of Taking a Positivist Approach

Cicourel (1964) instigated an argument that quantitative methods are favoured by governments as they model the work of their own agencies. The positivist framework in government research is all pervasive. Positivist research has been favoured by government and employers when exploring employability and higher education (Cicourel 1964; Archer and Davison 2008; CBI/Universities UK 2009; High Fliers Research 2009). Interrogating statistical records from secondary data sources, or obtaining primary data from quantitative surveys

means larger samples can be obtained and data is used to infer links to the wider population. Obtaining rich, qualitative data from a large sample is time consuming, heavy on resources and therefore costly in both time and money.

Silverman (2006) argues however that quantitative data is not necessarily favoured by the public as value free. The public can be suspicious or sceptical of statistics because governments are political agents, who can be selective, favouring the publishing of numbers that are beneficial to them.

The research methodologies may have influenced my initial investigation and the choice for a mixed method approach. I planned to begin with a quantitative study to establish “broad contours” and then use qualitative research to “look in depth” (Silverman 2006;48). At this first stage of the research, I did not anticipate that the qualitative data would be more useful than the quantitative material and this would be the material that I wanted to focus on. It was at this point, that I revisited methodology literature and looked for a suitable method to analyse the material gained.

The research themes of higher education, creative industries and creative work do not fit into one discipline area. The themes overlap into various disciplines namely education, sociology, social policy and business studies. Discrete disciplines have cultures and practices in their research approaches. It is very important to acknowledge this. My first literature exploration along with my initial reading around employability in British government policy, touched upon positivist research in a wide range of disciplines. The research methodologies influenced my initial investigation and moved me to decide that a positivist approach was the most appropriate for Stage One of the research with graduates.

Delamont (2005;7) argues that most sociologists in the world, especially in USA, are positivists in practice. They are using traditional surveys by interview

and questionnaire, use SPSS analysis and are writing journals and reports in a conventional hypothetical-deductive format.

Somekh (2005;7) critiques that the discipline of education is not discrete as it draws on other subjects and research methodologies. There are differences of opinion about the purposes of education based on ideological ideals. Some see education as the benefit of the individual and others on producing the human resources needed to maintain the economy. Therefore educational research has a political dimension. Educational researchers through funding mechanisms have been pressured to adopt an evidence based approach. The need for “bureaucrats to justify spending on education has led to increasing demands for ‘hard data’ generated by pseudo-positivist methods” (Somekh 2005;8)

Payne (2005;9) argues that social policy is politically preoccupied with official data and documents and “on placing official and informal policies on how social resources are distributed in a broad historical, philosophical and social context”. External, state funding in relation to public policy favours a positivist approach.

Thorpe (2005;10) posits quantitative methods of analysis and model building dominate many business schools’ curriculum, especially in the USA and France. A “best fit” approach uses both quantitative and qualitative methods but a positivist viewpoint is predominant. There has been a gradual recognition that positivist methods are not always appropriate and that methodological approaches are culturally bound (ibid).

Having reviewed critiques of the positivist approach, I nevertheless decided to choose the positivist approach as being the most appropriate for Stage One of this research because I wished to use the same kind of surveys that evidenced the employers’ voice, to compare them with the findings of the graduate voice.

In adopting the two staged approach using bricolage methods, my research data has been enriched and acknowledges complexity. Stage One generated data from a larger sample which brought breadth and understanding and Stage Two gained depth and rich narratives. Like Silverman suggests, the first stage established “broad contours of the field” (Silverman 2006;48), which later I interrogated with more intensity.

## METHODOLOGY PART TWO

This second part of the methodology chapter documents the search for an appropriate mode of appraising the survey responses. I found the most valuable data generated in my initial field research with the graduate sample was the qualitative data. The qualitative responses from the graduate respondents revealed what they thought about employability, how they defined it and what they have personally found useful in their own undergraduate courses. It gave me different insights and other constructs, some different to my own understandings of undergraduate curricular and student identities.

As explored earlier, I do not place this research exclusively in any one paradigm, although it fits most within the participatory paradigm in Figure 9 (on page 179). I am taking a more holistic approach which borrows from many. It is iterative, involving realities which can be co-created through both internal and external worlds, is experiential, participatory, a living knowledge which is interrelated to others in time, place and space. In summary it is intricate and the multi-methods embrace this complexity.

### Taking a Grounded Approach

I sought a collaborative investigation (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997; Lincoln and Guba 2003) to analyse my data and inform the second stage of the research with undergraduates.

When exploring methods to analyse the graduate data, (Cohen, Manion et al. 2007; Bryman 2008) I rejected content analysis because I wanted to avoid merely measuring, or counting phenomena. I sought to understand the graduates' views. I also chose not to use predefined categories for coding which were viewed as important in the dominant employability discourse



explored in the literature review such as the need for 'skills', 'work experience' and 'employability interventions' in undergraduate degrees. Instead I wanted a way to seek the graduates' own conceptions of employability using the richness of their words and actions. I chose not to build a case-study for each participant because I wanted to compare their perceptions with each other. I wanted to see if there were any patterns or comparisons between and across the data, particularly across graduate and undergraduate perceptions. I also wanted to include others (academics, practitioners, other graduates and undergraduates and employers) to ensure that the research findings were critiqued and internally validated. I sought a co-produced methodology.

To fit with this iterative approach I decided on a grounded approach as it appeared a relevant way to analyse my graduate data through a data informed lens looking for new insights.

I believe there are multiple meanings in the way actors interpret their world, their actions and their place within it. I consider that as a researcher I am part of these conceptualisations and interpretations and that I need to acknowledge my involvement, viewpoint and bias. Charmaz (2000) refers to this as co-constructing. Her approach fitted my quest for a more iterative and collaborative methodology.

Charmaz (ibid) has been highly influential in my methodological approach as well as my writing approach. She advocates overtly addressing the researcher's involvement by writing in the first person, weaving the researcher's critique with the experiences and narratives of those that she researches, in order to bring the research alive and live this co-construction. The researcher becomes transparently involved in all stages of the research which includes the research findings, conclusions and ways forward for the research.

Being a lecturer in a higher education institution, means I inhabit the world in which I research and become part of the interpretations that I investigate. I am an educated, white, middle-class, middle-aged female.

I am arguing that employability appears to have multiple meanings, is experienced in different ways and is a contested concept. I aim to gain an understanding of the different interpretations and experiences of students and graduates in relation to employability and their undergraduate degrees. I accept that I am part of the world that I am researching and through interpreting the interpretations of others, I become part of those interpretations.

## Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative, exploratory approach used to develop mid-range substantive theory. It is useful when studying phenomena that are contested or not fully understood. Grounded theory is a “theory generating research methodology” (Corbin and Holt 2005:49). The end product is to gain,

...an integrated theoretical formulation that gives understanding about how persons or organisations or communities experience and respond to events that occur.

(ibid)

Corbin and Holt (2005) use Hage (1972) to explain that a theory is interpreted, as a set of concepts that are integrated through a series of relational statements. The purpose of grounded theory research is to reveal a theory; therefore the user of grounded theory should not enter the research process with a pre-determined outcome or hypothesis. Grounded Theory, is an “inductive, theory discovery methodology” where the researcher is able to

develop an understanding of “the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data” (Martin and Turner 1986;141). It does not require the researcher to conceive preliminary hypotheses, yet still provides a rigorous, detailed and systematic method of analysis (Jones and Alony 2011). It gives the researcher greater freedom to explore the research area, allowing issues to emerge (Glaser 1978; Glaser 1992; Glaser 1998; Glaser 2001; Bryant 2002) and gives rigorous insight into areas that can be relatively unknown to the researcher, cited in Jones and Alony (2011).

Literature reviews are left until the end or are iterative (and on going throughout the research process) to avoid determining the data. Clearly the user’s belief system and general/personal perspective will influence the process and give some bias, however the researcher aims to gain theory that is rooted in the data and derives from the participants’ responses and interpretations of events. The reconstruction of these events by the participants, are then further filtered by the interpretation of the researcher, who then constructs a theoretical formulation (Corbin and Holt 2005). Validations of these interpretations can be tested by increasing the participant sample, known as theoretical sampling and if possible returning the interpretations back to the original or comparable participants for their agreement.

Charmaz argues that grounded theory is not a recipe book with exact stages that must be followed in order to produce the perfect research. It can be used creatively by those who want to only borrow from the coding, to gain more systematic analysis of qualitative data or by those that want to use all the principles as a methodical research process.

Researchers can draw on the flexibility of grounded theory without transforming it into rigid prescriptions concerning data collection,

analysis, theoretical leanings and epistemological positions.

(Charmaz 2006;176)

Grounded theory was pioneered by Glaser and Strauss arguing for legitimate qualitative research in its own right. Although Glaser and Strauss divided and moved into separately defined areas of grounded theory, their original work challenged the assumptions that qualitative methods were unsystematic and inferior to quantitative instruments (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It broke assumptions that qualitative research was unable to generate theory. Grounded theory has evolved since this original work, there are “probably as many versions of grounded theory as there were grounded theorists” (Dey 1999;2).

Most grounded theories are substantive theories because they interpret problems in specific substantive areas of study. There are arguments that formal theory can be found that cross these substantive areas, applicable across a wider context, for example Glaser and Strauss’s theory of status passage (Glaser and Strauss 1971) and Charmaz’s study of supernormal identity (Charmaz 1987).

This latter research is influenced by Charmaz’s understanding of grounded theory. Her interpretation is summarised as follows. Grounded theorists study data and separate, sort and synthesise this data through coding. Coding is where labels are attached to segments of data in order to compare data and make comparisons.

Through studying data, comparing data, writing memos, researchers define areas that best fit and interpret the data as tentative analytic categories. When questions arise and gaps in categories appear, researchers seek data to

answer questions and fill gaps through further data collection and theoretical sampling for theory construction rather than population representativeness.

As the research proceeds, these categories become theoretical as researchers engage in successive levels of analysis. The literature review is then developed after independent analysis (Charmaz 2006;3).

Charmaz concedes that researchers through their bias will already have some preconceived ideas of the research. Charmaz asserts that this researcher bias should be made explicit and embraced in the research process as part of the co-construction process. Researchers are part of the world we study and the data we collect.

Thorough reading of the literature should be left until after independent data collection, to avoid hypotheses. This helps the researcher focus on the actual data and find perhaps original interpretations. Charmaz, unlike Glaser, does not believe theory is “discovered” and produces “objective” findings as argued in scientific experiments. She argues that theory is an interpretation of the studied world, because it is an interpretation, it is an interpreted picture not an exact picture of it. Exact pictures cannot exist within the human world consisting of multiple constructions, however each interpretation has validity and authenticity (Charmaz 2006;10).

In summary, a grounded approach is appropriate to this research project because it explores experiences and takes a holistic approach (Goulding 1998; Charmaz 2006) which addresses complex phenomena (Charmaz 2006). It looks to find alternative perspectives and new voices without preconceived hypotheses (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978) and aims for systematic and rigorous methods of analysis (Jones and Alony 2011). It seeks to generate findings arising directly from the data (Martin and Turner 1986) and aims to gain meaningful emergent concepts (Charmaz 2006).

Taking a grounded approach accepts that knowledge is not static. Knowledge can be ephemeral. This research approach seeks a contemporary understanding of what that knowledge is. Grounded theory provides,

...a lens that that does not bias emergence with *a priori* assumptions and does not thrust forward a selection of preconceived theories from which the researcher must explain the socio-technical phenomena.

(Jones and Alony 2011;97)

## Coding

The analysis of data has a focus on systematic coding (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Corbin and Holt 2005; Charmaz 2006) and the development of codes within the data. When all the data has been coded, the codes are sorted into key and sub themes (categories and concepts). These themes become categories for a set of common concepts that link with a number of related sub-concepts.

This method of coding is used in the analysis of the graduate and undergraduate data. Following the 'constant comparative analysis method', each set of data is contrasted with other sets of data. The preliminary concepts generated by the graduates may not relate to the first and final year undergraduate codes. There maybe non-conformity, however the key concepts found in the majority will be seen as the most significant. The key categories will become the salient themes.

It was anticipated that every single theme that arose would not be explored in the findings because the research study would have to limit itself to only the significant, key ones. However, the data would be validated by taking the analysis and findings, back to other research participants, who may be able to

corroborate the interpretations (Eisenhardt 1989) because they have similar student experiences (i.e. completed undergraduate degrees in creative disciplines) and completed them in the same or similar institutions.

## Risk in Taking a Grounded Approach

A methodology that takes a more holistic approach will have critics from many paradigms who will argue ontological and epistemological differences.

Although grounded theory uses interpretivist and constructivist tools, it originates from objectivism/positivism, which makes internal misalignment the major concern (Bryant 2002). The language used such as theory, discovery and emergent (Glaser and Strauss 1967) suggests an objective realist perspective and one true reality (Locke 2001).

Charmaz (2006) argues that there are multiple realities, see above, and stresses that theory is not discovered so misalignment should not be a significant concern. She argues that Glaser himself had a strong positivist background which he brought into the Glaser/Strauss partnership.

Grounded Theory is linked to American pragmatism and the symbolic interactionist school of sociology, lying in an interpretive paradigm (Goulding 1998; Locke 2001). Glaser (2001) argued that Grounded Theory did not belong to any one paradigm and that it was an alternative to all paradigms.

Together Glaser and Strauss brought systematic rigor to qualitative research and introduced theory development as a possibility, in an area previously criticised for achieving only descriptive case studies as research outputs. Glaser (1971) argued that all and everything became data that could be interrogated. Consequently qualitative data, quantitative data, government

policies, fiction and non fiction texts, in fact anything that the researcher encountered, could be investigated through a grounded theory approach.

“Grounded theory developed to avoid highly abstract sociology” (Jones and Alony 2011;98). The Glaser/Strauss partnership was successful because it bridged the gap between uninformed theory and informed data by developing theory grounded in data (Charmaz 2006).

There are potential risks to taking a grounded approach. Some argue that a researcher who does not undertake a thorough literature review at the outset of their research study can miss substantial or significant theory (Goulding 1998; Bryant 2002; Charmaz 2006; Jones and Alony 2011).

This aspect initially concerned me. However, the requirement of a PhD proposal meant I had to include a preliminary literature review which drew attention to the dominant employability models within the literature. I left a more systematically thorough analysis of literature until later in the research process. Jones and Alony (2011) argue that the unconventional research process may alienate the potential recipients of the research findings. The unconventional use of the first person within the whole research process and in the writing up of thesis was initially a leap of faith for me. I was alarmed that using ‘I’ maybe seen as irregular and outside of the conventions of a PhD research project. Consequently I sought reassurance from my supervisors, the institution, the Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) and other academics in and outside of the institution, before I continued using the first person in the whole approach.



## Approach to Analysis

Memos were kept and were ongoing as part of the research process. These memos reflect upon the research process and record researcher thinking, themes, reading and directions in the research.

Data in the survey questionnaire relating to the following qualitative questions: *15. On reflection what was it within your degree programme that helped to prepare you most for employment and why? 18. How could your degree have been developed to help you acquire greater employability? and 19. What if anything has inhibited you from achieving your work aspirations?* were coded to identify concepts and these concepts were recorded onto an Excel spreadsheet. Where possible the concepts came from the data itself, 'in vitro', for example the term "exposure" was used by a graduate to explain an individual's relationship with industry. Related concepts were then sorted together, to form umbrella categories.

The graduates did specify ways to develop their creative potential in their undergraduate experience. Collating the categories in the coding, the graduates identified successful, key factors in both the curricular and co-curricular undergraduate experience, which they believed developed their creative employability.

The findings from the graduate sample are discussed in detail in the next chapter *Research Findings and Analysis*. However, the graduate findings are referred to very briefly within this chapter to demonstrate the iterative nature of this research, and how the data from Stage One, directly fed into developing theory. The Figure 10, The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the

Undergraduate Experience below, is repeated for convenience for the reader, in order to discuss briefly these findings and their relation to developing theory.

**Figure 10** The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience



There appeared to be external and internal factors that graduates perceived were important in their undergraduate experience. Both were salient, the external factors (understanding how the industry worked) that made it more likely on graduation to find work in the area they aspired to work in; and the internal factors (graduates seeing themselves able to work in the industry) that gave graduates the confidence to apply to work in the industry.

However, despite these factors it seems that graduates, to potentially work in the industry, need most of all to gain confidence. Confidence gained through understanding the industry and confidence gained through imagining themselves able to work within in it. How these graduates/students see themselves as professionals, confident, with an identity in the industry, is important.

Graduates seem to gain their confidence when they see themselves as having abilities as a creative artist, graduate producer or creator. Students understanding the industry and students understanding themselves in the industry, is needed in tandem. The graduate notion of employability in the undergraduate experience is looking out to understand work and looking in, to understand themselves as workers.

Through drawing these analytical categories together from the graduate data, and looking at the relationships between them, a theory begins to develop. Theory, as defined by Hage (1972) earlier, is a set of concepts integrated through a series of relational statements; my developing theory was at this stage:

*To increase the likelihood of a graduate gaining (potential) work in the creative industries a graduate needs to have had meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work in, coupled with opportunities to gain an understanding of their worth within it. This*

*understanding is gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area.*

The lack of relevant, skill acquisition was not identified as a main obstacle to finding work in the industry of choice. Maybe this is because it is assumed by graduates that students need these skills. Graduates believed that there were obstacles to finding creative work that were not only particular to a recession. Graduates identify lack of personal industry contacts and money as being the main obstacles to accessing and sustaining creative employment. Personal contacts are needed to fight competition for opportunities. Money is needed to finance long periods of unpaid internship or work experience. Cash flow is needed to sustain a career of contract working, portfolio working, project working and sole trading. It appears creative work is becoming a career for the privileged.

These findings were shared and disseminated at many events, teaching sessions and conferences (see Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback*). These activities were used to seek feedback and critique as part of the collaborative and iterative methodology.

Stage One research took a different course to that initially expected. The questions requiring qualitative answers allowed graduates to interrogate their concepts of employability, without their answers being predetermined by the researcher. The data generated guided the development of the research and uncovered aspects of graduate employability that had not originally been revealed through initial reading, such as the overriding need for confidence and self-belief in graduates' identity as creative producers in their industry, the importance of networks and contacts to gain entry in the industry, often through unpaid work experience and consequently the importance of money to survive the unpredictable environment of creative work.

## Stage Two – Research with Current Undergraduates

This second stage field research takes a grounded approach to designing interview methodology to gain undergraduate narratives from a sample of 20 undergraduates undertaking creative industries degrees.

The interviews sought to answer the research questions. How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees? In particular they aimed to:

- to gain an understanding of the undergraduates' personal histories prior to university
- to gain an understanding of what undergraduates believe is needed for their graduate work aspirations
- to ask the undergraduates what, in their experiences, has helped them acquire what is needed to be successful in their work aspirations
- to ask the undergraduates what they think they need to do further to meet their aspirations and how they would develop the undergraduate experience to meet their aspirations
- to ask the undergraduates how their perceptions of themselves have changed during the undergraduate experience and how they see themselves in the future, after graduation

I chose architecture and dance as the undergraduate degrees to collect data from the undergraduates undertaking them for various reasons, mainly because they offer a contrast. Architecture has a professional body but dance does not, which makes the two disciplines distinctive. Creative subjects are taught predominantly in colleges and post 1992 universities. Only architecture and music have a strong presence in Russell Group universities (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011). Architecture graduates are more likely to be employed after graduation than dance graduates (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

Taking the 'Destination of Leavers from HE institutions' (DHLE) published by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA 2005) from 2004/ 2005, creative graduates are 53.7% less likely to have full-time paid work than non-creative graduates (57.39%). The former also are more likely to work in a voluntary or unpaid capacity, are less likely to study at postgraduate level and twice more likely to be unemployed than their non-creative peers (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

However, when the aggregate figures are broken down into creative sectors, they reveal better performing subjects than the non-creative graduate group. Those better performing are advertising, writing, publishing and architecture (65.88% and 59.19%) against the non-creative group of 57.39% (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011;298). Salaries are inconsistent, architecture and creative technology graduates have the highest earnings, a mean of £18,000 and £17,000 respectively, with craft, performing arts, drama, dance and music, film and television graduates earning the lowest (Comunian, Faggian et al. 2011).

Lecturers teaching architecture and dance degree courses from pre 1992 universities and a post 1992 university, have given me anecdotal evidence about their disciplines. Architecture has more clearly defined graduate employment roles compared to the graduate employment roles in dance. More

middle class students are taking degrees in architecture than before. It is seen as a prestigious profession. Architecture degree courses at pre 1992 institutions seem like 'finishing schools' for affluent students after independent school. Architecture degrees now attract less working class students than in the past because they are long courses and therefore expensive to self-fund. However architecture in post 1992 institutions are attracting some mature students who work in an area related to architecture already and want to qualify with a degree to improve their employment opportunities.

Lecturers who were involved in the ten staff workshops, (see Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback* item one Staff Workshops) saw architecture and dance at different ends of the creative spectrum, primarily because architecture has a professional body and dance does not, making the two disciplines distinctive. Dance is less prescriptive in terms of curriculum/programme structure and has many vocational routes upon graduation with no ongoing development or quality stipulation from a professional body. Many students choose dance as a degree because they are passionate about dance and perceive a degree in any subject as helping them to gain a better job. Dance attracts a mix of both working class and middle class students who choose dance because they love it and want to continue the subject post 18.

In dance, women are the dominant gender in university degrees but do not maintain this dominance in senior employment roles in the discipline. More women are being attracted to studying architecture at university which has a history of being a male dominated discipline. However women gaining employment in architecture after graduation, is perceived as challenging. Participants were asked at various events (see Appendix I *Dissemination and Feedback*, item six New lecturers on a PgCert in HE recruited from creative industries, Item nine, The Education in a Changing Environment 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference 2011 and ten, SRHE Annual Conference December 2011) if they agreed with the two subjects chosen as being appropriate for

further study. There were no objections or strong arguments to include other disciplines.

This anecdotal evidence about the two disciplines is useful because I aimed to gain undergraduate narratives from a range of students with a rich mix of aspirations, personal backgrounds, experiences and entry points into higher education. I chose individual interviews rather than focus groups, because I wanted participants to give their own stories, without being influenced by the views, perceptions or experiences of others.

The interview sample would be:

- 5 final year undergraduates of a degree in architecture (at the end of their degree)
- 5 final year undergraduates of a degree in dance (at the end of their degree)
- 5 first year undergraduates of a degree in architecture (in the first few weeks of their degree)
- 5 first year undergraduates of a degree in dance (in the first few weeks of their degree)

Comprehensive coding of qualitative data for analysis, findings and theory development using a grounded approach would be undertaken. Any theoretical sampling would be sought if any gaps were identified in the data or further data was needed to be obtained. After all the data collection and analysis has been completed, the salient themes would be used to inform the iterative, ongoing *Literature Review*.



## Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews are increasingly used in the social sciences as a research method in their own right, coupled with expanding methodological literature on how to carry out interview research (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

Glaser and Strauss' pioneer work in hospitals *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967) brought the qualitative interview to centre stage and from it a qualitative research movement (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Qualitative research methods have moved into many disciplines; education, psychology, marketing, anthropology, sociology, business, human geography and nursing science to name a few (ibid).

The place of interviewing in British cultural life may be influential in the decisions interviewees take when asked to participate in qualitative research. Interviewees such as university undergraduate students are likely to be familiar with the interview scenario and may make value judgements about qualitative interviews' contribution to valid research. Interviewees are likely to be very clear about whether they are comfortable sharing their experiences for public scrutiny. They may be aware of the possible negative outcomes of publicising the self within a public arena. Their anonymity as interviewees becomes not only a reassuring factor in deciding whether to participate but also takes on an ethical reassurance that they will be represented fairly, kept safe and protected by the research outcomes and the researcher.

“Interview work is a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009;15). The tension between the pursuit of knowledge and ethics in research is a delicate balance (Sennett 2004) cited in (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) stress three areas of interviewing that are salient in their approach and seem relevant to this research study.

### *Interviewing as Craft*

Interviewing can be learnt through practice. This contrasts with positivist methodology, seeing interviewing within the social sciences following rules and predetermined specific methods.

### *Interviewing as Social Production of Knowledge*

Interviewing is an active, social process where both parties, the interviewer and the interviewee, co-produce knowledge together. Knowledge is produced as a conversation “contextual, linguistic, narrative and pragmatic” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009;18).

### *Interviewing as a Social Practice*

An emphasis on the consequences of the research, with consideration for the ethical issues in interview practice and research outcomes, as well the social impact of the research findings being important.

## Ensuring Rigour in Qualitative Research

A “central methodological issue for quantitative researchers is the reliability of the interview schedule and the representative research” (Seale and Silverman 1997;379).

Authenticity rather than reliability is often the issue in qualitative research. The aim is usually to gain an ‘authentic’ understanding of

people's experiences and it is believed that open-ended questions are the most effective route towards this end.

(Seale and Silverman 1997;379)

Interviewers may simply ask "tell me your story" (ibid). Seale and Silverman (1997) argue these qualitative interviews are usually with small samples which gather rich data bringing authentic understanding of participants' experiences. The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is not viewed as scientific and objective but defined in political terms.

Exploring the interviewee's and the interviewer's perspectives and relationship with explicit terms brings greater understanding to the analysis. Similar to Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) assertion that the co-production of knowledge has social and ethical connotations, Charmaz summarises the political relationship with her notion of the co-construction of the data between participants (Charmaz 2006).

Seale and Silverman (1997) cite Scheff's (1995;74) single case research "intensive verbatim records of single case.... can generate data driven theories". Seal and Silverman (1997) evidence that audio recordings have become a significant research methodology for health research (Maynard 1991; Drew and Heritage 1992). Transcribed interviews, compared to field notes, provide an accurate documentation of naturally occurring interactions and conversations. These data recordings are highly reliable and researchers can return to them both as primary and secondary resources, in order to develop new theory or explore existing hypotheses (Seale and Silverman 1997).

Seale and Silverman (1997) argue that processes to seek rigour and validity are maturing within qualitative, health research. They list a variety of methods that have been developed to counter the criticism that qualitative researchers cannot

seek validity and only quantitative, scientific research is able to follow prescribed formula.

Seale and Silverman (1997) argue that in our everyday lives we continually sort fact from fiction and that science is no different. Qualitative research is criticised for being anecdotal. However, presenting simple accounts of events allows readers to make up their own minds about how representative or widespread a particular instance is. Seale and Silverman (ibid) cite using computer programmes to mark instances of recurring phenomena, e.g. 33 instances of x out of 40 people. Instances that are seen as significant by the researchers may also have their deviant case analysis explored, to enhance reliability. For example, instances of violence can be counteracted with instances of non-violence, or instances of no support with instances of support. A systematic coding scheme makes it possible to conduct deviant case analysis. This can relieve criticisms of anecdotal research but can also make the data more inclusive. Gathering stories from different people or different cohorts, such as neighbours, friends or relatives, gives different perspectives.

Seale and Silverman's (1997;4) understanding of inclusive research, asking "tell me your story about how you came to be here" seems appropriate as a way into gaining narratives and different perspectives from different cohorts of students, at different stages of their education or working lives, in particular first years, final years and graduates who graduated from their undergraduate degree within the last four years (2006-2009).

Triangulation in my research is gained through taking an iterative, holistic approach that gains perspectives from undergraduates and graduates but also from the communities of practice that relate to the experiences of that sample, such as other graduates, other undergraduates, practitioners, academics and employers. Their collective views validate the interpretations and outcomes and give internal validity to the research findings. Flick (1998:229) argues that using

multi methods or triangulation with a combination of perspectives and different participants within a single study adds rigour, breadth, depth, complexity, richness and greater understanding of the phenomenon in question. Richardson (1997) asserts that different perspectives and concerted input, reflect the image of a crystal. A crystal represents different perspectives, shades, patterns and colours which give a greater understanding of the problem and its issues. Triangulation presents several realities and the researcher as bricoleur works within and between competing paradigms and perspectives to investigate these realities (Denzin and Lincoln 2003).

Silverman and Searle explore transcribed audio tapes written 'verbatim' without grammatical or other tidying up and transcripts that have been transcribed using coding standards from conversation analysis. They suggest detailed attention needs to be paid to the quality of the qualitative data and the ways we analyse the contents. Researchers can develop the reliability and validity of qualitative data through full transcripts of interviews, systematic coding and inclusion of the stories from different cohorts.

In this research, I intend for the interviews to seek understanding of students' undergraduate experiences and see the interviews as an interpretation of people's understood realities and meanings. Researcher bias is made explicit, I am part of the world in which I am researching and I view the interviews as a co-production (Charmaz 2006; Heron and Reason 1997; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Lincoln and Guba 2003) of knowledge and social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. However I check these interpretations by involving many other parties to critique my interpretations in order to seek authenticity and internal validity.

The researcher is aware of the social and ethical impact of the outcomes of the interviews and will aim to include stories from different cohorts and will seek rich data from a small sample of 20. The researcher interprets the interviewee's

interpretation and should seek validity, accuracy and honest representation of the interviewee for ethical as well as research authenticity. Verbatim, full transcripts will be sought for each interview and interviewees will be allowed to withdraw. All interviewees will be made anonymous and their transcripts anonymised to ensure that they cannot be identified.

The sample does not aim to be representative or claim any generalisability generality vis a viz the population as a whole The sample will aim to include first and third years' narratives of their undergraduate experiences at a point where they begin university and at a point when their university time is coming to an end. The sample will be used to gain the student voice and aims to gain understanding of student perceptions in relation to the broad areas of creative undergraduate degrees, university experiences and conceptualisations of graduate employability and creative work. In summary, the intention is to gain rich data from the student voice to supplement the employer voices that exert influence in government policy.

Ethical approval was sought and the interview questions were decided (see Appendix IV *Information Sheet, Interview Consent Form and Interview Questions- semi-structured framework*). In order to practise the craft of interviewing (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), a pilot interview was carried out with a recent graduate from a B.A. Honours in Dance from a post 1992 university. The interview was role played from beginning to end as if it were a real interview with the same process as anticipated with the first and third year undergraduates. I previously requested that after the interview she would give me feedback on the experience. After the interview, I asked the interviewee to debrief on the process and give me candid feedback.

This interview was an excellent way to practise interviewing and gave me the reassurance that I would be able to gain rich, authentic data from the interview sample. I was delighted that the pilot interviewee said I had excellent rapport

and that she felt comfortable and safe to allow herself to talk and give her story. She said that she was surprised that she had so much to say and had found reflecting back on her undergraduate experience insightful and enjoyable.

She advised me to ask the question, “Tell me your story about where you have come from and how you came to be at X studying your course?” at the outset of the interview, after the interview consent had been given and forms signed. Asking this question she felt would allow the participant to talk about their experience and identify areas that they found to be relevant. It was a question that revealed what “made that person tick” and was a way of gaining insight and understanding of their perspectives, values and perceptions of their discipline, their identity and their life prior to coming to university.

The pilot interviewee also said that she did “not like the word employability” and that it was certainly not a word that she would use in relation to her dance work or graduate work. She said that she did not think employability had recognition in creative work or creative life.

Her response gave me some insight into how she conceptualised the word and also her disdain for it. Because of her reaction, I intended to use the word employability in the interviews with undergraduates as I wanted to gain their reactions and pursue their perceptions of its construct. I wanted to see what employability meant to undergraduates and to ask them where they thought their constructs came from.

The pilot interviewee highlighted that interviewing is a social process where knowledge is co-produced. The social production of knowledge (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) immediately became tangible. The use of the linguistic and the narrative by participants in the conversation within the interview became particularly important. I felt suddenly very responsible for the participant and wanted to really listen, to make sure that I was representing her in an honest

and fair way. The social practice of interviewing (ibid) and the truthful representation of the participants became real.

In summary, the ethical outcomes of the interviews and the care of the research participant, supporting them to give their voices in a candid but safe environment, became as important to me as the research consequences of the interviews within this research study. I had experienced Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) theory in practice by undertaking the pilot interview. This equipped me to embark on the process of undertaking the 20 interviews with diligence, a sound ethical foundation and an outlook of professional care. My aim was to represent the voices of the 20 interviewees as authentically, honestly and ethically as possible, while contributing to the overarching research questions within the research study: *How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?*

All stages of the research analysis used coding which generated themes rooted in the research data. I had intended to use NVivo software for coding as I believed this would be a convenient and a pragmatic way to label, to record and to sort the codes. However, in reality I found this computer assisted method very limiting. When I used the NVivo package it encouraged me to use only content analysis and build lists of common items. I found the themes becoming simplistic lists and that I was losing the authenticity of the data, the linguistic narrative and the participants' meanings. I abandoned NVivo to focus on the manual labelling, coding, recording and sorting of codes through a cutting and physically sorting approach in order to compare sections of text. I was comforted by Charmaz's (2006) commentary about how she finds manual coding more authentic and insightful compared to using computer software for the coding and the analysis of data.



This chapter outlined the methodology taken. The next chapter, Chapter Four *Research Findings and Analysis*, analyses the 20 interviews in depth and outlines the findings of all stages of the research; the first year undergraduates, the final year undergraduates and the graduate perceptions of their undergraduate experiences and creative work.

The *Research Findings and Analysis* chapter presents an overview of the research findings. It will demonstrate the iterative nature of this methodology, how each stage of the research shapes the next, determining the overall research framework. The salient themes from each stage of the research are brought together. The relationships between the themes are explored to reveal insights or theory using Hage's (1972) definition for theory development. These themes and the developing theory inform the *Literature Review* and are used in shaping the synthesis of the research project. Chapter five, *Synthesis – Developing a contemporary perspective of employability* brings together the three research questions, the literature review, methodology and the research findings to give a contemporary perspective.

## **4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter explores the differences and similarities in undergraduate experiences in order to trace the perceptions that change for participants and those that persist through the creative undergraduate degree. First year undergraduates, third year undergraduates and recent graduates who have undertaken a creative undergraduate degree in the UK are interrogated.

The chapter begins with the first and third year undergraduate interviews. The coding process is explained. Charmaz's (2006) grounded approach is used to analyse the interviews. The differences and similarities between first and third year undergraduate data are discussed. The chapter continues with reflections from first and third year undergraduates about how their degrees could be developed to prepare them for potential creative work after graduation. Employability is conceptualised from undergraduate perspectives.

The chapter moves on to address graduate experiences of undergraduate degrees by drawing on the questionnaires. The graduates identified what they believe is needed to gain creative work and acknowledged key, success factors in their undergraduate experience which developed them and helped to prepare them for potential, creative work. The chapter closes with an emerging theory about creative employability through taking a grounded approach.

### **Stage Two: The Undergraduate Interviews**

At a post 1992 British university, ten interviews were arranged with final year students from Dance and Architecture. The sample was a convenience sample consisting of the first five respondents from each discipline who agreed to be

interviewed. The interviewees were selected with the criteria that they were final year students of the chosen disciplines of dance or architecture.

All final year undergraduate students were 21 or 22 years of age. Ten interviews, five from Architecture BA Honours and five from Dance (four from Single Honours Dance with one from Combined Honours Dance and Education) were undertaken in May at the end of their final year.

All interviews with the first year undergraduates were completed within one month of them enrolling as new students at a post 1992 British university. The students were a range of ages from 18 to 26. The ten interviews consisted of five from Architecture BA Honours and five from Single Honours Dance.

Like the third year sample, the first year sample was a convenience sample and consisted of the first five respondents from each discipline who agreed to be interviewed. The interviewees were selected with the criteria that they were first year students of the chosen disciplines of dance or architecture.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with participants' complete consent. The interviews were then anonymised to remove references to names of universities, home towns, tutors and peers. Each transcript was renamed with a first name, which was not their real name, in order to identify the transcript data within the thesis.

## Coding the Transcripts

Coding has become a central analytical procedure in grounded theory (Dey 2007). Some claim that analysis is coding but most agree that coding is data management (ibid). Once data is coded, the data can be sorted into category heads which makes it easier to compare both within and across categories.

Dey (2007) brings in a holistic dimension to the way codes are interpreted and discussed. He argues it is through narrative, story telling, that humans make sense of and structure experience. He claims it is not only the storyline of the analyst that is of interest but also that of the actors. The actors, including agencies as well as individuals, “engaged in the drama of events also constitute their experience in terms of unfolding stories and overarching plots” (Dey 2007;185). The coding becomes elements of the stories from which people make sense of their experience. The researcher or analyst is both representing the process and explaining it. Dey (2007;185) cites Polkinghorne (1988;185) who demands the “practical understanding on the part of the narrator”.

Each transcript was coded with initial codes using Charmaz’s guidelines for coding. “Initial coding should stick closely to the data” (Charmaz 2006;47). With this in mind, the coding kept close to the original language within the transcript. This aimed to retain the participants’ language patterns and usage; “Try to see actions in each segment of data rather than applying pre-existing categories” (Charmaz 2006;47). By using an open mind, rather than an empty head (Dey 1999), open coding looks to code and interpret the data, taking an emergent approach.

I hoped that by using this open coding method, I would reveal discoveries from the data which I had not anticipated through the process of the Stage One research. This emergent approach could bring fresh insight to the data. I wanted to use Charmaz’s practical, systematic approach rather than adopting a more traditional, hypothetical strategy which anticipated concepts or identified codes before data collection. I wanted to avoid the latter approach, as this could mean that, in the analysis of my data, I could ‘force’ the data to fit with my preconceived codes. I wanted instead to let the codes emerge from the data, to analyse the data with initial codes which are “provisional, comparative and grounded in the data” (Charmaz 2006;48).

Star (2007) argues that a code has both an attachment and a separation to the researcher. The researcher distances themselves from the data in order to code. However the researcher codes the data using their own perspectives, their own views and their own ways to interpret the data, through their own lenses. The researcher is therefore both attached to their data whilst interrogating it with some separation.

Star believes a code sets up a relationship with your data and your respondents. Star compares the coding process to Winnicott's (1965) 'attachment-separation cycle', there is no roadmap and the researcher has to find their own way. Through constantly comparing data and moving through the data, the researcher loses and gains, attaches and separates.

This takes a very different perspective to the first path breaking grounded theorists' assertions about codes (Glaser and Strauss 1967) being 'discovered' in the data by objective researchers. In this seminal text (Glaser and Strauss 1967) researchers are perceived as working scientifically, forensically searching the qualitative data, unearthing the codes.

However Layder (1993) argues that even Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory approach takes a more involved close up viewpoint of individuals compared to a middle range approach, such as Merton (1957) whose framework is more scientific, taking an external, objective and impersonal standpoint. Neither approach Layder (1993) asserts is any less systematic or valid. The middle range theory approach emphasizes the importance of the "collective and institutional aspects of society and their impact on the lives of individuals" (Layder 1993;5). The grounded theory approach focuses more on the importance of "processes of interaction and the way in which individuals play a part in constructing their social environment" (Layder 1993;5).

Simplistically in sociological terms, a grounded approach investigates the micro aspects of social life and the middle range theory the macro, large scale, social structure aspects. In reality, research approaches do not fit neatly into one sociological idea. However, Layder (1993) argues coherently that the difference between analysis in theory building and theory testing, is the emphasis on meaning. The grounded theory approach interprets codes from the data, strongly emphasising the subjective, the importance of meaning for the participating actors and exploring the meaning of their actions.

When interpreting the data, I consciously sought words that reflected actions within the coding. These actions aimed to reveal the thoughts or movements of the participants. If I had used only nouns to code the data, I would have developed more themes from the data (Charmaz 2006). My coding sought to use a “language of action” (Charmaz 2006;48) to represent and interpret the thinking and actions of the participants’ reflections, experiences and aspirations before, during and after university. For example it revealed the codes ‘feeling emotions’ and ‘living the discipline’ experienced by participants in the research data.

The research process is iterative, moving between data collection and analysis. “The simultaneous data collection and analysis can help you go further and deeper into the research problem” (Charmaz 2006;48). This iterative process also helps identify and develop categories to interrogate further through the later examination of literature or through deeper research or theoretical sampling.

My initial coding used a line by line process. This coding produced many codes. I used Charmaz’s (2006;50) guidelines for line by line coding to reveal detailed observations of people, actions and settings. Charmaz asserts that the participants’ actions, statements and language teach us about their worlds in

ways that we may not anticipate or could not identify through the preconceived themes or codes which arise through the interrogation of extant literature.

My interviews with undergraduate participants were in depth and detailed. The line by line, method of coding, hoped “to identify implicit concerns as well as explicit statements” from the research participants (Charmaz 2006;50). These strategies help to code by:

Breaking the data up into their component parts or properties

Defining the actions on which they rest

Looking for tacit assumptions

Explicating implicit actions and meanings

Crystallizing the significance of the points

Comparing data with data

Identifying gaps in the data

(Charmaz 2006;50)

Charmaz (2006) asserts that by using the above strategies flexibly and by following leads in your data, coding moves from initial coding to theoretical categories. This way the research builds from the ground up without “taking off on theoretical flights of fancy” (Charmaz 2006;51).

# The Coding Process

After conducting the interviews, I listened to all the interviews several times and recorded initial responses, or gut feelings to the data. For example, after Sunnil's interview I noted he was angry and felt that university had not met his expectations. In this way I recorded my first responses, before I began to interrogate the data and became distant or separate from it. It helped me record the 'first impression', and reveal any attachments or bias I made to the data initially.

The interviews were then transcribed in full. I took each interview as a text and coded it line by line, from the beginning to the end. The transcripts were then cut up in order to isolate each code and their associated text, from other codes with their connecting text.

Below are two examples of line by line coding, Codes are in red and the text of the transcript is in black. The first box is from James' transcript and the second is from Danielle's

**Figure 11** Coding

**JAMES**

Trying to get in

...just trying to get in...to...be seen..to get into whatever company is going for auditions

Taking your time

...taking your time

Taking whatever comes your way

...and just sort of take whatever that comes your way,

Seeing life as a path

..that falls in your path



## **DANIELLE**

### Talking about doing community projects

The one that we just did now (sic) was about transition adoption. So it was about fostering people, it was for foster parents, or for kids who have been fostered in, it was their story and da-da-da.

### Getting campaigns going in the community

I want to get campaigns going out...to help the community

### Helping others through dance

...how you can....how you can...influence kids... how you can help them through dance to believe in themselves

The codes were then physically laid out in a large space to sort. I coded the final year undergraduates first and these produced varying numbers of codes for each student. The students and their numbers of codes are below.

## Final Year Students

*Transcript 1 Josh, a white British male, final year Architecture undergraduate student produced 138 codes*

*Transcript 2 Tom, a white British male, final year Architecture undergraduate student produced 78 codes*

*Transcript 3 Sunnil, an Asian, British male, final year Architecture undergraduate student produced 130 codes*

*Transcript 4 Lucy, a white British female, final year Architecture undergraduate student produced 117 codes*

*Transcript 5 Jag, an Asian British male, final year Architecture undergraduate student produced 94 codes*

*Transcript 6 Jenny, a white British female final year Dance and Education undergraduate student produced 142 codes*

*Transcript 7 James, a white British male, final year Dance undergraduate student produced 112 codes*

*Transcript 8 Rebecca, a white British female, final year Dance undergraduate student produced 122 codes*

*Transcript 9 Danielle, a black, British female, final year Dance undergraduate student produced 92 codes*

*Transcript 10 Patience, a black British female, final year Dance undergraduate student produced 161 codes*

Using the same process I then coded all of the transcripts of the first year undergraduates with line by line coding. Again, I cut up the codes, to isolate each code from the other.

The student names and codes numbers are below.

## First Year Students

*Transcript 11 Veejay, an Asian, Indian male 20 year old first year Architecture undergraduate student produced 79 codes*

*Transcript 12 Saverio, a white Italian male 20 year old first year Architecture undergraduate student produced 52 codes*

*Transcript 13 Grant, a white British male 18 year old first year Architecture undergraduate student produced 70 codes*

*Transcript 14 Anna a white British female 18 year old first year Architecture undergraduate student produced 70 codes*

*Transcript 15 William, a white British male 18 year old first year Architecture undergraduate student produced 103 codes*

*Transcript 16 Giselle, a black British female 18 year old first year Dance undergraduate student produced 58 codes*

*Transcript 17 Sally, a white British female 18 year old first year Dance undergraduate student produced 79 codes*

*Transcript 18 Shelley, a black British female 18 year old first year Dance undergraduate student produced 70 codes*

*Transcript 19 Mavis, a white, British female 18 year old first year Dance undergraduate student produced 61 codes*

*Transcript 20 Tina, a white British female 26 year old first year Dance undergraduate student produced 81 codes*

The cut up codes were then compared with the other codes in the same, student cohort. First, I coded the 10 first year undergraduates by physically sorting their codes into groups of codes, on the floor of a large space.

The codes were sorted into similar areas. These similar areas were then pared down, until they made up a group of like codes. The groups of like codes were then given a name that represented all the codes in that group. The group's name is referred to as the umbrella code. The name of the umbrella code represents all the similar codes beneath it. Below, is a list of the umbrella codes for the first year undergraduates.

List of the first year undergraduate umbrella codes:

- 1. Living before university*
- 2. Choosing the discipline*
- 3. Feeling emotions*
- 4. Seeing current times as different to before*
- 5. Having a degree*
- 6. Meeting new people*
- 7. Having a destination*
- 8. Talking about others' reactions*
- 9. Speaking about time*
- 10. Influencing people in their life*
- 11. Talking about a second passion*
- 12. Affected by the environment*
- 13. Being supported by the family*
- 14. Talking about work experience*
- 15. Wanting to help others through dance*

16. *Being involved from a young age*
17. *Living the discipline*
18. *Discussing expectations of university*
19. *Imagining how they will develop at university*
20. *Seeing life after university*
21. *Studying after undergraduate degree*
22. *Talking about money*
23. *Defining the word employability*
24. *Not hearing the word employability often*
25. *Talking about employability before university*
26. *Defining success in their discipline*
27. *Talking about how you get your first work*
28. *Defining obstacles in their discipline*
29. *Leaving to chance*
30. *Feeling other first years less determined than they are*
31. *Using family to find contacts*
32. *Needing to put yourself out there*

When I had finished sorting the codes for the first year undergraduates, I then sorted all of the third year undergraduates. The codes below, give examples of the umbrella codes from the third year undergraduates.

List of the third year undergraduate umbrella codes:

1. *Talking about the journey to the start of their degree*
2. *Exploring the personal journey and imagined destinations*
3. *Discussing the journey in relation to their discipline*
4. *Talking about money in their journey*
5. *Experiencing pleasure in their journey*
6. *Talking about effort in their journey*
7. *Experiencing the university part of their journey*

8. *Reflecting on what they might develop in hindsight*
9. *Defining their concept of employability*
10. *Reflecting on the meaning of employability before university*
11. *Moving around in a global world*
12. *Using family, friends, personal contacts and industry contacts to open routes in the journey*
13. *Getting lucky*
14. *Leaving it to chance*

I then compared the codes of the first year undergraduates, to the third year undergraduates and looked for similarities and differences between the umbrella codes. After this coding, I revisited the first year data, then the third year data and finally the graduate data and looked for similarities and differences across them all.

The differences and similarities in the codes form a basis for my analysis. The next section discusses these differences and similarities in turn. The first year data is compared to the third year data and finally to the graduate data. The following findings are structured through sub headings, e.g. *Feeling and Emotions*, which are used to summarise the salient themes.

## **Differences between the First and the Third Year Undergraduates**

### **Feeling and Emotions**

There were some differences between the first and third year undergraduates of architecture and dance degrees about what they talked about in their narratives.

Grant, a first year architecture undergraduate, talked about the difficulty of leaving his fiancée to come to university. Tina, a first year dance

undergraduate, spoke of the anxiety in settling her daughter into nursery. Veejay, a first year architecture student shared his observations of being a student in India, compared to a “first lonely” student in Britain. Saverio, a first year architecture undergraduate, said he had chosen a different discipline in Italy and decided to leave that degree to study a more creative course in the UK. Saverio says this is unusual. In Italy, people only do a degree course that is related to the work they can get from their family after graduation,

“...a lot of people on my course, as I say to you before, thought that after their degree, they wouldn’t have the graduate courses because all of them are, the most part, are getting work straight from the family in Italy (sic).”

The first years have just started their degree, so talk in detail about why they chose their discipline, why they chose to do a degree and why they chose that particular university. The first year dance undergraduates, Shelley says “this was my favourite one. I love the way the courses are structured”. Giselle said “my first choice...wasn’t for me”. She explains in more detail,

“You have to go out and take extra classes. So I didn’t think it was worth paying nine grand a year...then have to pay for extra classes. So I thought this is best for me...I think I do about twelve hours of dancing throughout the week, which is really good. And then it’s just three hours of lectures”.

Tina says, “I’ve actually been out of education for about six or seven years now”. She explains, “...my mum was against all my efforts to go to university...a waste of money...she said I should work for a living”. Tina said that working in an office, had made her miserable because she was not dancing. She felt her mother had always put her down and knocked her

confidence. However, she was “independent” now, with a husband and a child. Her husband Jason “was behind her all the way”. She says,

“Jason is different...he believes you can just get things if you work for them and prepare carefully. He has helped me to build my confidence and prepare mentally for a new life. My old dance teacher told me to come here”.

Grant, a first year architecture student, says,

“I’ve wanted to be in architecture from a really young age. I remember driving through London with my dad when I was about seven and I looked at the Gerkin and at Buckingham Palace and the Emirates and Wembley. So I drove past all those and I was saying ‘I want to make one of those, Dad, when I’m older’ (laughter) and Dad said ‘Oh, the people who do that are called architects’. So I said, ‘Oh, I’ll be that when I’m older then’. And I’ve stuck hold of this since I was seven”.

The first years see the current time as particularly difficult compared to their predecessors, firstly, because they are paying higher fees and are aware of ever increasing debt and secondly, because they perceive the workplace as particularly competitive and challenging. This makes them focus on what they perceive will be the hardships, what obstacles they envisage and how success maybe achieved. Shelley says, “It is going to be difficult and funds have been cut...I will need some help and support because dance is a physical life...its just if you are really injured, you need support”. William, a first year architecture student, thinks, “London is an expensive city to live, work, rent and it takes a long time to be able to have the funds”. Sally, a first year dance undergraduate believes “It’s always good to have something like that on paper. And also, with like dancing, it’s so competitive...I’d like to say I had a first in something, that’s what I want to aim for...” Anna, a first year architecture student says, “If I don’t



manage the stages that will be tricky because it makes it so long. Then if jobs are scarce at the end of it...it's taken me seven years to get that".

The first year students seem to make their degree decisions based on what they are feeling. Many talk about their emotions in relation to the subject they have chosen, William, a first year architecture undergraduate explains, "I'm doing what I love...restoration of old buildings". Mavis, "loves dance", Giselle is "alive in dance", Shelley "lives dance". If Giselle doesn't enjoy the dance experience, she will move to an area of dance that she thinks she may enjoy,

"Once you've experienced it, it might not be how you thought it might be. So, your idea of it might change and you might want to move into a different area of dance, so it's sort of finding out".

The first year students' narratives demonstrate that they are mostly supported by their families and they have been interested in their discipline from a young age. Grant says "I'm the first member of my entire family to go to university...my dad dropped me off and said he was proud of me and I could see him well up...(laughter)." Some of the dance first year students talk about their mothers bringing them to dance classes from a very young age. Shelley says her love of dance started with lessons, "I was three". Sally says her mum "took me to ballet classes when I was young. It's just the sort of things mums did". All third years used the word passion and all first years talked passionately about their love of dance, or pleasure in dance and how it made them feel or behave. Mavis is aware of communicating her feelings through dance, "it's a way of talking through an expression rather than actually having to say it". Giselle, a first year, has "a big passion for dance". Jag, a third year architecture undergraduate, says,

"I think you need to be 110% passionate I think. I want things. So I think that really, you've got to really...to have to...it almost takes over your life

so you've got to really live it...live the discipline. 110% dedicated, I think that's what you need to do. Real passion for the subject and really see it through (sic)"

Jenny, a third year dance undergraduate talks of "...wanting freedom in relation to expression, creativity and open-ended, passionate dance". Grant, a first year architecture student, says "I've wanted this for so long, I ain't going to let it slip (sic)". Veejay, also a first year, "I chose architecture because it combines science with the creative arts....everything is related to architecture... it is a kind of philosophy for life."

The first years talk about the importance of work experience. Work experience seems to be expected to be part of the experience of studying for a degree and looking for work afterwards. The first year students do not talk about the skills that will be learnt in a work placement but see the placement purpose as gaining understanding or insight into a particular creative area. Students will experience, respond to or feel what it is like to be in that creative environment. Developing their feelings at this stage seems paramount, rather than developing their skills. Anna, a first year undergraduate talks about work experience,

"...of experiencing just seeing loads of different architecture and architects' styles and feeling what goes well and what doesn't...but also the experience of sensing the client's idea right to the final thing (sic)".

Veejay says work experience made him realise that "architecture can play such a big role in our lives, from designing the smallest pen to designing the whole building". Shelley a first year dance student, "I must do placements...and then talking to people who do different things, like performers, how they got there, what they did, and choreographers, what they do...I need to find out what I will love".

The first year dance students use words that suggest that they see dance as experiencing, experimenting, feeling the kinaesthetic and the physical entwined, being actively engaged, absorbed and feeling emotion. Words and phrases are used, such as from the first year dance students: Giselle is “loving life...it’s one full of dance”; Mavis is “expressing myself every day...I’m dancing to fit...and to get me through it”; Shelley says “dance is giving her an insight and she is experiencing life through it”; Sally is “enjoying my life with dance... I so missed dance”; Tina says “everything just clicked into place...I’m happy now”; Giselle “watching dance...experiencing it...moving into different areas of dance”; she is “full of dance”. Giselle says she will “keep on going... what ever comes in my way, I will find a way round it and never give up”. Shelley reflects that dance has always been “a big part of me...it is living in me”.

The first year architecture students too talk passionately about architecture. They use words and phrases that suggest architecture is about experiencing, being driven to be creative, engaged, absorbed, stimulated, their feelings being enmeshed in buildings, wanting to see things differently and wanting to create their own buildings. These students used words and phrases like “it is so exciting...I felt really special”, says William. He wants to have “a fine experience of world architecture”. William is “talking to people doing architecture about architecture”. He says “I’m just enjoying myself really”, because he is eventually doing what he wanted to do for so long. Grant explains, “I want to make one (a building) as soon as possible” and “I’m not going in half-heartedly in anything”; he is “loving it”. Grant talks about architecture with emotional involvement, “it is breathtaking...it totally attracted me...it got me”. He says, “I look at things differently like natural shapes, like crumpled up leaves or shells or like animals. And I would see them as a stadium, and sort of thinking that would be an interesting shape for a building”. Veejay explains, “...talking all the time about architecture...makes you feel alive”. He says he desperately, “wants to create one (a building)”. Veejay says he is currently being “influenced by others...experiencing new perspectives”; he

will definitely “always keep going at it”. Saverio talks of architecture, “playing such a big role into lives (sic)”. He will “enjoy new challenges...new discoveries” and is “fascinated”. He “wants and they (sic) feel into the building...I’m involved with”. Saverio says he is passionate, “I’ll do buildings as much as I could (sic)”. Anna believes it is about feeling involved, but keeping some distance, “it is not to put too much of yourself into a building but to put in their ideas and to be able to translate what they want and they feel into the building.” However the experience is still creative, Anna does not want to be drip fed knowledge but to be supported by her tutors, “...it is to be creative and comes from...the ideas are from myself”. Anna believes architecture is “the bit that lasts”.

## Having a Degree

The first year dance and architecture undergraduates believe that their degree increases their chances of being successful in their chosen careers. Mavis, a first year, sees a degree and doing what you enjoy as an escape route from being stuck in what she imagines her life to be, without a degree. She imagines this life as trapped in a boring job because it is non-dance related. The dance first year undergraduates used words in relation to completing a degree as a “safe thing”, “it is something extra”, “it’s a necessity for a proper career in dance”, “you can’t really walk into a dance job”, “it’s good to have something like that on paper”, “might help you get maybe an audition or something else” and “the right thing to do if you can do it”. Giselle is determined to combine theory with practice in her degree, “I won’t be a dumb dancer”. The first year dance undergraduates see having a degree as important for a successful career. They perceive having a degree as an advantage. The degree is seen as a safety net if dance does not work out.

Mavis feels a degree is so important,

“..in this day and age that you can’t walk into a job like there’s always...they’re like, obviously employers always look for the best, educated and that sort of thing. Well, I’m not the most academic person. I think having a degree behind me will help me (sic)”.

Mavis says “having a degree behind me” and Tina says a degree is “something behind you”. Comments like these, suggest they see their degrees as a kind of armour which gives extra strength to access something that they cannot do without a degree and on their own.

Another dance first year student, Shelley sees her dance degree as having a contingency plan allowing her to change path. She says,

“...with a degree, I could not just go with dance, I can possibly go in like another sector if I get injured and I can’t perform or choreograph. So I can easily mould my way in.”

Her use of “mould” and “way in” seems telling. Shelley, like Mavis, sees a degree as a way into work that she feels she could not get into without a degree. The use of the word “mould” suggests that Shelley believes having a degree makes it easier to change, or to fit, into another role or work sector. Shelley sees having a degree as a precaution, “it’s a more, safe thing”.

Architecture first year undergraduates believe that the RIBA accreditation from a British University has currency in the job market. “You wouldn’t be able to call yourself an architect” says Saverio. “It’s important to have a title in our time”, says Veejay. Grant believes,

“...if you complete the first three years but don’t do the Master’s degree, you’ll only be known as an architectural assistant, so that you’d be able

to help the architect, but you wouldn't be able to call yourself an architect."

First year architecture student, Veejay sees a degree as something you need in the world,

"...to survive...for finances...for needing a good job, you need to have a degree to show them. It is proof of that exactly your knowledge is about, your certain passion is all about (sic)."

The third year dance and architecture undergraduates are not in awe of their own qualifications. Jag says,

"I come from a completely different culture where things like pharmacy and law and medicine are seen as things that you're supposed to do in university. I think my parents might have preferred if I'd done pharmacy because it was four years... Seven years is quite a long time."

They believe it is other factors that bring success in addition to the degree, which is viewed as only the base line.

## Effort

Architecture students see their discipline as hard work compared to other disciplines. Tom a third year architecture student says, "I work hard all the time...in architecture you work and work...it is hard...really hard". Lucy also a third year explains,

"I think that you have got to push yourself especially in the third year...to get you to open up doors later on. If you can't do well this year, I can't imagine that you can carry on in architecture. Working in studio and seeing what others are doing is so important. Because if everyone just

was at home working, you don't know what anyone else is doing, so you don't know what you should be doing as well, or what you want to be."

The third year architecture students see this hard work as unfair compared to other disciplines. Josh explains,

"...a lot of my friends say you work all the time. We are getting to the end of third year and, one thing we've all said, how many bar crawls have we been on? How much work have we got? There's lot of work, so you get up and you work till whatever time of the night and weekends until everything is finished. It's been a bit our fault, we should have probably went out (sic) in the first year...I haven't really enjoyed it. Before; I'd finish my work and I'd have a weekend to play football or sports."

However the architecture first years see the hard work as worth it for the reward. Is this because the first years have not begun the hard work yet or have yet to discover that it may not be possible for all to gain the reward of being an architect?

All the dance students live for the discipline and do not see dance as hard work because they view it with so much pleasure. Patience, a third year dance student talks about her dance curriculum, "...you can't convey how good it is...I have really enjoyed all the reading". The first year architecture students seem to be living for the discipline, Grant "loves all of it" and Veejay is "living architecture". This is compared to the third year architecture students who appear disillusioned, aware that jobs are scarce and show anxiety that their hard work may not be rewarded. Sunnil regrets doing architecture, "in a recession it's really bad...getting a placement is really difficult". He says, "I have worked my socks off...what a waste...I mean I'm really disappointed."

## Metaphors

Third years, in contrast to the first years use metaphors that relate to journeys. Metaphors mentioned related to journeys, travel, routes, roads, ways and paths.

Jag, a third year has a clear destination at the end of his journey,

“I didn’t ever want to do something where I did the course, without a specific field of job that I could go into. If you’re doing medicine, you’re going to become a doctor. If you’re doing pharmacy, you become a pharmacist. If you do architecture, you most likely become an architect. So I wanted specific jobs...or a degree...that were related.”

The third year dance journeys into creative work are unpredictable, with many terrains, obstacles, paths which are both planned and unexpected. Rebecca a third year dance student talks about potential work, “I think a lot of people are struggling, but it is to be expected in the journey, it is worth it, to get to somewhere you want to be...wherever it takes you”. She says “we are taught to improvise... we try to look round a problem”. Jenny, a third year dance student, “will find a route”. Mavis a first year dance student says, “I don’t have a set career path...like I’m like, I need to do this, and this and this and this. I just want to see where the journey takes me”. Mavis says “my mum...she’s pushing me to follow my dreams, wherever they take me”. The dance third year students perceive their own lives as full of experiential action. The third year dance students talk about their anticipated careers as journeys with different maps, terrains and preparing for the anticipated travel through planning; however expecting, coping and sometimes relishing the managing of the unexpected. Giselle “lives to dance”, she says, “failure is inevitable...I’ll just not give up”.

The first year dance students conform to discipline paths of performing or choreography with teaching as a back up. The dance third years had diversified



further away from these three career routes. Their working life is varied and portfolio like. The third year dance students view failure as part of the course and injury is not feared. "I'll find the routes through to get there", says Jenny.

The third year dance students appear adaptable, confident and comfortable with uncertainty. "Passion" is a term used by all third year dance students. The third year dance students talk about their potential careers in dance and what is important: "taking your time" and "get inspired by creativity" (Danielle); "keeping up training" with "lots of jobs" (Rebecca); "self development" and "continuous learning" , "experimenting" with "lots of things lined up" (James); "developing through dance" and "keep it on the side just in case it's not making enough money" (Patience); "expanding the knowledge", always "self-learning" and "taking whatever comes your way" (Jenny). Jenny says "creativity" and "open ended dance" will take me anywhere.

Danielle says,

"I was involved in a production called 'X'. I was the creative director and it's just made me...it's just kind of given me a focus, I was like, 'Oh, I love that. I love it!' ...so yes, I've discovered the path I want to take."

The third year dance students are far more comfortable with adapting for the unexpected and unanticipated, than the third year architecture undergraduate students.

The architecture students talk of journeys too, but they are clearly mapped out with a defined destination. Jag says,

"You see, the thing is, I've got a twin brother, and he's doing pharmacy. (Laughter) And...I mean, my family has always said 'you could do whatever you want', but they've always known about pharmacy. And if I

had gone into pharmacy, I would have passed it, pharmacists start off at, like, £35,000. So it's good money in pharmacy.”

For the architecture students, to detour or not arrive at their planned destinations is viewed as failure. The architecture students focus on effort and how hard they work to make these journeys to qualify and how difficult it is to stay at their destinations once qualified. Josh explains,

“I'm in contact with a surveyor, I'm friends with his son, doing music. Accreditation is the most important thing...I try to get that message across...You just need key accredited people...If I can sort of prove my worth and get three months from them and then hopefully get another three months and get another certificate...Keep going making connections”.

They recognise that the journeys are multiple because in a global work place, many journeys need to be made to sustain architectural work. These students see work in an international world and expect to travel to chase opportunities. Tom is going to Dubai as he has heard that it is “good at the moment”. Sunnil is worried about chasing jobs around the world when his family and religion in the UK are so important to him. Jag says he will go anywhere to be an architect.

First year architecture students also expect to move for work and go to where there is a demand for architects. Female architecture undergraduates, Anna and Lucy, talk about how the constant travel fits with having a family.

## Privilege

Architecture third years talk about class and rich students and refer to needing money and contacts to be successful. They talk about rich students who can work for free and know people through family networks that can get them work experience and paid work. Phrases are used like “friend of a friend”, “posh”, and “contacting ...friends of the family”. Sunnil says it is a privileged world, “it’s being posh to be honest...It is not to say that you can’t develop any contacts but it’s difficult...It is more difficult from our side.” The dance third year undergraduates do not mention class or status.

The third years of both architecture and dance see making contacts as the opening or bridge to enter and sustain work. Using contacts are ways of opening doors, pushing in, letting participants into a closed area of work. “Who you know opens doors”, says Jag a third year architecture student. The following phrases are used in relation to the importance of networking and gaining contacts, “ they get you noticed”, “get the face known”, “getting your name out there”, “get your foot through the door”, “put your foot out there”, “it’s who you know”, “finding the right contact”, “having to throw yourself into networks”, “if you know somebody they’ll get you in” and “it’s you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours”. Patience, a third year dance undergraduate says “it is how the industry works, and things like that. But obviously, that’s kind of private between them...so I can’t go and ask him...how did you get that?”

Sunnil, a third year architecture student says privilege and using contacts are apparent even within university,

“I think that in the world of work you’re always going to get you scratch my back. I’ll scratch your back...you’re always going to get that, but I don’t think at university level that should be happening. It’s just bad to see it happen at university (sic)”.

The language used by the third years suggests a 'them and us'. The 'them', are the gatekeepers of work, able to give to those that want work, the 'us'. Contacts were the bridge or hole between them and us. Contacts could open the gap in the wall and contacts could keep you in the enclosed area, to retain you in the privileged, inner circle. Getting noticed and getting your face known, seem to be important factors, because the inner circle recognised you as belonging with them, or having an identity within their group or because of familiarity, having the legitimacy to join them.

This use of participants' language around action relating to contacts, I interpreted with the metaphor of the 'bouncer'. The bouncer on the door of the private club automatically lets in all those that are already members. The bouncer then lets in some non-members because they come with fully fledged members and finally the bouncer only lets in the odd one or two who have become familiar to them and have built up rapport with the door keeper by the frequency of their efforts to get in. The dance students rely on university tutors to gain these contacts. "They give us load of opportunities and bring in contacts", says Danielle a third year dance student. The architecture third year undergraduates show frustration and say they feel at a disadvantage, because they are expected to find their own contacts. Lucy, a third year architecture student says she is aware that those on the course have more privilege than others, because people "hang around with those of similar social status". She expands, "so say your dad's a doctor, he might know architects and it might get you to step through the door". She worries about how university is developing, "We will have people from rich backgrounds only becoming architects".

## Star System

The third year architecture students experience a clear difference to the other students interviewed, because of the star system that the third year architecture students talk about. Ten percent of students are identified in the first year of the

architecture degree as the “stars” and receive mentorship with professional architects throughout the three years.

Lucy, a third year architecture undergraduate, explains the mentorship programme,

“You interact with real architects. I mean I’ve got a mentor and he’s an architect in X and they come in and they guide you on how a real client would think about those situations. It’s actually having communication with people in the real world, rather than in your make-believe world.”

Two of the students interviewed received this mentorship but did not talk about the system as being unfair.

However, the other three students interviewed, who were not chosen to be mentored within the ten percent, expressed anger and disappointment in the university system believing it to be unfair and causing bias.

Tom a third year says,

“We have mentoring here where you can meet architects. Students are chosen, the good ones...not everyone. I think it should be everyone. Everyone wants to be seen individually. You know... have their work looked at by a firm...because they also know others. They know the real world...‘so and so, he may help you’, Yes...I do think it leads to placements - paid ones.”

Sunil and Josh expected inequality outside of the university in the workplace, but not in education. They believe there should be equal access to all resources at university.

## Success

The third year architecture students define five areas that make a successful architect: Confidence; Self-motivation; Self-promotion; Passion and Determination (Design, Creativity and Talent are mentioned but are not seen as important as the former attributes); and Privilege, (Class and Money are talked about as increasing the potential for success).

The third year undergraduates talk about these areas, Tom says, “some people in my year know everybody. I don’t know...confidence helps”. Sunnil says “self-promotion, self-motivation, it’s a lot of luck as well”. Tom believes, you need “passion to keep going and massive organisation, meeting deadlines, being organised...understanding how it all works...from start to finish how things are done...passion and determination to keep going”. Tom says however, “it is very hard without contacts...you need that...(laughs). It opens doors”. Sunnil believes success is linked to privilege,

“I suppose in one way it’s going to all these posh dinners but it’s hard to build up contacts. ....If you get a few days over a summer practice, you might be able to build up some contacts...You have to have a business card in your pocket, I suppose for making contacts when you meet people. It’s mostly a friend of a friend...or...it’s being posh to be honest.”

The third year female architect believes the recent emancipation of women in architecture has been lost. Lucy reflects,

“I don’t mean to sound like a feminist but possibly being female can get in the way of being a successful architect. Obviously because architecture is such a long course, when you’re qualified, maybe that’s the time you want to have a family. It’s finding a balance between wanting a family and wanting to be successful because if you don’t want a family, I think you’re on par with any male...Someone’s doing feminism for their dissertation and it has come up that basically, you can only go

so high up in a company because they know that you want children. They wouldn't let you be a director and they try to put you down."

Lucy believes the increase in fees is making architecture a profession once again for the rich and believes men are favoured within the British class system. In contrast to this, the first year architecture female student, Anna, sees her own sex as an opportunity for niche clients. This student has a father who has his own architectural firm, so may already have a privilege that the students talk about, which may increase her chances at being successful.

The third year dance students see success in dance as being adaptable, confident, determined, creative, driven and taking risk both physically and mentally. Like the architecture students they see having contacts and money increases the chances of being successful. Danielle says "it is kind of, who you know, who you know". James says "I don't have enough money to do what I want to do". Rebecca is sure "the barriers stopping me are the money side." Patience says "being a choreographer here, I had to pay for everything, everything...that's what will happen in the real world...I just think I'm not going to have much money ever really". The third year dance students do not see themselves as the part of the privileged few with access to contacts and money but instead expect their creative lives to be hard, challenging but hopefully rewarding.

## Luck

Both the dance and architecture third year students talk more about luck than the first years. They see that much of success in a creative work as inexplicable, illogical or intangible and therefore they put it down to luck. Jag says,

“Too many of us are chasing the same jobs. Most of us are perfectly capable of getting them and have the right credentials but it is who fits the most at that particular moment...I think a lot of getting the job is about your face fitting at that moment and the fit of personalities in the interviewing room. So many people applying to a job in reality could do it but one person has to be chosen. They are chosen for many different reasons and some probably are not rational.”

Sunnil thinks,

“...it’s like you enjoy your work. But then you have to balance that with the argument that you have to move around for work...But then when you balance it, I’m not lucky, I think I just... lack ... I think I’ve just not got the guts to do it.”

To the question, “How do people get jobs?” Jag replies,

“The people that are lucky, I guess. The people that know people. They always say, ‘It’s not about what you know; it’s who you know’. And in architecture, that is quite true. If your father was an architect and he’s worked at a practice for 50 years, he could just say, ‘my son or daughter is going to go and work for you.’ They’d say, ‘Okay’...Otherwise ...You apply, you pray...(laughter).”

## Continually Developing

Dance third year undergraduates perceive themselves as in charge of shaping their own careers. Dance students see risk as a factor in being successful. Third year dance students see their working lives as continuous self-development. All third year students talk about a creative life where one is continually researching, experimenting, self-developing and adapting. Rebecca a third year dance student says, “I’ve completely changed from that...I want to



help others through dance and to create work together, but not necessarily based on like perfect lines or technique, but something more...sort of artistic”.

First years talk about wanting a life that is full of dance and work that is dance related. The first years envisage work which is not dance related, as boring and soul destroying. Mavis, a first year dance student says, “obviously dance has helped me. I like the fact that I could be helping other people in the same way.” Tina was “miserable” without dance. The third year dance students seem internally motivated, more than the third year architecture students. The third year architecture students seem much more reliant on external feedback from professional people such as tutors or employers. Jag, a third year architecture student reflects,

“I think I’ve developed quite well, ...my first year was not as successful as it could have been, but then in second year, a tutor came, who is probably the reason why I’m enjoying it more in this school right now.”

Tom has been “influenced by the lecturers” and needs “input from employers”. He says “mentoring, as I said. Firms being...teaching...being a part in...in all the work (sic)”. Josh, also a third year said “I needed more contact time with my tutors...you are trying to fight for a time slot.”

The discipline of dance has no professional body and no defined process or route like architecture. Dance has multiple career directions and multiple ways of working and with different employers, Pay as You Earn (PAYE) contracts, freelance contracts, project work and self-employment etc. Perhaps this is why the third year dancers create the need for self-development because there is no organised continuous, professional development (CPD) process that they have to adhere to, which comes through membership in the architecture professional body.

Dancer Danielle, a third year says,

“We have just started off... it’s only from this play that we thought, ‘Oh, we could have a little company.’ And we’ve got funding from some people already. It’s come from (names an international media company) and (names a reputable theatre in the midlands).”

Josh sees that the mentored students developed the most because they were pushed, “certain tutors kind of push a small handful of people instead of getting a mass of people through”. Josh, Jag and Tom all say their self-confidence has developed.

## Money

Tom, a third year architecture undergraduate, says,

“No man, you don’t come into it for the money. No way (laughs) I was good at art and wanted to work in design; but it’s not well paid. You need money...funding for...living...finishing the whole course...you need equipment. Books. All that... My mum has bought me stuff.”

The third year dance students accepted that finding dance related work would be challenging and that money would be short. Dance students expect money to be erratic and sustaining a comfortable level of continuous pay, as challenging. The need for money for dance lessons, keeping up technique, for low paid or unpaid work experience and to manage a portfolio way of creative working and with recent arts funding cuts, all mean that the third years anticipate frugal, creative living.

Patience realises that external funding is scarce,

“I didn’t realise how much competition there is. And especially now that we’ve been put through...there are funding cuts as well. It is a bit harder for everyone to get any money out there to do anything...”

They anticipate that they may need a second job, one that may not be related to dance at certain points, to subsidise their creative work. A job at McDonalds is seen as useful because it gives flexibility. James, a third year dance student,

“I have work when I’m not paid as a dancer...it’s a part time job...back at McDonalds, sort of like that. These jobs are really good because the shifts are really variable, so I can just go home whenever I want to which is quite nice, or when I don’t need the work.”

The first year dance undergraduates do not talk about other supporting jobs but focus primarily on self-employment. Giselle, a first year student, says she has never had money, “my mum and dad, they’re like...don’t work”. She says she will work for herself, “money I think will be an issue as a dancer...I hope I have, still have the same mentality. I just hope I’m not going to be knocked back by anything”. Sally says she will be a freelance choreographer, “choreographers work in different ways to maybe...even if they ever have the same goal to get to, they’d approach it differently. So if you’re working with someone...you’ve got to learn how to adapt (sic)”. Like the third year dance undergraduates, the first year dance students share the aspiration to having their own company at some point but focus primarily on performing and/or choreography. Teaching was seen as a back up for injury and for times out of dance work. Giselle says “some of the teachers are older...I think there’s a point where you might have to stop but you can always still teach it in some way”.

All the first year architecture students talk about setting up their own business at some point in their careers. It is seen by them as the pinnacle of their own success as architects. William imagines he will do this later when he eventually

has the money, “I’d like to set up my own practice in central London as an eventual ambition...I’ve met people in their 60s who’ve just got around to setting up their own practices”. Lucy will work for her father, but as a woman believes she will attract female clients and develop her own niche. Veejay, Grant and Saverio will return eventually, after global working, to their home towns, in their respective countries, to set up their businesses. The third year architects however do not have a craving to manage their own firms and see themselves as employees within a reputable and rewarding firm.

The third year architecture undergraduates talked of the cost of their seven year course. These students have not paid higher tuition fees that were introduced in September 2012. These third year students have been encouraged by their tutors to gain as much work experience as possible. Josh says,

“You’ve got to be prepared to do work for free for a while...especially at the minute...I don’t care about £50 here and there, while I get to the end of the year (sic).”

He was told by tutors to diversify into other areas, because of the current job market,

“I took photography at (names a college) this year. I’ve got a lot of things that I thought, well if architecture is bad, I can at least try to do something with photography. If I get good at it and then at least it’s something... I’ve been kind of running my own sort of thing down here as well for events and things. So yeah, that’s a little bit where I’ve... made some money, not lots but some.”

These third year students say architecture in reality is not well paid, contrary to public perception, and they think that finding work will be challenging. These

students say that their current debt, after graduating from a three year degree, means that they cannot afford to work for free to gain work experience.

## Developing Over the Three Year Undergraduate Degree

Dance first year students believe that the university experience is about “maturing and growing as a person”, “to get my confidence back”, “take risks”, “develop as a dancer”, “more knowledge”, “developing theory”, “coming with a big open mind”, “what I can get out of it”, “putting everything together”, “networking especially after graduation”, “being supported by tutors”, “thinking and being supported on where they want to go” and “little bit extra than the people before” and “find my own track to where I want to go”. The first years show that their expectations are varied and linked to their own narratives and aspirations, rather than discipline specific, discrete skills. Tina has a husband and a young child,

“I’m definitely more determined. You can see how much effort and note taking that I put in. While the others are a little bit, not taking it that seriously that I am (sic). And I don’t want to get distracted so like on my breaks, I won’t sit around. I won’t be talking in conversation. I would just go and do my own thing in the library. I’ve got a nice little quiet spot and I go on and have my lunch and I study. Because I need that extra time...I don’t have time at home...to do that work. I do it in my breaks.”

Shelley, also a first year dance student,

“I think in the performing arts industry everyone has to be different especially in dance. You can’t have two companies doing exactly the same thing. You’ll be competing against each other...you need to aspire

to do something differently...take a different perspective...I saw Matthew Bourne's Cinderella and I came out and he was there. So I actually went to speak to him and he just sort of inspired me to go on to study dance".

The first year architecture students want to "develop in science", "find out what kind of architect I'll be", "design all stages of a building", "design interesting and different buildings", "get better knowledge of architecture", "learn new skills in my profession", "be able to take a project from a lecturer", "become independent", "understand what is needed", "find their style", "prepare for future work", "links to real practices", "widen knowledge" and "work with practising architects". Anna, Grant, William, Veejay and Saverio want architects who still work in practice. Anna chose the course carefully with her architect father, "the lecture series seemed really good. And the links with industry, they didn't seem cut off like other courses. But it is still very creative, but also the history and theory is still very involved and is looked at in detail". Anna wants, "to develop, to design space for people...people and their spaces, their interaction". She says "actually it's the space and the yeah, place...that is an interest." Veejay says he embraces British life. He wants to "live like a UK student", "to fit in a new culture" and to "experience freedom". He says a UK university is different pedagogically,

"This university is quite different from my university back in India. You actually get to work in real time. People you can communicate with, different kinds of people, you can communicate with, work together with, various nationalities of people, and that actually influences a lot on your mind.. as well as how you think (sic)."

Saverio talks of being very lonely when he started his degree in the UK,

"When I arrived here...I was expecting a lot of things like maybe any help to settle in. To, I don't know...because when I arrived, I need some stuff

maybe for the room, or help to understand how the course is built, but anyway, during those two weeks, I don't know, if it's my fault but hasn't been a lot of good things and so I think...I cry (sic).”

The first year architecture students expect to develop discrete skills linked to architecture, develop style and identity as architects but also to develop independence through living a student life away from home. The international students in particular, expect full pastoral care compared to the British, domestic students.

## **Hindsight of the Third Year Undergraduates**

Third year Architecture students in hindsight would develop the following in their own undergraduate degrees:

- Increase time per student for formal tutor support on their work.
- Remove the star system of mentoring for the top ten percent and have mentoring for all by professional architects and their work regularly looked at by a firm. If resources did not allow this, mentoring should only be for the struggling, the bottom ten percent. The top ten percent were perceived as being potential firsts and would do well on their own without mentoring.
- Firms being involved in the university curricula through teaching and/or assessment or evaluating the work produced, so that all students can make contacts.
- Increase support and funding to allow social mobility, higher education access, inclusion and completion for all potential students.

- Give individual support to find contacts for placements and potential work.
- Students accepted that employers choose the elite but wanted the university environment to be unbiased and to give support to all. Inclusion and fairness is seen as crucial.
- Specific career advice related to architecture with placement advice.
- Industry contacts - Industry involved in the students' work so that students could get contacts.
- Working architects helping to write students' CVs and doing mock interviews.
- Students completing site visits to real architecture buildings and sites.
- Making health and safety regulations more flexible to allow students access to sites.
- Would like students to be able to follow a real project during university and "see it from start to finish".
- Give more alternatives for work outside UK.
- Give more information directly to students so that students do not have to rely on networking in the research hub to find out about potential opportunities.



- Ensure students working at home are privy to the same information as students on campus. Students on campus “see and hear things” (Jag) which those at home do not have access to.
- Arrange a conference where the university invites all architects to look at opportunities for students and graduates.
- Information given to students about opportunities available from specific firms for Part One.

Sunil, a third year architecture student, reflects on what he has found useful,

“Recently we had these mock interviews with general practitioners. I thought that was quite useful. So like, you know, so I’m getting to sort of ...prepared for those situations. I think that’s quite good. I mean, they do have people coming in for lectures and saying this is how to write a CV. That’s available I suppose, so you do have a bit of individuality but you have to chase it up yourself.”

Jag suggest some developments for his course,

“I mean the school is getting good ties with the architecture world...architects in this city. They’ve got, like, the student board which now has contacts with the various architects in (names a city). But if there’s a day where there was a conference, something like that, which allowed all architects out there to come....but that would probably be difficult to do because architects are busy people. I don’t think they’ll all have one day where they can come and say, listen, we’ve got opportunities. But if the tutors could find out from firms when they have an opportunity for Part 1 students, so they can tell students where to apply and direct their CVs. I mean at the moment, we just apply and shoot it everywhere and hopefully someone will return, yeah.”

Josh suggests,

“I don’t think it’s structured fairly in some ways because there’s a mentoring scheme where some people are being given an architect from a practice and they come in. So these architects will be getting paid and there’s only been a handful and some people are a bit sore about it. I’m paying £3,500 a year, so are they; they’re getting the tutors help and then they’re getting private things as well. Why not just have a team of architects that come in to talk to everybody instead of having individually assigned people.”

Lucy reflects on her time working with people and different projects,

“Work varies a lot and it depends on what the firm specialises in and how they work. Some literally bash it out, get it out of the way and get the money. Whereas some people are more passionate about one project and they’ll put all their designs on that one project and try to come out with a better design. You’d have to work, where some are still quite strict... Some of the younger practices, they’re quite playful, like we have studios at Uni. You sit there as a group and you make models and you really try to be playful....Still you’ve got to prove that you’re worthy of employment because there’s 40 Architecture schools in the country and people graduating from Part 1 and Part 2 at the same time. You’re looking at a hundred people from each school. That’s a lot of competition. Then you’ve got international students who are usually from rich backgrounds and will happily work for free.”

Third year dance students in hindsight would develop the following in their own undergraduate degrees:

- More classes to improve their technique.

All the third year students with hindsight wanted to have improved their technique. Only one third year dance student added further areas. Jenny felt that the discussion and advice about dance careers should be repeated again in the third year because she could not remember the advice given to her in the first year. She believed there should be people available at university to offer students support and individual support about what you are going to do after their dance degree. She thought also there could have been more opportunities for work experience in dance. She reflected that she wished that she had utilised all the universities resources within her undergraduate time. Jenny says experiential learning is important,

“...if you’re participating in a community project or something like that, you’re making the choice to do that ...you have a more passionate group of people participating in that and getting involved. Yeah you experience it. So, I think it is important...working in different places, with different people. I don’t know if that would be.... I mean, for me, the learning experience, just being kind of the learner in the situation of dance, I think that’s something that I think...if you just want to go and teach or lead a workshop, you...I don’t think you can do that...without experiencing it first.”

The third year dance students felt in hindsight that the following areas of their dance degree had prepared them for work:

- The course had given the students understanding of all the parts of the industry.

- Expertise obtained from the teaching module had given students the confidence to plan and deliver a workshop.
- The experiential nature of the curriculum was enjoyable and this had become part of their current dance philosophy.
- Learning about the philosophical side of dance complemented the physical side of the discipline.
- They had been encouraged to see the diversity of dance and this gave them more understanding of many different communities.
- Working in a trans-disciplinary way “increased our understanding”.
- They felt they had been taught by amazing teachers.
- They felt that they had been transformed during the course, as James says “from a timid to a much more outgoing man”.
- The interaction of people and spaces brings confidence.
- Work experience brought “openings” and many contacts.
- Pluralistic perspectives helped them to learn about difference, diversity, philosophies and methodologies in the discipline.
- They felt they had had a holistic dance experience.
- They found their own personal development through the dance degree.

- Simulating auditions and being put on spot useful for finding work afterwards.
- Learning was taught through and by experiencing which became the dancers' approach to working.
- Finding the "purpose of everything" gave the students meaning and motivation.

The sessions throughout the three years on the dance industry with questions and answers gave students a greater understanding of the dance world and the creative work available.

Danielle, a third year mentions the dance tutors,

"...they're available but they're not going to chase you in your journey. So, I think it's up to you to really....And they like it when you come to them and say, 'Oh, I need a tutorial with you. Can you help me with this?' They're very, very helpful. I think they've been the most influential."

Rebecca talks about simulations,

"We do pretend audition classes, we audition for a role which is just like performing for your class but still it's important to do that because you're put on the spot and that's the good thing. "

Danielle has found a purpose to her work and learning,

"I've found a purpose in what I'm doing. Because before, I'll kind of go through the modules. 'Why am I doing this?'...I say...'I don't want to do this'. But now I know what I want to do. All these things are important,

I'm starting to realise and they're actually helping, and I don't want to leave because there's so many facilities...there is so much help here (sic)."

The first year undergraduates imagine developing their dance technique in their three year degree. The first year undergraduate architecture students imagine developing in science and in the whole of the architectural process. Anna imagines what she will be doing on the course in the next three years,

"We have both the history, theory, technology and the studio design, so to have experience in technical drawing and the sketching of ideas and model making. But also in the studying of architects and eras and cultures and the technology...different spaces, people. Then outside...like meeting new people, like at lots of different times...with others or on your own."

Grant says,

"I think I will develop more of the sort of actual science behind it, because I mean, two years and a half...so I kind of...I have got the arts side of architecture down and the design down, so I just need to learn about how the building would be built in like space and economics."

All first year undergraduate expectations of university are very teacher focused. They view their teachers as the experts and themselves as the novices who will learn everything from them.

## **Meaning of Employability**

First year architecture student, Anna seems to interpret her college's meaning of employability as being "a good employee". This 'Good Employee' model seems to list attributes, such as "being a good listener" or "working hard" to generic roles of being in work. In this model, *the individual looks for deficits*

*within themselves*, in relation to this generic, ideal model and subsequently works to improve themselves to fit the 'good employee' representation. Mavis, Tina, Giselle and Sally, all dance first years support this idea and talk about how a university degree and its experience, can work towards the good employee model.

Shelley, a first year dance student, sees work as linked to selling yourself,

"I think it is mainly by networking, knowing the right people and getting your name out there...the more people you advertise yourself with, you're always selling yourself... the more you sell yourself...I think the more popular you become, more people want to come and see your work and be interested in what you're doing (sic)."

Grant, a first year undergraduate, contextualises employability within architecture. He says "team work" is important because when starting out as a new architect, "you rely on others to provide parts of an architectural project and bring it together". Saverio, also a first year architecture student, has not heard of the word employability. He thinks there is no equivalent word in Italian because people graduate and work with their families. Veejay has not heard of the term either. He says he finances his own development with his "allowance". Veejay explains, "...my parents are fairly well to do. My father is a doctor and my mother works for (names an intergovernmental organisation). So it is not a problem".

The third year student data confirms that the word employability has multiple meanings and is multi-faceted. The word is perceived as being an all rounded person who gets on with people and is made up of many parts and that all these parts must be employable. The students view employability as being defined as gaining an actual job and not as having the potential to be employable. Getting a job is seen less about talent and being the best at something, and more about

the need to get along with colleagues, to be personable and fit in. Josh defines his conceptualisation,

“So it’s what you can give. I don’t think you have to be the best, you have to be all rounded really...so you’ve got to be just rounded really and get along.”

Tom sees employability as getting a job through contacts, as it “opens doors”. Sunnil too sees employability as securing work,

“I think the only way really is getting your foot through the door in one place. Otherwise you have to just...just apply as a genuine application and you just hope that they take you on. So it’s very hard without any...contacts.”

Only Jag sees employability as having the right skill set that a firm of architects wants. The other nine students do not refer to skills in the discipline, but talk about personality attributes.

The third year students have heard the term prior to coming to university. Tom heard it in year 8 (age 12 to 13 years) before they chose their subjects and “did what are you going to do at university, what job?” Sunnil remembered it in PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) sessions at school and what happened after school. Sunnil felt that his university was “almost granting, guaranteeing employment in the end”. He said, “you always thought, you know, I’ll always have a job at the end of it and you expect to when you, you know, have been through so much fees, etc”.

Sunnil expected more support in his conceptualisation of employability,

“But it’s so self independent, even looking for a job. They do help you, though in essence it’s always... you’re doing it for yourself. I thought that there’d be more support...more schemes.”



Lucy thinks employability was used in GCSEs to try to get students “to do some work”. She said she has lectures on how to make oneself appealing to employers “don’t wear a brown suit” and make sure you come across as willing to learn. She says, “don’t come across as big-headed”, however “show off what you can be, rather than what you can’t”. Jag sees employability as “having the correct skills and having the things they want from you”. Some tutors used it, for example “if you can become an animal in this programme, you’ll be employable”. Jag spoke of career sessions at school which were “quite good, what you want to do, where you want to go.” These sessions were formalised into the school timetable to write their personal statements. The school he said saw employability as choosing a job or career at school and choosing a degree to meet it. The school views the university as the route to a job or career that the children aspire to.

Jenny thought employability could perhaps mean “maybe looking good on paper to attract potential employers”. In dance, she thought employability would be seen as “being both good on paper and being good in person”. Jenny said in interviews “you need to show willing and enthusiasm” and “you should show reflection, you know, what you have learnt from experiences”. Patience thinks, “you build up networks as you work in dance...I think regardless of what part you play and you’ll meet new people and then you’ll understand what they do and how that works and then...even then...you build up that network.”

James “definitely” remembers employability in school which he said was defined as “getting new skills...what you are going to do or pick for a job and for college.” He sees employability as “really luck”, because so many have very high grades and the right skills and are all competing with each other to get in. James sees employability as standing out from the competition with the acceptance that most applicants have the skills, attributes and qualifications to meet the work specification that the employers stipulate.

Rebecca does not think employability is used in the dance context. She thinks it means “whether you are employable to a person”. Danielle remembers the term at school from Year 9 (age 13 to 14 years),

“...you need these grades because you need to succeed. Later on, you’ll need a job. It was always around a job. The exam studying...it was all round that...basically why I was sent mainly to school”.

Danielle takes employability to mean,

“How are you going to make money...basically how are you going to live. I think employers...work-wise in an institution or something like that, usually ask for some experience.”

Patience has heard “you are more employable if you have a two one or a first degree and that you need an undergraduate degree to get a job.” She says her school focused on the right personal statement and getting into university. She thought her school’s identity was academic.

“They want as many of their students to go to universities as possible because X school was like...it was quite like a posh, clever school. You had to have that personal statement just so that you knew what it was about (sic).”

Where the student hears the term and by whom, also influences their perceptions of what employability means. Sunnil, Patience and Jenny feel their school has drilled them for one learning route and show disillusionment with it as being highly pressured, rigid and formulaic. Jag finds it fits with Asian culture of high achieving through education for a prestigious job. Other third years, from the discipline of dance, James, Danielle and Rebecca, have chosen their own learning routes and enjoyed being self motivated in their development. It

appears this will continue after leaving, as they talk about it as a kind of philosophy for living and life.

James has a personal philosophy for living that is enmeshed in his discipline practice, theory and creative life. His continuous self-development or life long learning, gives confidence, curiosity and purpose to explore different paths, terrains and detours. He sees learning as continuous growth. James talks about Parkour. He says Parkour is inclusive, experiential and fun. Parkour pushes individuals to their limits while being supportive and open to all. James gives a passionate monologue about Parkour and articulates how it has affected his university development,

“Parkour...getting from one place to another, around the most effective way possible...overcoming different sorts of pathways and going around them...overcoming them. So it's really for that. Detouring...finding your own path. It's a philosophy for life. This is about challenging yourself and like bettering yourself and overcoming fears which is really nice. Because there are lots of mental and physical obstacles...have you seen like documentaries and stuff where it actually has guys jumping off the buildings. It's not at all about that. There's a lot more to it than physical training, it's the mental training involved. Yes, that's...basically it, there's a sort of routine in training and getting together...I'm going on more now...It's very easy to find people. Everyone...has like a group who normally meet or you can meet. Like we have a Facebook page for the X City Parkour Community and so anybody could just come and ask... say 'is there training this week?' 'I'm kind of 'yeah, we're training. You can meet us here'. And there's always a friendly atmosphere, really nice....We got a...it's also free to do because it's all...you just go to any space and do it. Anywhere is just really good for it. And then apart from that, we...like me and a few other lads have been doing it for a while, we run something called the X Parkour Association and we run classes every Friday night, for like teaching other people how to do Parkour in

like a gymnasium. So it looks like a safe environment. Girls and boys from everywhere...So sort of like...teaching and practising and that. One of the guys who got me into Parkour is called Dan, who's in the same year as me and so he has influenced me for that. And then all the Parkour guys as well, like they really sort of inspire each other...to do more, to get better and go harder and faster and stronger and we all went really well there together, supporting each other and overcoming obstacles. You meet them and they are already practising there and teaching at the same time...sort of like pushing you forward to do more and more which is really what you need to do. I find that anyway. I liked being pushed. If that just sounds like, yeah, try to do this and then you like get it and do more and just move on. But then, okay, try to do better, do better again, more control. More determination...It...helps...like you can be like broader as a person, like whole, just much more self-confident, very much, in that sense. Like before...I was quite a timid person so through the years, I've been much more outgoing and have brought that interaction with people, in space, sort of like social learned stuff around into university too, meeting new people, like coming to a completely new place where you know nobody and working together (Overlapping Conversation)...it's like okay, go research together on that. Then like the community aspect, like the Parkour, where you get on together well. It was just like...it's such a friendly atmosphere there. It's like...it's sort of like...it comes naturally to us to teach each other and be the best that we can be, which is really good and that comes also into just meeting with everybody and learning around Uni which is good (sic)".

James' philosophy and approach to his discipline made a very strong impact on me and on the analysis in this research. He seemed so confident, motivated, and resilient. James seemed totally prepared for life after university. He continually developed and kept up his creative training; using the community to

support him, while also supporting it. His creative spirit and strength came from his philosophy for life and work.

This led me to thinking that the Parkour approach, described by James, seemed such a powerful metaphor. It was also a useful metaphor, in which to form the basis of an alternative perspective for creative working and life, which could be relevant for students and graduates. The Parkour metaphor fits so well with the research data in these findings. All students had made reference to their paths in terms of learning and work (the physical) and feelings (the emotional). Many of the third and first year students talked about obstacles in their journeys. Anna, Jenny and James make specific reference to different people, places and spaces and their interactions. All these students' creative development would benefit from a philosophy of emotional, physical and mental training in an environment where people could be part of a community and train and work together. A community of practice which is open, where people can drop in, join in, out of their own geographical area, to teach each other and to support each other to overcome creative obstacles in their creative employability. I return to the relevance of Parkour in meeting the undergraduate and graduate needs in this research, in the next chapter.

The Actors Centre and The Pineapple Studio, both in London, work a little like this because the physical places informally cultivate an active, social, supportive membership through the community use of acting and dance classes. However, although the spaces and classes are open to everyone, they are very expensive to participate in.

The first year undergraduate dance students talked about what employability may mean. Giselle has not heard the word but guesses it means "how employable you are". Shelley also has not heard it but thinks it is "dress codes and CVs and all that stuff". However both Giselle and Shelley talk about the need to have a degree to improve oneself to get a job as that is what employers

are looking for. Shelley defines it as “whether they are employable” and “what employers want”. Mavis, like Anna in architecture, talks about being a good or bad employee and about impressing the employer with her degree.

First year undergraduate architecture students defined employability with the following phrases, “having the skills to get a job”, “being an all rounded person that practices want to hire”, “getting employment”, “employers actually like you”, “an easy person to get around” and “a team player”.

Grant, William, Anna, Sally, Mavis and Tina remember the word employability at “tutor times at school” and believe it meant “being a good listener”, “working hard”, “being perfect”, “CV writing” and to “make yourself more sellable to employers”. Some of the first years had heard it at college and quite a bit at university in the first week; Grant remembers “other departments of Uni. coming in and offering help on employability”. One architecture undergraduate first year, William, thinks the word ‘employability’ is a weasel word, a political word. He says it is a new word,

“...that people make up...by the government or things like that, doesn’t mean a great deal to me...you just kind of go along with it really...if you don’t use words like that these days, then, you’re kind of seen as a ...I don’t know anti-establishment.”

Most of these undergraduate students see the word ‘employability’ as meaning the need to conform, to be the “good employee” and what the employer “wants” and is looking to hire. The undergraduate first year students have a definite belief that the relationship between the employee and employer has an inequality of power. The employee is seen as ‘the obedient child’ and the employer viewed as ‘the strict parent’.

### **Third Year Undergraduate Views of Employability – A Summary**

The third year undergraduate students believe to access and sustain creative work, creative workers need to have:

- An element of luck in relation to being “in the right place, at the right time” and making the most of chance meetings.
- A personal network of industry contacts.
- A tenacity to continuously network within work and personal life.
- A passion for their discipline that drives them to work creatively and create work without the motivation of monetary payment.
- A need for ongoing personal development, self-drive and self-motivation.
- A need to constantly “keep up” their discipline specific skills and technique.
- An acceptance that a creative career is a journey that takes many different paths with many different destinations.
- A view that creative life is experiential and involves action.
- A need for work experience to gain industry contacts.
- A reliance on university tutors to give industry contacts.

There were differences between the two disciplines. Dance students viewed work experience as important only to make industry contacts. Work experience was mostly at entry level and was not perceived as relevant in skill development. Dance students talked of “a normal job” to support their unpaid or low paid creative work. A lack of money was accepted and students showed they were versatile in finding ways to support their creative work. The dance students saw part-time teaching as a means to support creative work while keeping up technique and skills but contemplated other non-related dance jobs to subsidise creative living.

However, architecture students varied significantly to dance students in terms of seeing the destination in their careers. These students accepted that the career destination and environment may be different to what they envisaged and they were resigned to being adaptable about where they would end up working. However, they all viewed not becoming an architect as failure or a waste of their degree. All these students perceive work experience as necessary to getting to the next stage for qualifying and building their networks of industry contacts. These students all referred to architects needing to travel globally to find work and the implications this had on personal life, for example keeping links with their religious communities or being able to have a family.

Final year students from both disciplines, view well paid, graduate creative work for only the privileged few. These privileged few were perceived as:

- having the money and connections needed to succeed.
- were “the stars” of the degree, identified early as having star quality and were personally mentored or given special attention to succeed during and after university.



- were more skilled in making the most of chances in life and were seen as lucky.

## **First Year Undergraduate Views of Employability – A Summary**

These first year students concept of employability mostly fits with government definitions of successful employment six months after graduation and meeting employers' needs for skills and being a good employee that employers would want to hire. Shelley and Giselle don't recognise the word for employability yet are trying to improve themselves to please employers. William distrusts the agenda and Veejay and Saverio do not experience it in their own countries.

Most of the first year students want to work for themselves in their own practices. This may be because they are entrepreneurial or being pragmatic in hard times by creating their own work. The first years' conceptualisation of employability are very different to the third year undergraduates' perceptions, which seem less mainstream, more pluralistic and related to who you know, rather than what you know.

The first years' interest in being self-employed may be a rejection of the Employer/Employee model where the employee needs to be "good" (Anna's word), to meet the wants of the employer. The first year undergraduates may view becoming the powerless in this working relationship as very unattractive and want to pursue creative autonomy and independence through being self-employed.

# Similarities between the First and the Third Year Undergraduates

## Having a Philosophy

The first and third year dance students and the first year architecture students seemed to live the discipline. Their lives and the discipline seemed to be enmeshed. They did not view their lives compartmentalised with a distinct demarcation between work and leisure. The two were entwined. The discipline seems part of them, affecting how they view and live their lives.

Some of the first year undergraduate architecture students (Veejay, Grant and William) and the first (Giselle, Mavis, Tina, Shelley and Sally) and third year undergraduate dance students (James, Patience, Rebecca, Danielle and Jenny) referred to their discipline as a way of life, a way of living, a kind of philosophy. A philosophy seemed to be a way of viewing, thinking and feeling the discipline in their perception of the world. All these students wanted to set up their own business and be in control of their own destinies.

These students' use of language revealed their emotions and senses which linked to the living of the discipline, their identity, their philosophy and how they viewed creative work. Giselle is "loving life...it's one full of dance"; Mavis is "expressing myself every day", Sally is "enjoying my life with dance". Tina says "everything just clicked into place...I'm happy now"; Giselle is "alive in dance". Shelley says dance "is living in me". In architecture, Veejay is "loving it", along with William and Grant who are also doing what they "love".

They talk of “taking risks”, not being “driven” by money, “being creative”, “focused”, “working with different people”, “adaptable”, “imaginative”, “free”, having “passion”, “walking in all kinds of fields” and “working independently...takes a bit of everything”.

## Talking about Money

Money was talked about by most students in both disciplines, as previous student voice quotations have demonstrated. Both first and third year undergraduates refer to student loans, debt and the need to be frugal both while at university and in the years after leaving university. Only the international students revealed that money was not a major factor in their student lives due to support from affluent families.

## Talking about Obstacles

The obstacles that the undergraduates perceived to be in the way of success in their discipline were very similar for first and third year undergraduates. They talked about scarce jobs, competition, an unstable economy and the ever dwindling access to arts funding. They talked about the money needed for every day living and the finances needed to set up their own business. They talked about their lack of experience and the money needed to fund low paid or unpaid work experience. Lucy, a third year architecture student says rich students “work for free” and she cannot compete with this. Josh cannot afford to work after graduating from architecture for free or expenses only work, he has to support himself. Danielle, a third year dance student says “criticism could stop me, or I’m not good enough for this”. James, also a third year, “took a weird route” to get to university by changing from drama to dance. He says “so many people have such grades like AAA...it’s ridiculous...take it as it comes...find a way round it...that’s my plan”.

Two of the dance students from the first year undergraduates (Giselle and Mavis) and some from the first year architecture undergraduates (Saverio and Veejay) did reveal some belief that by following your dreams and working hard, they felt they were more likely to succeed than those who did not. This suggested a new type of American Dream, that anyone can be successful in life if they are driven and work hard. These findings did somewhat contradict other findings of the same group who perceived that money, contacts and privilege increased the potential for graduate success in the discipline that they aspired to work within.

The third year architecture undergraduates do not buy into this dream of success and openly say that money and contacts are needed and believe hard work is not rewarded.

## Work Experience

All saw work experience as important in understanding creative work and gaining insight. Work experience is perceived by the majority as a crucial way to gain contacts, rather than for skill development. In architecture, work experience is a requirement in the seven year route to accreditation.

## Stage One: The Graduate Questionnaires

Stage One of the research used a guest blog for *The Guardian* (Higdon 2010) and *Facebook* and first destination surveys, to engage with 68 recent graduates (2006-2009 from UK universities) from 13 undergraduate creative disciplines (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998).

In summary, the findings reveal that graduates identify self-confidence and industry contacts as the main requisites for employability in creative work. The graduates identify successful, key factors in both the curricular and co-curricular

undergraduate experience, which they believe develop their creative employability. Lack of personal industry contacts and money is identified as the main obstacles for both accessing and sustaining work. These graduates perceive evidence that creative work is moving to a career for the privileged.

68 graduates representing all 13 disciplines, graduating from 2006 to 2009 from both pre and post 1992 universities, completed an online survey. Stage One of the research, with a graduate sample, took a positivist approach (See *Methodology* Chapter) and developed a survey which asked mostly closed questions related to what employers say they currently need from graduates.

The issues and themes that I explored in the survey arose from my initial literature search and recent government policy. The survey focused on skills, knowledge and work experience (see Appendix II) and was influenced by employer surveys such as the High Fliers yearly surveys (2009) and current literature around employers' needs (Archer and Davison 2008; CBI 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009).

However the quantitative data did not reveal anything insightful. Using *Survey Monkey*, an online questionnaire software package, a list of predefined graduate attributes were given to the graduates and they were asked to choose which attributes were relevant to their creative work. The list of attributes were taken from skill and graduate attribute lists that employers claim are needed from graduates (Archer and Davison 2008; CBI/Universities UK 2009; High Fliers Research 2009).

I wanted to investigate whether graduates perceive the same need for the skills, knowledge and work experience in their creative work as the lists that employers perceive they needed from their graduates. The lists were for generic graduate work because at the time of writing in 2009, there were not specific lists for creative work in the creative industries or creative economy.

This came later in 2010 when the CBI put together a blue print for the creative industries (CBI 2010).

## List of Graduate Attributes

Graduates were given a pre-determined list of graduate attributes for potential creative work and asked to choose which they believed were relevant (see Figure 12 on page 279).

**Figure 12** Graduate Attributes

**In order of Importance**

|   |   |                                |  |
|---|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. <b>Confidence</b>                                  | 8. <b>Independent Working</b>             | 15. <b>Qualifying</b>          | 22. <b>Graduate-ness i.e. the mind state of being a graduate</b> |
| 2. <b>Subject Knowledge</b>                           | 9. <b>Passion</b>                         | 16. <b>Entrepreneurship</b>    | 23. <b>Communication Skills</b>                                  |
| 3. <b>Working in Groups</b>                           | 10. <b>Specific Industry level Skills</b> | 17. <b>Client Development</b>  | 24. <b>Practice of Theory</b>                                    |
| 4. <b>Business Skills</b>                             | 11. <b>I.T Skills</b>                     | 18. <b>Marketing Skills</b>    | 25. <b>Intellectual Ability</b>                                  |
| 5. <b>Specialist Skills or Knowledge - Specialism</b> | 12. <b>Self Discipline</b>                | 19. <b>Presentation Skills</b> | 26. <b>Report Writing</b>  |
| 6. <b>Critical Analysis</b>                           | 13. <b>Self Believe</b>                   | 20. <b>Problem Solving</b>     | 27. <b>Working outside Comfort Zone</b>                          |
| 7. <b>Research Skills</b>                             | 14. <b>Time Management</b>                | 21. <b>Creativity</b>          | 28. <b>Ambition</b>  |

This list of attributes did not reveal very much, only that confidence was seen as the most important attribute to have as a graduate, followed by subject knowledge, group work, business skills and a specialism.

As I did not ask why these attributes had importance in the questionnaire for the graduates, there is no detail, depth or context about the relevance of these attributes. The data consequently reveals little and is generalised.

It is interesting to note that confidence is also seen as paramount within the undergraduate data. Creativity and passion in the graduate response is lower down the list than other attributes which the graduates identify as relevant. However the graduates like the undergraduates, in later responses about aspirations for graduate work show that they are passionate about their discipline and want to be creative. Perhaps graduates are passionate and want to be creative in their discipline but do not believe employers want these attributes in entry level graduate jobs or perhaps they take the attributes of creativity and passion for granted so do not highlight them first. This question is an area to touch upon later when I take back the findings to other graduates and undergraduate participants giving feedback on the authenticity of the findings.

## Inhibitors for Potential Work

The qualitative data in the 'free text' sections in the survey was very insightful. In the qualitative responses, graduates identified obstacles that they perceived inhibited success in their chosen area of creative work. The inhibitors are listed below in Figure 13 Inhibitors for Potential Creative Work and direct quotations have been used to give examples of how the obstacles were expressed.



**Figure 13** Inhibitors for Potential Creative Work

- 1. Recession**
  - Jobs are “scarce”
  - Economy
- 2. Money**
  - Money to start businesses and “unable to buy products”
  - Money “stops me from being ambitious and taking risks”
  - “Living wholly self-employed, project to project and not knowing if I’d get paid each month”
  - “Money for further study”
  - “Entry level work is unpaid”
  - “Debt means I have no money to develop myself”
  - “No money to specialise”
  - Vulnerable working environment – portfolio working and “all temporary contracts”
  - “No permanent jobs“
  - “Everything is temporary and short term”
  - “Finance is needed for unpaid or low paid work experience”
  - Vulnerability of arts funding
  - “There’s been cut after cut in the arts”
- 3. Contacts** needed to identify where the work is – “work is not advertised”
  - Contacts “to get into” work opportunities, “getting though the door”, “need to break in” to be “seen” or considered for paid work
  - “Contacts are needed to keep in work”
- 4. Realisation that job recruitment is not rational** - “who you know”, “looking right”

“Having family and friends to help you”

**5. Competition**

“Chasing the same jobs”

**6. “Face not fitting”**

**7. Grade of qualification** (“upper second or first needed for work experience”)

**8. Changing job role** – i.e. “constant development needed” and “unable to keep up” with the creative discipline, techniques or advancements in creative technology

**9. Older age** – hard to start in the creative industries if you are mature graduate, “young people favoured”

**10. Location** - “unable to move for work”

**11. “Degree has no impact for potential work”** – “work gained through contacts not through qualifications”

**12. “Lack of Confidence”**

**13. “Bad luck”**

**14. Male personality traits** favoured in creative employment – “it’s a boys’ club”, “men like working with men”

In the graduate ‘open’ responses, the graduates commented on their undergraduate experience and their perceptions of what areas had helped their development for graduate work and what areas they believe could have been developed to support them for graduate work. It is interesting to note that none of the graduates used the word ‘employability’ in the ‘free text’ sections of the survey which produced the qualitative data.

## **Graduate Voices - Areas in their creative courses that supported their development**

“Learning about myself and the human body was very useful as I developed my confidence and learned ways to cope with stress and self analyse, although this may be more of a general benefit rather than helping my creative work.”  
Performing arts

“Working in groups and learning to work with anyone. Being disciplined.”  
Publishing

“Contacts - film is who you know. I have got work experience through someone I met on the course.” Film

“Developing excellent communication skills.” Advertising

“The mindset of being a graduate.” Web design

“Meeting others on the course - learning together, working together with different people.” Design

“The expertise of lecturers and their links to the profession and working in it with them.” Television

“All aspects of my degree prepared me. Working together with classmates and experiential learning.” Game design

“Prepared me to work as part of a team and working on negotiated studies in my final year prepared me to be able to work alone and be self motivated.”  
Video

“Working with those in the industry. Being challenged to work outside what you thought you were good at.” Art and galleries

“I was very shy at Uni and by being made to present each project made me a lot more confident which was crucial in interviews and meetings at work.” Software design

“Much emphasis was given to you becoming a self employed textile artist. I feel it would have been better if we could have had some work experience in our chosen field.” Fashion and textiles

“The theory was great and we were able to do lots of practice.” Architecture

“The Graduate Scholarship I won allowed me to prove my worth to the company I am now employed by and gain vast amounts of knowledge about a professional working environment.” Architecture

“Working with businesses, other designers and the shows. It gave me a taste of the working world. I found my own work experience which was really, really helpful. I now am gaining more experience by working part-time and gaining more work experience.” Art

“I work for myself as an artist. I have community projects and local authority work as well as independent jobs. Gave me the confidence to go off on my own.” Dance

“Outside speakers and professional practitioners coming to work with us in workshops. Lots of variety and creative input. Lecturers brought in others to complement their teaching. It was a stimulating environment to learn in.” Film

“Having design briefs from external companies and help from tutors to organise work placements in the industry over our summer holidays.” Design and products

“Many of our projects were in coalition with high street brands (the industry) which helped me to analyse and understand a brand and therefore to be able to develop commercial products that are in keeping with the brand. The university also had very strict deadlines which meant I had to learn to multi-task, organise and manage my time well, which is crucial in the working world.” Fashion

“..loving the people and the kit. Passion that comes through the people that work with music. Teachers that know what they are talking about and learning thru (sic) people on the course. Working with people who feel the same as you is what is needed to get work or you have to show them what they can do, that they are missing.” Music

“Technique. Examining painting technique and criticality skills. I use them in my teaching now. It gave me supportive friends who love the subject - hence filling in this questionnaire on Facebook.” Art

“Final show. Lecturers knew about work. Running own business.” Design

“Visiting lecturers, practitioners, giving an outside eye to my work. Feedback from shows.” Theatre

“Careers service were useful. I visited them in my first year and they talked about my options. I realised from this point on that I wanted specifically to teach and combine with painting my own work. The two seems to fit well and gave me a rewarding career.” Art and design

“Exhibition work. Gallery input. We put together shows and critiqued others. My job now is in this field and this work was very useful.” Galleries event management (antiques and crafts)

“Work experience arranged via the university is what prepared me the most. Experience is what the majority of employers are most interested in, i.e. it was invaluable. Apart from that, practical work such as running a design project and

teamwork, working across disciplines has helped prepare to the employment phase.” Journalism and Publishing

“Theatre in Education module - as worked in schools and had to design workshops and produce resources for students and schools. I do this for a living now.” Drama

“Research and analytical skills and strong grounding in subject have given me confidence. Become used to working as part of a team, doing presentations etc. all of which are useful.” Radio.

“The design skills I acquired in general have helped, and also the small amount of CAD I was taught has been extremely valuable.” Architecture

“Confidence and independence.” Music

“I had a job as a runner for a film company. I went back to university to get more skills. I am back with the same company in a better job. The degree gave me the qualification to do that.” Film and video

“Modules that brought all theory and practice together.” Game Art

“Lecturers were brilliant. We had lots of guest lecturers which gave diversity and variety.” Film and Video

“Inspiring teachers and a series of working practitioners made me want to be an art teacher. I love creating and working with people which my degree allowed me to discover.” Art

“I still don't have a job in my field but through further education and work experience I have decided I want my own business”. Web design

“Intellectual ability and I guess more than I had before!” Journalism

“Confidence. Knowing that I had completed successful projects with lots of different people, where I really had to push myself. University gave me the self-

belief and courage to be able to push myself in my workplace today.” Art and Business

“My industrial placement year within a real Blue Chip global organisation. This experience allowed me to test my academic knowledge in the real world and balance out what was actually used in working life and gain on the job expertise in the subject discipline and corporate environment”. Media software

The graduates would develop the course with:

- Networking and contacts given and made in the industry
- Exposure through mentoring and work experience
- Working with high street brands
- Workshops with professionals in industry
- Meeting and working with those in creative business
- Real work environments and working in real industry
- Real design briefs, in real places with real people
- Safe opportunities to fail
- Simulations and role plays
- Graduate Scholarships
- Managing your own business
- Talking to artists and working in collaboration with artists
- Links to working professionals and ex graduates
- Knowledge and understanding of industry

The graduates reflecting on their undergraduate experience of what was successful and what areas they believe could have been developed to support them for potential graduate work, identified people, the 'actors' and what they need to do, the 'actions' and where they should take place, the 'environment'. The data has been collated in the table below.



**Figure 14** Who, What and Where?

| <b>Actors – who?</b>   | <b>Actions - what?</b>   | <b>Environment – where?</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Creative industries sector professionals and creative industries sector employers</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving contacts, networks, experience</li> <li>• Contributing to HE curricular and co-curricular input and feedback</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real work environments</li> <li>• Simulated work environments</li> <li>• Curricular and co curricular level activities</li> </ul> |
| <b>Ex-students</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking about their experiences</li> <li>• Giving contacts and networks,</li> <li>• Contributing to the HE curricular and co-curricular input, feedback</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real work environments</li> <li>• Simulated work environments</li> <li>• Curricular and co curricular level activities</li> </ul> |
| <b>Working creative graduates</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking about their experiences</li> <li>• Supporting and mentoring</li> <li>• Giving contacts and networks,</li> <li>• Contributing to the HE curricular and co-curricular input, feedback</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real work environments</li> <li>• Simulated work environments</li> <li>• Curricular and co curricular level activities</li> </ul> |
| <b>Universities</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining knowledge and understanding,</li> <li>• Networks,</li> <li>• Academic development and support,</li> <li>• Student support,</li> <li>• Inclusion,</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economies of scale – central services and cross discipline collaboration</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Lecturers as practitioners</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory and practice</li> <li>• Subject knowledge</li> <li>• Networks</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Teaching and practice expertise</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simulated work environments</li> <li>• Curricular and co curricular level activities</li> </ul>                                   |
| <b>Academic staff</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curricular linked to potential work – e.g. subject knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Show case projects, modules linked to work</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simulated work environments</li> <li>• Curricular and co curricular level activities</li> </ul>                                   |
| <b>Career advisers</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific advice and guidance tailored to industry and student</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curricular and co curricular level activities</li> </ul>  |

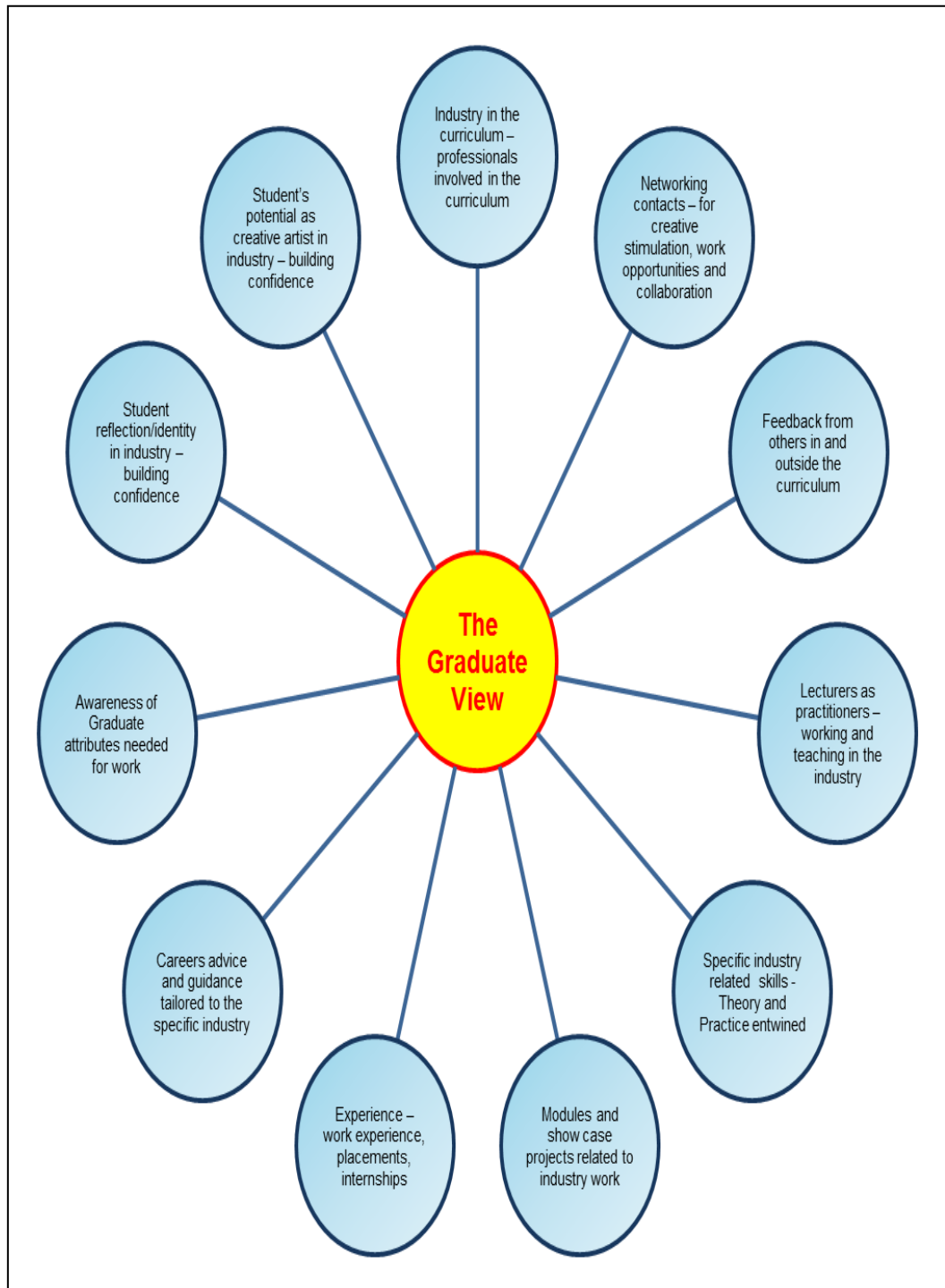
There appeared to be two areas that graduates, in hindsight, believed were important in their undergraduate experience:

- External factors (understanding how the industry worked) that made it more likely on graduation to find work in the area they aspired to work in.
- Internal factors (graduates seeing themselves able to work in the industry) that gave graduates the confidence to apply to work in the industry.

Like the first and third year dance and architecture undergraduates, the graduates did not focus on the skills needed in their creative industry and what skills they felt they had acquired in their undergraduate experience. Instead they focused on the nexus between their academic work and the creative industry itself, the work they aspired to enter.

The graduates focused on the connections and interactions between their undergraduate creative work and creative industry work and the feedback and advice from their undergraduate tutors and practitioners in the industry. Sometimes, these tutors and practitioners were the same people. In fact, students rated highly the university teaching staff who currently practised in the creative field the students wished to enter. The graduates identified key, success factors that they felt helped them develop for potential work. In Figure 15 below (repeated again from page 38 for convenience), graduates give detail and context to the actors and actions that they identified and where they take place in the undergraduate curriculum.

**Figure 15** The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience



At the end of Stage One research with the graduate sample of 68, I analysed the graduate data and the codes that emerged. I brought these codes into umbrella codes or larger categories and explored the relationship between them.

Through this comparative process, I began to develop a theory. Theory is defined by Hage (1972) as concepts integrated through a series of relational statements. A snapshot of the developing theory at the end of Stage One is recorded as:

*To increase the likelihood of a graduate gaining (potential) work in the creative industries a graduate needs to have had meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work in, coupled with opportunities to gain an understanding of their worth within it. This understanding is gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area.*

The graduates across the 13 disciplines felt that above all, confidence was needed to potentially work in a creative industry. Confidence that is gained through understanding the industry and confidence gained through imagining themselves able to work within it. How these graduates/students see themselves as having what is needed to be a creative artist, graduate producer or creator is crucial.

The students understanding the industry and the students understanding themselves in the industry is needed in tandem. The graduate's notion of employability in the undergraduate experience is looking out to understand work and looking in, to understand themselves as workers. The graduates believe both an external and internal perspective is needed.

This echoed the third year students of both dance and architecture disciplines, who valued teaching staff who were involved and practising in the industry itself

and valued undergraduate work that mirrored or related to the creative industry itself.

The third years of both disciplines wanted connections with people from the industry, in order to gain an understanding of how the industry worked. The third years also spoke of the importance of these industry contacts to break into initial work, to gain work experience and to find paid work.

The third years referred to the importance of confidence, to believe in themselves, to handle competition and see themselves entering and succeeding within the industry. The architecture third year students felt that those third years that had been mentored by professional architects, were most likely to have this confidence. This suggests that at even at the third year stage, most students are still dependent, needing external feedback from others, such as university tutors or practitioners in the creative industry, to help build this self-belief and confidence and imagine their identity as creative workers.

The mentoring of the high achievers, or “stars” within architecture seemed to make those architecture students who are not identified as stars, perceive themselves as inadequate or inferior to others on their course. The students who are not being mentored also focus on the rich and connected students on their architecture course, who they believe do not need star status to succeed. The third year architecture students perceive these rich students as having their own contacts who will give them work opportunities and having the financial means to work for free within the industry for long periods of time. The students who see themselves as not well connected, not rich and not the stars of their course, feel disadvantaged and talk about competing ferociously for the very few, advertised work opportunities.

The third year dance students seem more independent than the architecture students because they are gaining this confidence with continuous experiential learning and self-development and through peer feedback as well as tutor feedback. Their aspirations for dance related creative work are high, but their expectations of high paid, prestigious, dance work is low. These third year students expect a long, unpredictable, low paid journey. Their confidence to see themselves as having an identity and agency as a creative artist working in the industry, can come from many experiences, such as autonomous work, group work, paid and unpaid work, community, voluntary and professional work.

## Emerging Themes

The themes and conceptualisation of employability that arise out of the research stages with the recent graduates and with the first and third year undergraduates are revealing because they do not fit with the dominant conceptualisation of employability within policy literature. These themes are not part of the initial literature review which interrogated recent policy documentation around government conceptualisation of employability, undergraduate degrees and the creative industries in the UK. The following are the themes that are informed by the research findings with first and third year undergraduates and with recent graduates. These themes are grounded in the research data and were explored further in the *Findings Informed Literature* section of the *Literature Review*.

- The lack of relevant, skill acquisition was not identified as the main obstacle to finding work in the industry of choice. Maybe this is because it is assumed by graduates that students need these skills. Graduates believed that there were obstacles to finding creative work that were not particular to a recession. Graduates identify lack of personal, industry contacts and money, as being the main obstacles to accessing and sustaining creative employment. Personal contacts are needed to fight

competition for opportunities. Money is needed to finance long periods of unpaid internship or work experience. Cash flow is needed to sustain a career of contract working, portfolio working, project working and sole trading.

- The importance of identity in the way students imagine themselves in potential work and the need to belong to a creative community. The importance of confidence as a prerequisite factor which helps students imagine or believe in their own successful identity.
- The importance of networks and contacts to provide work opportunities and for work creation. Communities of practice may possibly be communities of membership or privilege. Graduates need to gain membership to these networks or 'inner circles' in order to gain and sustain work. Social capital, cultural capital and networking are salient. The students' comments in this research, suggest that they view creative work as moving to a career for the privileged.
- Undergraduates' personal narratives show that they link their course choice to their aspirations of graduate, creative work. Many choose a career related to the discipline where they experience the most pleasure. This pleasure is reinforced by influential people or role models, feedback from others, self-development, peer learning and their own emotional experiences. The pleasure associated with 'the living of the discipline' can lead to work and leisure becoming entwined. The discipline affects the way they see and live their lives and becomes their own philosophy.
- The first year students have a conceptualisation of employability that seems to be influenced by pre university definitions of employability and how employability is discussed at school and college. Both first and third year undergraduates talk of being encouraged by their school or college

to view graduate employment as a factor in their choice of discipline and undergraduate course at university. Undergraduate students seem to be suggesting that they are influenced in their school/FE college experience that a degree is the next step after compulsory education and that this is a safe option or prerequisite to getting a 'good' job.

- First and third years' conceptualisation of employability mostly fit with government policy conceptualisation of employability. That is, employability is defined as getting an actual graduate job, having the right skills that employers say they want and seeing the employer and good employee fit as crucial. The employer is viewed as having the dominant role and the employee being the subordinate one, in the employment relationship. The ideal employment relationship in terms of employer and employee metaphors are described as a parent needing an obedient child or an expert needing an attentive novice. However, the first and third years talk about the importance of contacts to break into creative work and this does not fit with this dominant model. They conceptualise the word 'employability' in terms of the dominant model but do not relate this model to themselves. They see confidence, contacts and money as crucial factors in their own conceptualisation of their own creative employability.
- Creative work can be conceptualised with a metaphor of a journey taking multiple paths and with many destinations. The journey can cover many different terrains with physical and mental obstacles 'en route'. A certain mindset or philosophy is needed to prepare for and manage the unpredictable journey which requires constant training, development, physical and emotional risk and resilience. However it is expected that some obstacles are insurmountable and cannot be overcome by the individual alone.



## Developing Theory

Recent government policy which is preoccupied with graduate acquisition of skills to meet employers' needs seems simplistic and naive. Employers are believed to have needs and these needs are matched with graduates who have the skills the employers perceive they want.

The process of graduate employment seems far more complex, involving negotiation and interaction between the individual and the gatekeepers to work opportunities. Mason et al (2006) find no evidence that the explicit teaching and assessment of employability skills by university departments has a significant independent effect on gaining employment within six months of graduation or securing work in graduate jobs. Structured work experience and employer involvement in degree course design and delivery does have an impact because interaction takes place between individuals and gatekeepers.

The graduates (particularly with their critical success factors) and the third years in this research, certainly acknowledge the nexus between the individual and the gatekeepers of creative work. They see the need for industry contacts and work experience, to bring potential connections to creative work. Even the first year students, many who have not thought about how they will get their first creative job, imagine that contacts are needed to gain it. None of the three groups, graduates, third years or first years talk about the skills they need to attract a potential employer. The three groups also do not view work experience as a way to develop their own skills, more to develop their understanding of creative work and their own creative contacts.

After Stage One (the graduate sample) and Stage Two (the undergraduate sample) of the research was completed, the emerging theory was adapted:

*To increase the likelihood of a graduate gaining (potential) work in the creative industries, a graduate needs to have had meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work in, coupled with opportunities to gain an understanding of their worth within it. This understanding is gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area.*

*However gaining actual employment in creative industries is reliant on industry contacts because they act as gatekeepers to creative work. The process of graduates gaining employment in the creative industries is complex and many socio and economic variables come into play. Current graduates and undergraduates in British universities perceive that confidence, personal industry contacts and access to funding increase the opportunities to break into the creative industries. This is because confidence is needed to believe in one's potential and contacts are needed to enter and sustain creative work. In addition to contacts, financial resources are needed to sustain a creative working life. Financial resources are needed to subsidise long periods of low paid work experience, to manage a creative, portfolio working life where payment is unpredictable and to keep up to date with the continuous professional development needed to compete in the ever transforming, creative economy.*

These findings have articulated the data from all three cohorts, in order to answer the three research questions: *How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?* These questions are used as a structural device in the next chapter *Synthesis – Developing a contemporary perspective of employability* to give a synthesis of the research area and to provide an alternative approach to creative employability.

# 5. SYNTHESIS – Developing a Contemporary Perspective of Employability

This chapter uses the research questions to structure a synthesis of this research. It brings together the research questions, methodology, the literature review and the research findings within a framework using these research questions:

1. How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices?
2. Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience?
3. What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?

This *Synthesis* chapter begins by summarising how employability is currently conceptualised by undergraduates and graduates who have undertaken a creative undergraduate degree. The chapter poses questions for universities that arise from this research with recent and current undergraduates. It then moves on to confirm student and graduate perceptions of how employability can be developed within the undergraduate experience and finally explores

student/graduate perceptions of the appropriate place of employability within their creative degrees. The student and graduate data, where relevant, is linked to the literature through citations. These citations act to remind the reader where connections have been made and where themes are reinforced across the data.

Responses to the three research questions were given through the voices of the undergraduate and graduate sample currently undertaking or who had recently undertaken, a creative undergraduate degree. These findings are detailed in the chapter *Research Findings and Analysis*.

The perceptions expressed in *Research Findings and Analysis* have also been confirmed from a wider group who are involved in the undergraduate experience and who are involved in the transitions into the graduate experience. The responses to the three research questions have therefore become co-produced through the participation of others in creative learning and creative work, in addition to the original research sample. These 'significant others' are other creative undergraduates, other creative graduates, practitioners, university lecturers, university staff and creative employers. This *Synthesis* chapter presents their co-production. Through the writing up of their responses, I interpret those interpretations and become part of that co-production (Charmaz 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997; Lincoln and Guba 2003).

The chapter then sets out Creatour (see page 322). I devised Creatour from the co-production of responses to conceptualise the place that employability could take in creative undergraduate degrees. I offer Creatour (adapted from Parkour) as an appropriate philosophy to support creative undergraduate learning and work. It seeks to form a philosophy that can be explored at university and developed through creative life. The philosophy aims to become meaningful for any creative undergraduate and creative graduate. I argue that

this is an important and original contribution to the theory, practice and literature shaping the conceptualisation of 'Employability'.

## **Origins of Creatour - using undergraduate and graduate data to develop a creative philosophy**

The Creatour model comes from the graduate and undergraduate voices in this research and from the research findings. Undergraduates talked of living the discipline and wanting a meaningful philosophy that made sense of their learning and work, and gave them a purpose. The undergraduate and graduate data gave many specific examples of what had worked in their experiences and suggested what was needed to be successful. Their data has been incorporated in Creatour.

For example, undergraduates in the discipline of dance make suggestions that are useful to other creative disciplines (see page 259). The undergraduates want to gain an understanding of all the parts of the creative industry that they aspire to work in. They want a holistic, experiential curriculum. Learning about the philosophical side, complements the physical side of the discipline. They want to see the diversity of the discipline as this gives them more understanding of many different communities. Working in a trans-disciplinary way, they feel they had been transformed through the course. The interaction of people and spaces brings confidence. Work experience brings 'openings' and many contacts. Pluralistic perspectives help them to learn about difference, diversity, philosophies and methodologies in the discipline. They felt they have had a holistic experience. They find their own personal development through their degree. Learning is taught through and by experiencing which has become the dancers' approach to creative working. Finding the purpose to learning and work gives the students meaning and motivation and a personal philosophy.

The final year architecture students and dance students (see page 271) summarise their needs for creative employability. Students say they need to continuously network within work and personal life. They need to cultivate a passion for their discipline which drives them to work creatively and create work, without the motivation of monetary payment. They need ongoing personal development, self-drive and self-motivation and to constantly 'keep up' their discipline specific skills and technique. They need to collaborate with others. They accept that a creative career is a journey that takes many different paths with many different destinations and they want the confidence to pursue these routes. They view creative life as experiential. It is not passive but involves action. They realise to enter and sustain work they need industry contacts and work experience.

The graduates identify areas that are needed for creative employability (see Figure 16 The Place of Creative Employability in the Contemporary Undergraduate Curriculum page 315 in this chapter). They also assert that confidence and contacts, along with financial, social and cultural capital is needed to enter and sustain creative work.

The graduates and the undergraduates in my research want to access a good, creative life. This yearning links to "the entitlement for all to a rich cultural and expressive life" (The Warwick Commission 2015;14). The graduate and undergraduate voices in my research also echo the features of the creative person (see page 102). They want a curriculum that is able to develop their self-confidence; acknowledges complexity; involves risk taking; resembles play; brings resilience; develops a mindset to overcome obstacles; builds motivation, recognises emotions in creative work and increases endurance (Amabile 1983; Sternberg 1986; Gardner 1993; Pollicastro and Gardner 1999; Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Falconar 2000; Sternberg, Kaufman et al. 2002; Hennessey 2003; Kraft 2005; Baer and Kaufman 2006).

What could a philosophy for a good creative life, underpinned by experiential learning look like? What should be included in an HE programme that develops

experiential learning and creative employability? How can learners develop creativity in communities of practice, collaborate through the interactions of creative places, spaces and people, and build resilience for their own individual journeys and creative identities?

The answers to these questions were synthesised through James and his love of Parkour. James, a third year dance undergraduate talked about Parkour (see page 267). The Parkour approach is a relevant philosophy for an alternative perspective for creative working and creative life. Parkour is about experiential learning, individual journeys, resilience and overcoming obstacles. Its metaphor encapsulates all the areas that the creative undergraduates and graduates in this research want to develop.

Parkour is a philosophy of emotional, physical and mental training, developed in an environment where people can be part of a community, learning and working together. This community of practice is diverse, it is not closed; people are able to join, to learn together, to teach each other, to support each other and to overcome creative obstacles. The philosophy fitted with the creative needs of the graduates and undergraduates in this research. The students' paradigm of creative working and creative life appears holistic, rather than primarily focused on the financial rewards of gaining a 'good' graduate job. The paradigm of creative life within this research has been expressed as 'living the discipline'.

With this in mind, I looked to develop a holistic philosophy for creative working that combined all the elements that the undergraduates and graduates identified as needed for creative employability. Drawing on the research findings, literature review and the need for a creative philosophy for learning and work which pursued a creative and good life for all; the principles from Parkour were borrowed and adapted to design the philosophy of Creatour. The metaphor of Parkour developed easily into Creatour. I took the undergraduate and graduate data (about what had been successful in their undergraduate experience and what they thought could be developed,) and incorporated them into the

development areas of Creatour. For example the graduates and undergraduates wanted to make emotions more explicit in their undergraduate experience; they said work could be stressful competitive and isolating. I included their concerns in Creatour with the inclusion of the section *Maintaining physical and mental agility*, within the philosophy. As I devised Creatour, I also shared it through meetings with creative practitioners and undergraduates and asked for their feedback. As a result, Creatour fits well with the needs of the students and graduates in my research.

In keeping with this research's iterative methodology and grounded approach, in this chapter I presented Creatour philosophy to undergraduates and graduates, to seek their evaluation and critique, and to develop the construction through their feedback and co-production (Charmaz 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Heron and Reason 1997; Lincoln and Guba 2003). The feedback was gained through undergraduate and graduate meetings organised by dance and architecture university departments.

In addition to the original sample who contributed to the research data of Stage One (with creative graduates) and Stage Two (with creative undergraduates), a summary of the findings and research conclusions are taken back to a comparative group of undergraduates and graduates. This reflects the grounded approach (Charmaz 2006) seeking validity and reliability through evidencing the authenticity of the research findings. The final section of the chapter provides evidence through a detailed discussion of comparable group responses to the research findings and feeds back on the authenticity, relevance and appropriateness of the research findings from the point of view of the undergraduates and graduates themselves.



# 1 How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices?

Employability is a social construct that has multiple meanings and layers. It is a construct that recent British governments link with all education reforms, from secondary to higher education levels (Dearing 1997; CBI 1999; BBC 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009; Cameron 2010; CBI 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2010; CBI 2012; Toynbee 2013; Department for Education 2014; Ofsted 2014; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). Within government rhetoric, employability is promoted as a benign construct, advantageous for long term security, both in the individual's interest for job sustainability and in the nation's interest, for economic health and growth.

The construct of employability has become an increasingly significant part of higher education institutions' infrastructure, coinciding with a clear move of the employer responsibility onto the employee. There has been a shift onto the individual to manage their own career identity/development and to be responsible for their own career progression and for the education institution to take a duty of care (which is being increasingly quantified) and offer their students support, advice and guidance in order to develop and meet their career aspirations.

The person centred emphasis in government rhetoric is presented as a reform to assist workers to adapt to the many changes occurring in the organisation and administration of work (and in the organisation of education and training) in order to navigate through an unpredictable economy. The employee 'acquires' their own knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics which employers will pay for because it is the agency that employers say they want to match their needs.

The construct appears in the interest of the individual as a means to improve their own, direct environment but also working on a majority, making them a malleable workforce, to meet the demands of a wider, brutal environment. Employability is “work specific active adaptability”, employability “facilitates the movement between jobs, both within and between organizations” (Fugate, Kinicki et al. 2004;16).

Employability conceptualised through recent government policy (CBI 2009; CBI/Universities UK 2009; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) promotes the interest of the individual but is significantly in favour of the employers’ interests. It appears to be the acquisition of skills to allow the movement between jobs and organisations with the main purpose of meeting employers’ changing needs. Through the acquisition of skills a person is rewarded with a job.

In this research, the data from undergraduates and recent graduates of creative undergraduate degrees support a belief that the acquisition of skills, or skills capital, is only the baseline for potential employment. Their conceptualisation of creative employability is not about the acquisition of skills which is central to government policy. These undergraduates and graduates perceive success in graduate, creative work, as achievable through social, cultural and economic capital. Creative employability can be defined as the range of capital or capabilities required to gain creative membership or access to creative communities of practice and to meet the gatekeepers of work.

The undergraduate and graduate conceptualisation of creative employability is revealing and their voices should be listened to, in order to inform current and future creative degrees. An argument for seeking the student voice to inform HE planning and the development of the curricular and the student experience has long been evidenced (Ramsden 1991; Dearing 1997; Harvey, Plimmer et al. 1997; Hill, Lomas et al. 2003; Bovil et al 2011). How do student voices

impact on the university and the teaching and learning in undergraduate creative disciplines?

Creative undergraduates and graduates feel they have meaningful identity when they are participating in creative communities. Dancers do not have to be paid to 'feel they are a dancer', rather they find their identity or belonging through participating in creative communities and learning and practising together. The discipline of dance allows undergraduates to move into formal and informal groups that seem relatively open to new members. They can choose to participate or not participate in groups and can move around with fluidity to form new groups. Moving in and out of these groups gives them the status and identity of working in dance whether or not they are actually paid for the work they do. Dance communities appear open, accepting and diverse based on these undergraduate perceptions.

Gaining paid work is of course a harder challenge. Paid work appears to be much more exclusive. Important contacts or gate keepers of work are seen to be needed to gain paid work and this is needed in addition or outside the need to participate in a creative group or community.

Should university tutors teach 'the moving in and out of communities' and be explicit about how a community of practice affects participants' identity? For example, should tutors acknowledge that dance students feel they are dancers or choreographers when they are participating in communities of practice whether or not they are paid or unpaid? Architecture students say they only feel they are architects when they have completed their seven years of training and are allowed to call themselves architects by RIBA. They only feel they are an architect, when they are allowed to join the community of qualified architects.

Many students feel disappointed if they do not have their identity as an architect confirmed. Without this status, what identity do they feel they have? Within

these communities of practice around architecture, you are either 'in' or you are 'out'. Architecture does not operate as the dance communities where dancers are able to move in and out of groups relatively easily and have fluidity between the different kinds of dance communities, such as those for performing, choreography, teaching, community working or collaborative projects. Do universities need to support students with other, alternative identities or paths if they fail to become an architect or leave architecture after the completion of their undergraduate degree?

Architecture has a professional body and a prescribed vocational route. It is more closed and traditional than dance. Dance is ever evolving because it has no prescriptive career path, or professional body that defines it. The two disciplines are seen as *creative industries* by the classification of DCMS (2001) and are therefore viewed as similar entities. However in reality, there are clear differences and architecture and dance mark the two ends of an imagined, creative industries spectrum.

At one end is architecture, appearing conventional and conservative, underpinned by a professional body and operating for a privileged few because it requires particular capital for membership. Cultural, social and financial capital is required to gain membership. Communities of practice in architecture appear to exist as communities of privilege, with a relatively closed membership which usually replicates members' capital and consequently reinforces the status quo.

Two Russell Group architecture departments that I approached to ask for feedback on these research findings, agreed that architecture had returned to being a profession of privilege. A star system in architecture meant that employers identified top students from the second year and gave them placements leading to jobs. The rest of the undergraduate cohort had to use their own connections to find placement opportunities. This meant those with connections were successful, those without tended to give up. How do

universities break this mould? How can universities open up architecture to the diversity which is needed for the creative economy to thrive and to allow the social mobility of society through higher education? Anecdotally lecturers of architecture in both pre and post 1992 institutions, say they are now seeing evidence that increased university fees, increased global working and the closed nature of architecture communities has meant that architecture has moved back to being once again, the elite graduate profession for the affluent middle class and in particular, the affluent middle class male.

At the other end of the creative industries spectrum is dance, populated by many members who move between groups and gain identity and belonging from these groups, working mostly without payment. These groups have diverse membership. However being paid for creative work in dance requires more than the participation in dance communities. Paid work is initiated by an influential contact or a gatekeeper of work. How do students gain these contacts? What role does the university play in brokering contacts?

When undergraduates come to university in their first year they are emotionally involved in their discipline, they love it, feel passionate about it and live it. Over time, this enmeshing of self and the discipline is loosened. By the third year undergraduates are more objective and have a maturity within the discipline. They do not have to feel 'total involvement' in their discipline and are not emotionally attached to everything that they do in their practice. In fact, to do so would be emotionally draining or even damaging to the psyche or physical health of the individual in the long term.

This occurs in other creative arts, for example the actor who is 'living' each part and finding it mentally and physically exhausting, is taught to remove the whole self and have a healthy detachment to their role. University lecturers anecdotally told me that dancers, actors and artists on arrival at university, want to get involved in everything and to "experience it all". They want to be artistic

without any constraints. They want to be allowed to be indulgent and be given time when they can be emotionally attached and “feel everything”. One lecturer suggested students need this period to “get it out of their system” before moving on “to have a maturity within the subject”. Another lecturer, talking about theatre practice, believed that “being histrionic” is a rite of passage before students are able to stand back and become aware of the elements of powerful drama and how it is shaped.

There maybe a responsibility for university tutors to facilitate this process. Could students be ‘allowed to feel the discipline’ and be emotionally attached for longer in their first year? Could the transition from being emotionally attached to becoming more objective be made explicit and become a ‘taught’ element of the course? Could the university assist the student to move from being emotionally engaged in the discipline as a participant, to being more objective, able to deconstruct the infrastructure of paid work, learning through entrepreneurial activities without compromising their creative flair or talent?

In response to the undergraduate conceptualisation of employability, the university may need to make some changes in the way they support their students. The undergraduate conceptualisation does not fit with the skill acquisition models of many university employability strategies and policies. Some universities may need to look at their current practice more critically. The following makes some suggestions for evaluating university provision.

## Communities of practice, networks and contacts – Questions for the Universities

- What are universities’ roles in bringing new members to the creative industries and economy?

- How do universities support their undergraduates to be involved in communities of practice in their creative area or discipline while at university and after graduation?
- Should universities directly broker relationships between students and creative practitioners? Are placements or work experience the conduit to access creative communities? How can creative communities of practice be made accessible to all undergraduates and graduates to increase diversity?
- Where do other creative disciplines fit in this metaphor of the creative industries as a spectrum? Which disciplines have professional bodies? Which communities are more open than others? Which disciplines have more diversity of members than others? How has diversity been achieved?
- What should universities include or not include in the development of communities of practice in their undergraduate curriculum? Who should university tutors involve in undergraduate curricular in order to support students to be able to access communities of practice and be able to meet the gatekeepers of creative work?
- Undergraduates and graduates believe work experience brings contacts rather than skills. What role should universities take in developing contacts for undergraduates or recent graduates? Should universities provide contacts?
- Should universities be explicit about contacts and how contacts help undergraduate and graduates to be employed in the creative industries? Do universities need to teach cultural capital and social capital by making

it an explicit learning outcome of how students should socialise, network and find work?

## **2 Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience?**

Disciplines need to be able to move away from the dominant model of generic graduate skills for employability espoused by government policies (CBI/Universities UK 2009; Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) and higher education initiatives such as generic, key skills building, general work experience and the acquiring of any graduate job six months after graduation measured through Unistats (2014). Anecdotally, undergraduate students view the employability strategies of universities as a series of initiatives to secure general work experience for undergraduates and to develop generic key skills, but they do not view them as useful to their own, specific work aspirations.

The graduates within this research say that generic interventions are not useful to their creative graduate work. The graduates believe strategies need to be working at a local and specific level to have meaningful relevance to their own aspirations. To be useful, interventions need to follow the practices and discourses of the discipline.

The teaching staff and students involved in a discipline area consequently need the time and resources to carefully deconstruct what employability means in their particular discipline and for their graduates' creative work. They need to evaluate who are the key actors in conceptualising employability and what that employability means. The literature on creative people (page 102) in the *Literature Review* explores what is needed to be successful in creative work. It reveals that creative students have particular needs and stresses the



importance of creating an experimental, collaborative and stimulating learning environment, where students can work and learn from those already working in the field they aspire to work within. Universities should also view their creative discipline as part of the wider cultural and creative ecosystem and recognise that each part feeds the other (The Warwick Commission 2015).

University departments can work on their own specific philosophies, from their deconstructions to enable these practices, nuances and ways of working to be more explicit and tangible. The importance of individuals' and of the discipline's creative philosophy was a salient theme for the undergraduate research participants. Particularly important was how the individual sees themselves in relationship to their external world. Consequently this theme informed the exploration of creative philosophy in the *Literature Review* (Ventegodt, Andersen et al. 2003; Pink 2005; Shuaib and Enoch 2013). I define the individual's need for a creative philosophy as developing the space between the individual's interpretation of their interior world and their exterior world, so that the fit feels more harmonious to them. The more successful the integrating of that space between both worlds, the more the individual is able to build their confidence, agency, meaning, purpose and wellbeing for what Ventegodt, Andersen et al (2003) call a 'good life'.

Through a meaningful philosophy, undergraduates can understand the creative learning, the creative communities and the creative work. They can begin to understand who constructs creative work, how creative work is constructed and how it becomes paid. They can be supported through the curriculum to work with and work in these creative communities and begin the process of how they cultivate, gain and keep the contacts who are the gatekeepers for potential paid work.

Figure 16 (page 315) brings together my model, *The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience* (see page 202) with Wenger's (2009;211) model (see page 120) conceptualising contemporary learning called *Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory*.

The two models (Wenger's model and my own) are brought together (see Figure 16) to conceptualise how creative employability is perceived (by both graduates and undergraduates) in the contemporary undergraduate experience. Figure 16 should be viewed as dynamic and fluid. It represents bubbles in a semi-liquid like structure. The two colours of the bubbles are used only to make it clear to the reader that the grey bubbles have their origins in Wenger's model (page 120) and the green bubbles from my model *The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience* (page 202).

The bubbles proximity and location within the two dimensional pictorial representation does not indicate any particular significance. The diagram represents a snapshot in time and aims to show the complexities of the many elements of 'Creative Employability' within the creative undergraduate experience. These elements are rooted in the graduate and undergraduate constructs of creative employability which link strongly to Wenger's construct of social learning and communities of practice. At another point in time the bubbles may move around as if in a three dimensional space. The bubbles may move any way and anywhere, forwards, backwards, closer or further away from each other within the overall conceptualisation.

**Figure 16** The Place of Creative Employability in the Contemporary Undergraduate Curriculum

Adapted from Wenger's (2009;211) *Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory.*



Figure 16 conceptualises how graduates/undergraduates believe they can 'acquire' creative employability and how they view employability's place within a contemporary undergraduate curriculum. These factors for success in *The Graduate's View of 'Creative Employability' in the Undergraduate Experience* are integrated with the undergraduate need to participate in creative communities of practice and to learn through collaboration and experience. Through these communities of practice, undergraduates gain confidence, find meaning and identity in their learning and gain contacts to access future work. In these communities of practice they develop the confidence and belief that they have potential and something to offer to the industry which gives them the affirmation to pursue paid work.

## Summary

In summary, the social interactions within creative learning and creative working spaces (space being interpreted as the physical, virtual and psychological) which are able to form meaningful links between the undergraduate and graduate inner and external worlds give individuals increased confidence, agency, purpose and identity to pursue a creative working life .

In any creative discipline, the undergraduate curriculum needs to engage undergraduates through experiential learning, collaboration, creativity and experimentation. The undergraduate curriculum needs to encourage and develop students, so that by their graduation they have the confidence to potentially become the new members of the creative industries.

Lord Puttnam believes that the creative industries and in particular creativity, holds the key for contemporary learning and for many future concerns. He asserts creativity is the future,

...look into the toolbox - creativity is the only tool we have left....and it's important to see it in the round: creativity is a new drug, or a better engine for cars – we shouldn't get trapped in a narrow definition.

(Holden et al 2009 ;14)

Puttnam (2012) talks about how young people always say they want to work in the creative industries. They believe creative jobs will be interesting and rewarding. Students are excited by new technology and the eclectic nature of creative media. The young are enthused by creative communities, their teachers and their peers. Sadly, teachers and practitioners are not being able legally to mix or 'mash up' media or creative industries to engage young people with creative learning. Intellectual property laws do not allow the pursuit of new forms to engage young people in creative industries and creative learning.

Puttnam believes educators are working with constant constraints, unable to be creative in teaching and learning. He believes Britain is strangulated by 19<sup>th</sup> Century examination policies and 20<sup>th</sup> Century teaching and learning strategies when trying to engage with 21<sup>st</sup> Century students who want contemporary and innovative experiences. The UK needs to modernise its policies, teaching and learning strategies to engage with young people with and through creative learning (Puttnam 2012).

Students want relevant, specific and creative interventions that are meaningful to their creative learning and the creative industry that they want to work within. Mason et al's (2009) positivist study showed that the teaching and assessment of generic employability skills in the curriculum did not have a significant positive effect on graduate learning or employment six months after graduation. Mason et al (ibid) found that employer involvement in undergraduate course design, course delivery and work experience through student placements did

have a significant positive effect on graduate employment six months after graduation.

Previously, Mason et al (2006) found that design graduates take longer than most to develop a career because of the need to win contracts for freelance and commissioned work. Six months is likely to be too soon to measure impact of different kinds of teaching on employment outcomes of graduates but it does suggest that generic teaching and learning strategies promoting generic employability maybe too generalised to be in the interests of individual learners. This fits with Puttnam's (2012) plea for new strategies for creative learning for the creative industries and it also fits with my research with graduates identifying success factors such as work experience, contacts, networks and industry/employer involvement in course design and delivery, as relevant to their creative graduate employability. The graduates in my research identified specific contacts, communities of practice and networks as important for both the entry and the sustaining of work for a creative career.

In my study, the participating graduates had graduated from university between one and four years earlier. These graduates still favoured the industry and work experience link as important to their own creative employability potential, regardless of when they left. Teaching and learning was considered important (e.g. theory and practice enmeshed modules) but it maybe significant that the graduates stressed that university lecturers, teaching on their degrees, needed to be practising also in industry, as well as teaching in the university environment. This may suggest that the graduates were identifying the industry involvement in course design, as more meaningful to their own creative employability. It may also be that students were able to meet the gatekeepers of creative work through industry involvement in the course design. Mason and Williams et al (2009) also stress as time moves on the teaching and learning at university, is replaced with occupational learning for the graduate, so most graduates would need links with teaching and learning early on.

### **3 What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?**

In the last chapter, I argued that open communities of practice, allowing collaboration, creativity and innovation, are needed across and between diverse, creative groups, allowing learning and work to flourish (Florida 2003; Hutton et al 2007).

In the *Literature Review*, I interrogated the literature around communities of practice (Wenger 2009), privilege (Smith 2010) and social capital (Lin 1982; Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Flap 1991; Burt 1992; Putnam 1993; Erickson 1995). These salient themes were rooted in the research data which informed the literature review. I argued that dominant models of employability are not relevant to creative communities. I introduced Parkour and how the environmental, spiritual, performance and competitive elements of Parkour maybe utilised to provide a metaphor or philosophy to offer an alternative approach to the dominant models of employability within higher education and government policy.

#### **A philosophy for employability**

The dominant model of employability is defined by political policy. Employability policy is the outcome of surveying leading employers' industry needs, a commitment to human capital theory (Mincer 1958; Schultz 1961; Becker 1962; Hanushek 2013) and the upskilling of the whole workforce through skills in the belief that it generates increases in economic growth. I have argued that the dominant model for employability does not sit with the complexities of contemporary creative education, creative work and how creative people collaborate and learn.

The dominant model has little resonance for some undergraduates and graduates working in creative disciplines because the employability model does not fit with their *modi operandi*. In creative graduates' lives, like small businesses, they learn to find their own work, they have to sustain their day to day living despite irregular payments, keep up to date within their discipline, as well as retain motivation. These creative graduates are paid in a variety of ways by different employers. They work in different spaces, with different creative teams, sometimes together and sometime alone, often working on bespoke, or 'one off' processes or outputs.

Current employability models are mostly defined by dominant, mainstream employers, who are able to define explicitly their industrial wants from higher education and graduates. The power of employers is particularly influential when the economy is vulnerable and jobs are scarce. The pressure from employers and government policy defines how universities provide higher education programmes and how undergraduates and graduates are supported both at university and following graduation. At the micro level, these generic employability strategies may have little relevance to the experiences and aspirations of creative undergraduates.

Parkour's philosophy about finding your own path, overcoming obstacles, seeing the environment in different ways and being fit mentally and physically for life is a perspective that fits well with creative people. Parkour is the art of movement, or moving through space. For some it is about the efficiency of moving from A to B, for others it is about moving beautifully, stylishly through space, finding new paths and new ways of travelling or using space. It is underpinned by training, experimenting, continuously developing, supporting each other as a community, finding confidence through facing and overcoming fears. Innovation and creativity develops through passion and perseverance. Those that practise Parkour talk about resilience, passion for life, child like discovery, exhilaration, fun, confidence and personal fulfilment (New York



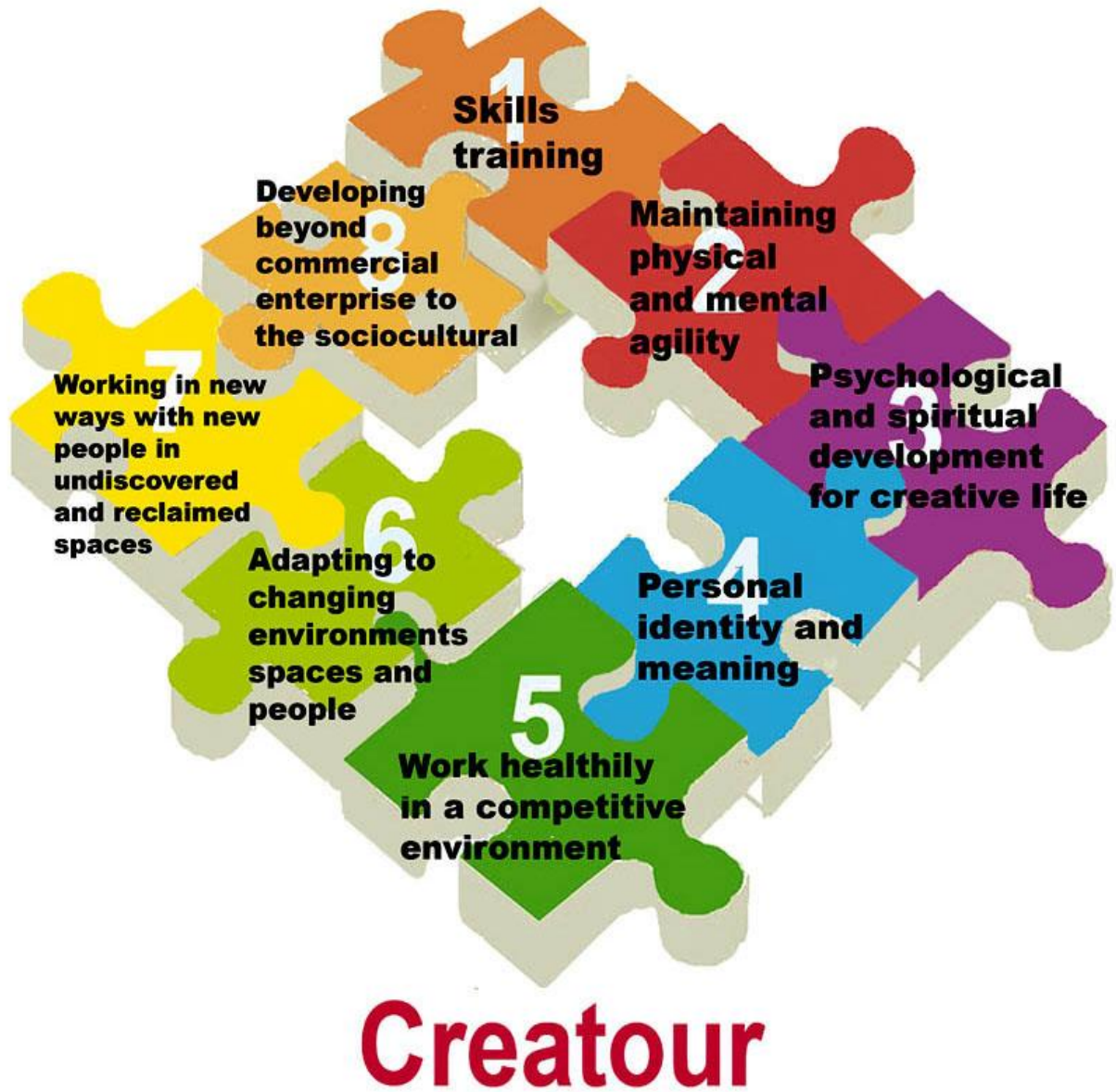
Times 2008; Amir's Parkour Philosophy 2010; Parkour philosophy with Energy of Life asbl 2010; Parkour Philosophy 2012; Stephane Vigroux - Philosophy of Parkour 2012). The practice of Parkour and how one experiments and adapts, also fits with Czikszentmihalyi's (1996; 2002) description of the creative person and how a creative person develops (see page 112).

## **Creatour**

The principles that underpin Parkour were borrowed and adapted to develop 'Creatour' philosophy; that moves away from employability as graduate skill acquisition to meet employers' needs, and instead provides a holistic philosophy that prepares individuals for creative employability through continuous physical, mental, spiritual and social development.

Individuals continually develop and learn in their discipline while also being prepared to access and sustain potential work. They develop through Creatour to become Creatours in their own discipline. Each area below can be developed to fit the specific needs of the discipline within the undergraduate experience. Individuals can also develop their own personal programmes for Creatour to use as an undergraduate or as a new graduate to prepare them holistically for creative life and potential creative work.

Figure 17 Creatour



Creatour (Figure 17) represents the continuous steps of learning which develop the learner holistically to manoeuvre through the complex interactions of spaces, places and people in a global creative world.

Numbers 1 to 8 represent some of the creative learning that may become a focus for Creatour to support them in being creative, adaptable and resilient. The numbers 1 to 8 are by no means exhaustive. Learning seeks to be meaningful; therefore it remains fluid and changes as the Creatour develops in her creative life.

The following unpacks the learning within Creatour (Figure 17) to demonstrate how teaching, learning, theory and practice is enmeshed within the undergraduate experience and begins the development of a philosophy to facilitate creative life after graduation.

The unpacking begins with *1. Skills training* see Figure 17. The numbers do not suggest a hierarchy but are there to facilitate understanding in the reading of the figure.

### **1. Skills training**

Skills Training includes any skill development that relates to the discipline and is seen as salient within the discipline or is viewed as important for potential creative work (that is, to prepare, to access and to sustain work). Skills Training is brought into Creatour as a holistic part of learning. Care is taken that the skills are intrinsic to the creative experience and are not packaged as learning outside it.

Skills Training develops skills in the discipline but they also develop wider skills related to the discipline and to creative work. For example in the

discipline of dance, skills maybe developed through dance classes, dance technique or discipline specific workshops. In the discipline of architecture, Skills Training may be architectural drawing, computer software training such as CAD (computer assisted design) and discipline specific workshops. For both dance and architecture, Skills Training may include continuous professional development (CPD) related to the discipline, marketing skills, business skills, finance and funding, market research, application and bid writing support. Skills Training is not an 'add on' to the discipline but is integrated holistically into the curriculum. For example CAD would be learnt within a design brief that simulates the people, places and spaces brought together as if in a real project. It would not be taught as a separate computer class. Skill Training is continuous as a Creatour moves through her creative life changing her focus and adapting to a dynamic environment.

## **2. Maintaining physical and mental agility**

Creatours maintain physical and mental agility to develop resilience. The area of agility includes any activities that support the individual in terms of their own physical and mental health. It maybe personal fitness programmes, activities to relax and de-stress, meditation classes, fitness classes, reading, holidays and other leisure pursuits. In fact any activity that is seen as enjoyable and brings physical and mental benefits to the individual. A good life means work and play integrating together and the experience of pleasure. Conscious interrogating and experimenting of activities to support Creatour to become physically and mentally fit bring an unconscious resilience. It assists the individual to endure the peaks and troughs of a creative life where there is a delicate balance between stimulation, stress, relaxation and boredom and the individual experiences where they meet a 'good life'.

### **3. Psychological and spiritual development for creative life**

Creatours are prepared and continually develop in psychological or spiritual ways to manage their creative lives. Learning activities such as simulation, enquiry based learning, problem based learning, scenario based learning, role play and collaborative project work are facilitated in a safe learning environment with the purpose of developing risk taking, managing fear and anxiety, developing confidence, self-motivation, self-sufficiency and pursuing mental good health to facilitate through unpredictable surroundings and environments. Creatour uses peer groups to teach each other and communities of practice to develop and support.

Creative opportunities and spaces are given to work in 'flow' and for Creatours to find their own approach. Flow is the creative place where the artist works in complete absorption, works in the moment and has total freedom to move in which ever direction they decide to take.

Creatours are given time to find their own paths which have meaning for them. Experimenting by going in the direction that they decide, that they are interested in or they are passionate about. Creatours aim to find their own focus, challenge themselves, push boundaries and be exhilarated.

Play is used to capture the curiosity and imagination of the child. Play is used as a way of learning creatively and supporting Creatours to see the world without its limitations, restrictions and boundaries.

Problem solving activities and problem based learning are used as an approach to understand that personal obstacles are continuous and that there are constant psychological and physical elements to be overcome or worked around. Creatours are encouraged to see that obstacles are common place and both physical and imagined. This develops resilience.

Creatours are inspired to explore many creative actions. *If* techniques are used to evoke creativity through questions like “if you were in this situation what would you do?”. The *if* is taken from Stanislavski’s “magic if” (Stanislavski 1937;65). The magic if works as a strong stimulus to discover inner and physical actions. An actor creates problems for herself and in the effort to solve them, brings out inner and external actions. It is powerful for finding imagination, thought and logical action. The magic if prepares students to be creative and look for innovative ideas or solutions. The students can identify their own obstacles, common barriers or pose problems to each other to solve together. “What would I do if... What would we do if..?”

#### **4. Personal identity and meaning**

Creatours are supported to find a personal identity that feels right for the individual within their discipline. They are encouraged to join communities or start their own. This identity gives creative space, support and a meaningful place to work and live. This maybe a discipline tribe or a community of practice but it maybe something new and undiscovered such as a new trans-disciplinary group, discipline or creative movement.

#### **5. Work healthily in a competitive environment**

Creatours are prepared to cope with competition within the discipline and to be able to work healthily in a competitive environment. In Creatour philosophy support and competition co-exist, their interplay is made explicit.

Creative work is undeniably competitive. Parkour has a non-competitive philosophy and believes in peer support and peer learning to maintain the group. In Parkour individuals compete to overcome their personal obstacles and use the group as support. There is much to learn from Parkour

principles. Creative communities can be encouraged to collaborate, to teach each other and to be mutually supportive. Gaining actual paid work is highly competitive but it does not follow that ongoing development has to be competitive. The community has many resources and can share and use them to their mutual advantage.

The theme of competition should be made explicit, having both constructive and destructive elements in holistic creative life and work. How does competition make individuals feel or act? How can competition be used constructively? How can competition be managed in every day life? Who and where are allies and support systems? Where can individuals feel safe away from the stresses of perpetual competition?

## **6. Adapting to changing environments, spaces and people**

Creatours aim to adapt to changing environments, spaces and working with different people.

Creatours are encouraged to work with complexity. They learn within and are able to adapt to, a variety of environments which constantly change. Creatours see it as common place to work in collaboration with many different people, in different spaces and different environments. The importance of the creative ensemble is emphasised. People come together for a purpose in order to learn or create together. They come together in a process or to make a product, for example a performance, a piece of art or an architectural building. Each persona has an equal, important part to play or role to take within the creative team. They are an ensemble and are strengthened by the variety, interdependence and support of the team working together.

Creatours are comfortable with a changing environment; being able to work on their own and as an ensemble. They find enjoyment, inventiveness and creativity in different spaces and in different collaborations.

## **7. Working in new ways with new people in undiscovered and reclaimed spaces.**

In Parkour there are times when individuals lead the group to help the group navigate through challenging terrain because they are familiar with its obstacles and have found a successful route through. Conversely, sometimes individuals who are new to an environment lead the group in order to pursue a new experience by seeing the terrain differently and taking alternative paths. This analogy is useful to Creatour. The Creatour should be able to work on their own, or as part of an ensemble, be open to new members who want to join the community, support others who want to learn from experience and be able to lead and support others to lead in search of new perspectives, new places and new spaces.

Creatours work in new places with new people or in undiscovered or reclaimed territories. Creatours are supported to practise and develop for potential work within rural, urban and global environments. Creatours are taught to consider practice in all contexts.

Creatours are developed to reclaim areas where artists have been marginalised or excluded. For example women or working class men becoming routinely employed in British architecture firms, or women becoming routinely promoted to senior positions in the dance organisations within the UK. Where insurmountable obstacles are found to be too great to reclaim because of the social injustices in society, the analogy to Parkour should be used. When hitting a wall that proves impossible to overcome, a new route round should be encouraged, rather than giving up.



Creatours are encouraged to use space or resources differently. To look at what is seen as common place with new perspectives or with 'alien' eyes. A more objective viewpoint is influenced by Brecht's work (1964) on distancing oneself from the action. How could specific people, spaces, resources or materials be utilised or developed?

## **8. Developing beyond commercial enterprise to the sociocultural**

Creatours see creative work as more than a commercially driven enterprise but continually having a potential social or a cultural place or space. Creatours view their work as having social consequences, for example the impact of a building on a local environment, an architect sharing their career experience with school children, a dance project on the local community, a dance performance with a particular audience, the sustainability of a project or a building.

Creatours critique places, spaces and people with a social or political perspective. Who comes here? Who uses it? Who doesn't use it? Can I use it? What is it for? How is it perceived? How should we use it or develop it? Creatours pursue inclusivity and diversity in creative virtual and physical spaces for ethical, creative and innovative purposes.

Creatour jigsaw pieces can be added to, taken away or changed, depending on individual interpretation and the discipline need. The elements of Creatour can be used in the shaping of contemporary university programmes but can be developed as personal philosophies for artists to enter and sustain their creative working lives. Creatours continually adapt, shape and create, to meet their own journeys or 'tours' and their own destinations. Creatour is the development of a philosophy for creative work and creative journeys, which leaves the employability concept as a skills bank, firmly behind.

The following section of this chapter takes Creatour philosophy back to creative undergraduates and graduates and asks them to critique it and to evaluate it.

## **Using theoretical sampling to take the research back to research participants**

In Part Two of the *Methodology* chapter, I argued that the researcher's belief system and their general/personal perspective will influence the interpretive process and give some bias. However the researcher aims to develop theory or an interpretation of the experiences or constructs from the voices of the research participants themselves. The researcher's theories and interpretations are therefore rooted in the data and derive from the participants' responses and interpretations of events rather than the researcher's assumptions. Validations of these interpretations can be evaluated by increasing the participant sample and testing out ideas/theories known as theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2006). Also, if possible, returning the interpretations back to the original or comparable participants for their feedback.

Charmaz (2006) argues that grounded theory is not a recipe book with exact stages that must be followed in order to produce the perfect research. It can be used creatively by those who want to only borrow from the coding to gain more systematic analysis of qualitative data or by those that want to use all the principles as a methodical research process.

As previously mentioned, I have found sharing the methodology and research process at conferences and workshops extremely valuable and have used ongoing feedback from graduates, undergraduates, lecturers, researchers and practitioners to make ongoing iterations throughout the research journey. My intention throughout has been to make these iterations explicit to the reader, to those whom I researched and to those involved in undergraduate experience such as creative practitioners or lecturers.

I always intended to return the findings and my research interpretations back to comparable research participants for their feedback. I was sure that the richness and variety of feedback resulting from opening out to other participants, would strengthen my methodology and make my conclusions more robust. With this in mind the research was shared with first and final year undergraduates and graduates from the creative industries.

Over the course of 2013 I used both professional and social networks to talk to graduates from architecture, art and design, gaming, journalism, television, film and the performing arts about the research. In addition I presented the findings at the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) annual conference in December 2013 and at workshops within a mixed discipline Postgraduate Certificate in Education programme, at Art and Design faculty pedagogical events and many transdisciplinary postgraduate pedagogical interest groups at a post 1992 university. I shared the research findings and explained the framework of Creatour in order to gain constructive criticism.

Creative graduates show strong agreement of the elite nature of certain disciplines, like architecture, television or areas of fine art (particularly in London based galleries and auction houses), where privileged inner circles are challenging to break into. These circles remain relatively closed to a diversity of membership. All creative graduates agreed that cultural, social and economic capital is needed to enter and to sustain creative working.

Examples of these privileged circles and need for cultural, social and economic capital was reflected in many anecdotes. Staff from an architecture practice said that firms routinely contacted the architecture schools at Russell Group universities to recruit the top students from undergraduate courses for intermediate work placements and the final placements from the 'stars' of Master courses. Top architecture firms also provided sponsorship and patronage to planning and architecture courses in return for access to top

students. Three architecture departments, two in pre 1992 universities and one in a post 1992, said that architecture firms had started to compete with each other to secure final year project prize money as a way to view top students' work and 'cream off' the elite.

Lecturers from many creative courses in both pre and post 1992 institutions mentioned parents who have subsidised their children to be able to live and work in London and participate in work experience for creative companies. One graduate had worked for an auction house for two years with expenses only payment, in order to gain a permanent post. Runners for film companies, the shadowing of theatre directors and working in publishing houses, were examples of low paid or 'expenses only' work placements for long periods of time which eventually brought paid work. In the pursuit of the many London centric graduate work placements, cultural and social capital is needed to find and secure the placement as most positions are not advertised and are gained informally through networks. This resonates the use of family and friends for informal networking in contemporary job hunting (Redmond 2010; Redmond 2012). Graduates also need the economic capital to survive the expenses of London on no pay or low paid placements. These anecdotes echo Burt (2001;32) that graduates who are successful in getting work experience or paid work are "somehow better connected".

Gaining successful employment by having better connections goes against the human capital theory metaphor that inequality happens because graduates are more skilled, have better qualifications, are more intelligent and attractive than their peers (Burt 2001). The graduates (and practitioners teaching on undergraduate courses) approached to give feedback, confirm the importance of being connected and talk of money and privilege as increasing the potential for success. Having contacts and networks in privileged areas with access to the gatekeepers of work, are seen as the openings or bridges to enter and sustain work.

Like the undergraduates' and graduates' data in the chapter *Research Findings and Analysis*, these graduates agree that contacts are ways of opening doors, pushing in, letting participants into a closed area of work. This networking process emphasises bridges in networks for facilitating information and where influence flows, bringing benefits to the individual, reflecting Granovetter (1973; 1995) and Burt (1992; 2001).

Graduates, like politicians, are noticing that creative work comes with privilege. "It is remarkable how many positions of wealth, influence, celebrity and power in our society are held by individuals who were privately educated," Michael Gove noted in *The Telegraph* (2012;12). Later, John Major expresses shock that power in 2013 Britain, appears to be held by the affluent middle class or the privately educated (BBC 2013).

Confidence, contacts and money are identified in this study as increasing graduates' success in paid creative work. Confidence, contacts and money are the foundations of an affluent middle class and private education. It is not surprising that those from these backgrounds are more likely to 'break into' creative work.

Private schools (boarding in particular) through meal times, social events, curricular and extra curricular activities teach students of all ages to talk to and socialise with many different cohorts of people. Students become very comfortable and confident about talking about themselves and engaging in 'small talk' with any peer, teacher, parent or visitor. Networking is learnt and practised and becomes part of normal life. Those not from affluent families (such as financially assisted students) also learn networking through being involved in school life. Networking and confidence are the by-products of a private school education. Students funded through full bursaries may not have access to financial capital but they will make contacts with many that do and who may open doors for them in the future.

Undergraduate students and graduates say they want to be supported to be able to access and join creative networks or communities of practice (during and after university) because without the necessary cultural, social and economic capital, these privileged circles remain impenetrable.

Undergraduates and graduates say government led employability strategies that focus on collecting generic graduate skills to meet employers' needs are meaningless to them. Graduates say creative working is different. They do not have one job, they need to work in complexity, where one size never fits and work is about creative interaction and finding creative solutions within a global environment.

Undergraduate degrees could borrow from private schools and complement their curricular by explicitly facilitating how undergraduates can network naturally as part of everyday life. An undergraduate curriculum needs to allow students to work with complexity and to continually practise working with many different people, in different places and in different spaces. This way it becomes natural for undergraduates to confidently network, talk about their work and collaborate, without feeling embarrassed or intimidated. Students through working with others, in an experiential curriculum, are 'taught' to be confident collaborators while gaining access to the important gatekeepers of creative work.

This contemporary curriculum of Creatour aims to create breaks in the circles of privilege. Confidence, contacts and money are identified in this study as increasing graduates' success in paid creative work and these factors should be made explicit in the undergraduate curriculum. Undergraduate degrees and universities cannot provide money to undergraduates but they can try to work with others to develop the undergraduates' confidence and their access to contacts.

This next section of the *Synthesis* chapter takes the findings and research conclusions back to those involved or participating in creative undergraduate degrees and those having an understanding of creative working (Charmaz 2006). A comparative group of undergraduates and graduates to those who originally contributed to the research data of Stages One (with creative graduates) and Stage Two (with creative undergraduates) describe the comparable group responses (Charmaz 2006) to the research findings and feedback on the appropriateness of the research findings for creative employability within the undergraduate and graduate experience.

## Graduate response to Creatour

The graduates' responses to Creatour, the adaptation of a philosophy for creative employability from Parkour has been most surprising and welcome. Parkour is about space and how people view, use and move through space in urban, rural and global environments. Architects said these areas sit comfortably with some of the educational themes within the architecture undergraduate curriculum. They liked the use of the 'if' technique, i.e. "If this was to happen, what would you do?" to explore potential problems within projects, to problem solve and to manage students' worry about failure or professional incompetence. Being explicit about the destructive nature of constant competition was also seen as important.

Graduates say that inequality is tolerated in the star system of architecture but is often not discussed and students' anxiety about not being 'good enough' erodes their confidence. Students can become isolated and this can make them bitter and angry, which can lead to the dropping out of courses and the cycle continually repeating itself. One architect said that looking at the constructive and destructive elements of competitiveness would help the group to acknowledge that anxious 'feelings' are not unusual. Students could support each other, teach each other their specialities, collaborate and share resources

especially as some undergraduate cohorts were between 130 and 160 students and this was leading to students feeling lost within the group.

One group of architects said that ensemble learning was missing and the need to be able to work within the creative project team, with all the interdisciplinary and interdependence of the creative roles supporting the whole construction process. Competition was seen to be needed to get the paid work, but once in the paid work, architects had to work as an ensemble. When one person or element had more power or authority over the others, the ensemble group could become dysfunctional, leading to incompetent projects, unethical planning and building or mismanagement of resources. Consequently I added the importance of ensemble working to the elements of Creatour philosophy, as it fitted with many creative disciplines such as dance, theatre, music and film.

Dance graduates have been very comfortable with Creatour because the philosophy of Parkour is seen to link clearly with the way of life in dance and the principles of dance for ongoing development, collaborating through peer learning and working creatively in new teams, spaces and places. A few women have said that dance is undeniably competitive but does not always 'feel so', as communities of practice are easily accessible and there is a feeling of camaraderie within them.

Some dance graduates of dance conservatoires agreed that reclaiming areas that had been lost to some in the community was important. Some thought it was difficult to recruit Asian men into dance. Others said it was challenging for women of any ethnicity to find senior management roles in hierarchical dance agencies run by white, middle-aged men.

Dance and architecture graduates and graduates from other creative disciplines of drama, journalism, art, interior design and music, thought that Creatour philosophy was very inventive. It was fluid and adaptable, allowing students



and practitioners to add their own elements based on contemporary markets, ongoing change within disciplines and their current or future student cohort.

These creative graduates from mixed disciplines thought that Creatour did not relate only to creative subjects but could be also used in any undergraduate degree, as a way of encouraging students to work creatively with different people, with different ideas, in different places, different spaces, to gain different learning and experiences. Learning creatively and working creatively fitted Puttnam's assertion that creativity is the future, "creativity is the only tool we have left" (Holden et al 2009 ;14). This feedback was hugely rewarding and reaffirming that the research had brought a useable and relevant alternative philosophy.

## Response from First Year Undergraduate Architecture Students

I shared the first year research findings with a cohort of first year architecture students and asked them what they thought. All agreed that confidence was important. Already, two weeks into the start of their degree they could see who had the confidence to succeed. Interestingly they too did not talk about the talent to succeed but used confidence in tandem with succeeding. I had not emphasised this to them but this echoed what third year undergraduates and graduates had said about confidence being paramount to success, rather than talent. Confidence is clearly seen as important for success in creative working.

One student said it was better to "get a 2:1 rather than a first because a first shows that you are nerdy and perhaps difficult to get on with". A student with a first was seen as talented but having no social skills or a life outside of architecture. "It shows you can't do anything else, or you haven't got involved" another student commented. Everyone agreed or nodded. One student said, "you need a 2:1 to get an interview". Again everyone agreed with this

statement. One student, who had remained relatively quiet up to that point, nodded in affirmation to his peers and subsequently asked “Do you think we’ll get jobs?”. Although not yet two weeks into their course, these students were already sharing stories about what was needed to be successful in creative work and the anxiety about the journeys towards getting paid work had begun.

The first years agreed that they too would want their own businesses and did not want to work as employees. When I asked them why they wanted their own firm, they said that they would “have more control”, “would be in charge” and “you could do what you wanted and what you thought was important”.

I asked how they would find the money to start their own businesses and only one person said “you would get a loan from the bank”. This male student then went on to tell the group that his father, a builder, had started his company with a financial loan and some money left to him by his father. Another student said she imagined that she would have to work for others first but ultimately wanted to have her own company because “you may as well do what you enjoyed (sic)”. The group agreed with this with comments such as, “you only have one life”, “you must enjoy it” and “I’m doing this because I enjoy it”. I asked if they would enjoy working for a firm and being an employee and the first year undergraduate students said it would depend what they were doing and who the employer was.

I found the students discussion about being an employee very interesting because I had noticed this with the previous first years and their reticence about being employees. They did not seem enthusiastic about being potential employees and this seemed to be linked to power or at least the perception that you lost control or power by becoming an employee but gained it through having your own business. Working for yourself was clearly seen as more enjoyable than working for someone else.

The first year perspective seemed to be saying that work should be enjoyable and that you should take risks in work, “having one life” meant you should not waste the precious time on work you did not enjoy. First years showed little enthusiasm for becoming an employee and associated this kind of employment with displeasure.

There has been a shift of the responsibilities from the employer to the employee to manage their own professional identities, their employability, their development, their career progression and their pensions. Now there seemed to be another change. Why have the employer managing the employee’s workload, when the employee can manage that too? Perhaps the shifting of responsibilities away from the employer has also brought a new drive for independence. There seems a rejection of the employer who demands a great deal of control over the employee but gives them little back in return.

## Response from Third Year Undergraduate Architecture students

I asked a cohort of third year architecture undergraduates what they thought about employability and how it was approached by universities. They said it was “a way to sell courses”, “made no sense”, “a sweetener to the cost of tuition”, “too generic” and “just a new fad”. All talked of employability interventions in a disparaging way. The third year undergraduates were more critical of dominant employability discourse, than the first year undergraduates. The third year undergraduates candidly interrogated university employability practices and did not find them meaningful to their experiences.

All the third year architecture students felt contacts were crucial to get placements and to get paid work. They agreed that confidence and getting on with people was also seen as important to “move on quickly”, once you had made a contact and found an opening.

Money was talked about as an issue to pay off debt and also to live in London where most of the placements took place, or as one student said “90% of them are in the centre of expensive London”. The third year undergraduate students said that at the start of their third year, the top percentage of the course already had secured jobs. These “top” students were clearly in the room but no reference was made to exactly who these students were within the group. Students said they were using family and friends to look for contacts within architecture to help them secure work. The students seem to have accepted that architecture was a profession that tolerated inequality.

I explained to a cohort of third year architecture undergraduates that I had borrowed from Parkour and adapted its philosophy to bring Creatour philosophy to creative subjects. I explained that the intention was find an alternative to defining employability as the generic acquisition of skills or a bank of skills, which is believed to gain a graduate job because it meets generic employers’ needs. Instead I aimed to explore what would be needed for those who wanted to work in specialist environments or to gain specific, creative work.

The alternative I offered to the third year undergraduates, through the research findings and through feedback from undergraduates and graduates, is to view employability as multifaceted and holistic, rather than as the acquisition of a list of skills. Holmes (2013) argues that graduate lists of skills remain totally arbitrary and are not based on any robust research with industry.

A more holistic approach would develop the whole self. Creatour was a philosophy which prepares individuals creatively through ongoing physical, mental and social development to be able to adapt to changing spaces, places, people and experiences throughout their working lives. It was intended to be a holistic methodology to manage working in the complex world of global creative work. I wanted graduates to gain ‘complexability’, conceptualised as being able to work with sophistication in many different ways, with many different

employers and clients, rather than gain 'employability' which suggests being able to secure one job with one employer as an employee. I said I wanted to know what they honestly thought about it and whether it could work.

The final year undergraduates looked at the philosophy, read through the examples and asked questions about it. I left them to talk about what they thought.

The undergraduate feedback was that this approach had more relevance to them than the generic employability interventions that they feel are incongruent. They too thought it could be adapted to support any undergraduate discipline but would want theirs to be adapted to be specific to architecture.

I asked them what would make it specific and meaningful to them as architecture students. They said they wanted changing spaces, places, people and experiences that enabled them to adapt to working with different people and with different materials and keep up with changing technology. They also wanted real projects, working on real problems and with real people.

At the moment they felt their assessment projects could be "too creative". They were given real sites to work on but were not given the real problems that would accompany the development. They could therefore just build anything and let their imagination "run riot". They thought this was a good project for some assessments but should not be for all.

Instead they thought they needed to problem solve through "frustrating blocks" or "limitations" that would happen when they were working with real planners, builders, clients and those "holding the money". They agreed that the "real projects" would be more useful as simulations rather than "live" because they wanted to be able to feel risk, make decisions but be able to fail without real consequences. At the moment they felt that they played "safe" because they

were so worried about failure. They said they wanted also to work directly with planners and builders so that they were really aware of restrictions to their creative ideas and what they would be able to achieve in reality.

It is important to note that this request from the third year undergraduates for “real simulations”, reminded me of work at Newcastle University in the 1980s between the architecture and planning departments and with the late Dorothy Heathcote, a drama teacher who used drama to facilitate learning in education and work. A retired lecturer of architecture from Newcastle University, told me how Heathcote had worked with undergraduates, lecturers (from the planning and architecture departments) and professional planners and architects in the North East to create drama enactments where students, lecturers, planners and architects in role, interacted with each other on real projects. In these projects the students learnt to take risk in safe environments and see the consequence of their and others’ actions. Although the Heathcote and architecture alliance at Newcastle University was never recorded, anecdotally it is remembered as being very successful for all who participated.

The third year architecture undergraduates talked about the constant element of competition and agreed that failure and competition should be talked about and openly addressed. They said they were feeling very anxious and in competition with each other and at times paranoid that when they left university, there would be no job for them and they would be the only one left without work.

The third years agreed that they would welcome wider knowledge of what you could do with an undergraduate degree in architecture in case they were not able to progress to the next stage or decided to leave architecture after graduating from the first degree. They had heard that there were jobs for those who had an architecture undergraduate degree but did not know where to look to find out the opportunities. Career advice about using an undergraduate degree in architecture would be helpful. They stressed they wanted specific

career advice about architecture away from the course, so that they could be honest about their perceived weaknesses and worries.

This third year group was very outspoken, confident and articulate. I felt that they would critique the philosophy and would not be reticent in coming forward with their ideas. The students agreed that they could work with their course tutors on what should be involved in Creatour to make it meaningful to them and relevant. I asked them whether using hindsight and thinking of what would be useful to prospective students of architecture, whether they could 'co produce' a programme with their academic staff and practitioners for Creatour. Some thought this was a good idea and that they could also bring in recent graduates who knew the work place and had also completed the course.

The third years said that the architecture staff addressed employability by spending time on identifying potential employers for work, improving their portfolios, writing letters, talking about interviews and "areas like that". However they did not think the course holistically explored the importance of who you worked with, how you worked and how you solved problems, or adapted to an architect's way of life or found a philosophy for working in contemporary architecture.

I was aware that I was leading them to the idea of 'co producing' with undergraduate staff but was affirmed that they did not reject it outright as an inappropriate idea. Some said that it was a good idea but realistically in the final year, they did not have the time to work on anything but assessments. I assured them I wasn't asking them to "actually do it" but to think about whether hypothetically it would be a useful exercise. They all then agreed that it would make employability more meaningful to them, as employability currently seemed to be general activities, taking place "ad hoc in the rest of the university".

In summary the third years supported the research findings. They agreed that success in potential creative employability was down to contacts, saying it was moving in “the right circles” and having “the right background”. Money was seen to be important to complete the long degree, to be able to travel and to start your own business. They all believed it was an elitist profession and there were challenges in getting work for women and for those people who were not from “the right background”.

The third years in their feedback thought that Creatour philosophy helped to see employability in a holistic way both at university and after university. They said it encouraged people to regularly work in different groups, in different places, giving students opportunities to work with industry contacts, real problems, to practice and to learn to do, as a “real architect”. The continuous feedback from others and from “real people” in the industry would give the confidence that the students needed, to believe they could go onto the next stage. The term “real” was used by the students to relate HE learning directly to industrial or professional identities and development. This mirrors Wenger’s (2009) stress around the social in learning that brings community, meaning, practice and identity for those that participate. These third year architecture students see the importance of learning as an experience, learning as doing, learning as belonging and learning as becoming (ibid). This social learning in university they see as continuing into creative work and creative life.

It is very important to stress that although the third year students gave Creatour a positive response, they said nothing could replace having the contacts to succeed. They agreed that you could become an architect with contacts alone. The consequence of a profession where people with contacts thrived meant there were “an awful lot of crap architects in the world” (male third year undergraduate student). A female student responded to his comment with the words, “but it is the same in other professions.” These perceptions echoed Gove’s (The Telegraph 2012) and Major’s (BBC 2013) remarks on positions of



power relating to the privately educated and middle class in 2012 and 2013, a demographic likely to have access to many contacts and to the social, cultural and economic capital needed to succeed in their chosen professions.

## Summary

In summary, this chapter has drawn upon all the previous chapters to address the three research questions posed in the introduction to this research study.

1. How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices?
2. Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience?
3. What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?

There is clearly a place for creative employability in creative undergraduate degrees in the UK and those involved in this research have shaped how this construct could be developed. In summing up, creative employability in an undergraduate degree works to build an individual's confidence, agency, meaning and purpose to engage in a creative working life. Confidence, contacts and money are seen as necessary to increase the opportunities to break into the creative industries. University programmes can explore how they are able to develop their undergraduates' agency, confidence and contacts to enter creative work and how they can provide them with a philosophy which integrates the internal and external worlds for continuous development to sustain a 'good', creative life. Within the external world, which is a global one, there are many social injustices and the university cannot be expected to break all these circles of privilege. However universities, working with significant

others, can help students understand this inequality and support them to not feel like victims. Universities can provide students with an outlook that makes them more equipped to manage the complexities of global working lives and use Creatour philosophy to creatively work around the obstacles that can be both physical and imagined, that inevitably block their way.

The following chapter, the final chapter in this thesis, summarises and critiques this research and explores the way forward for this research area.

## **6. SUMMARY AND A WAY FORWARD - New ways to engage with contemporary students and graduates**

Fundamentally in this final chapter I argue that future qualifications, their learning and teaching strategies and institutional policies should have creative collaboration at their core. I assert that we need to find new ways to engage with contemporary students and graduates who are our future. Higher education needs to promote, support and value collaboration that crosses boundaries, epistemologies and disciplines in all areas. A bigger prize for global sustainability can be sought through risk taking and collaborating across sectors, a goal beyond the narrow confines of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and HE funding. Individuals can be prepared for the complexity of contemporary global work in all industries, not just ones defined as 'creative'. Creative collaboration which begins at school and progresses into higher education, training and work develops a way forward to problem-solve, to overcome obstacles and pursue solutions to many of our impediments for sustaining a 'good life' for all. A good life should focus on ethical, cultural and social considerations as well as economic ones.

Before I assert my closing argument, this final chapter summarises the research and critiques the research approach and the research conclusions. It reflects on Creatour as a philosophy to make sense of creative practice, of creative work, to overcome obstacles and to shape creative employability within the undergraduate creative curriculum. The chapter develops to contextualise

Creatour in relation to contemporary ideas about 'creativity' in learning, education and work. The chapter concludes by addressing national developments since the beginning of this research and looks forward to further spaces and ways to explore creative employability within the education context.

This research is located at the heart of the significant, contemporary international, social, cultural and political changes that are impacting on British governments' strategic priorities and policies, focusing predominantly on their influences on education, culture and work. It brings together the Creative Economy and Employability agendas, concerns of British government policy from the late 1990s to the current day.

A grounded approach was taken to ensure the research findings were rooted within the voices and the research data of the participants themselves. Through undergraduate and graduate experiences, the concept of 'employability' was interrogated and found to have a multiplicity of meanings. Participants in this research found the dominant conceptualisation and models for employability, keenly supported by recent governments and influential British employers are mostly irrelevant to their creative disciplines and to their aspirations for creative work.

Participants in my research claim that the generic 'employability' interventions in universities' employability strategies feel meaningless to their creative courses and their creative practice. These undergraduates and graduates believe that the university sector opportunities to engage undergraduates to 'acquire' the skills that employers say they need, remain flawed. Participants in this research say they want an undergraduate curriculum that includes discipline specific interventions that involve collaborative learning and meaningful communities of practice with access to the gatekeepers of creative work within the creative industry that they aspire to work within.

Increasing graduate access to creative work and making the creative industries more inclusive would bring much needed diversity to the creative economy. Florida's book, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) stimulated an economic argument for creativity. A nation has the potential for a thriving creative economy through the inclusion of a diversity of talent. Inclusion of a diverse membership of talent from a global world encourages sustained economic productivity for countries that are successful in retaining and recruiting creative talent. Those countries that are unable to retain talent become stagnant. Florida argued that creative workers value diversity, meritocracy and individuality and look for these qualities when they locate to a city or country (ibid). Florida claims that the creative class are participants rather than spectators and they are attracted to vibrant places where they can work, be involved in all elements of life and be themselves (ibid).

The research findings, in tune with Florida (2002), revealed that creative undergraduates and graduates want to 'live' their discipline and that work and leisure are enmeshed in their lives. People want to participate in communities of practice, be involved and be active. This research has evidenced that achieving a diverse membership continues to be unattainable as many networks in creative work remain closed, elitist and privileged. This research argues that individuals need to be supported to be able to join communities of practice and access creative networks because without the necessary cultural, social and financial capital, these circles remain impenetrable to them.

My research consequently argues that the pursuit of inclusion into creative communities of practice for all, and finding opportunities to meet the gatekeepers of creative work, should be explicitly addressed at undergraduate level and within the undergraduate curricula and experience. Students need to be openly supported into accessing privileged groups and to learn how to gain and sustain contacts and networks for creative working.

This research promotes Creatour, a philosophy for creative work and life as a contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective for creative employability. It provides an alternative philosophy to the dominant models of skill development and skill acquisition to meet employers' needs. I argue that 'complexability' is a more appropriate word than 'employability', to describe what graduates should develop for potential creative work.

Creatour aims to help participants to view employability in a holistic way both at university and subsequently. The creative philosophy within the undergraduate experience encourages people to regularly work in different groups, in different places, giving students opportunities to work with industry contacts, to work on real problems, to practise and to learn to do as an established practitioner, whether they are a dancer, an actor, an architect or an artist. It encourages people to work creatively, to view problems imaginatively and to look at things with different perspectives. Certain situations may be internalised as the status quo and they may seem unchangeable. Through distancing, alternative perspectives, actions or solutions maybe seen that are more useful, relevant, inclusive and commercial.

Continuous participation and feedback from the relevant communities of practice within education and industry aims to nurture confidence, identity and meaning for undergraduates and support them to progress to their next stage. Creative learning is espoused as interactive, social and inclusive, stressing the importance of learning as an experience, learning as doing, learning as belonging and learning as becoming. This social learning, encouraged in university, is seen as a philosophy to continue into paid creative work and creative life.

This research has shown that a creative journey involves many routes, destinations, actors, action, reflection, iterations and energy. Confidence is seen to be important in recognising one's worth and being able to push through many

real and imagined obstacles to access and sustain creative work. Creative work means living with competition, rejection and insecurity and requires a continuous stream of networking, money, resilience and determination.

To reiterate, contributors to this research say they want universities to support inclusion and diversity for all participants in undergraduate creative practice and within creative communities of practice. In addition, they ask that the university is able also to support them to break into the privileged creative circles of the industry that they aspire to work within when they become graduates and are pursuing paid creative work.

## **Application to Other Disciplines**

Many students want their voices to be heard and to be involved with the design of their own learning. Creatour would benefit other subjects, outside of the creative disciplines that wish to engage with a holistic experience and want to explore appropriate creative teaching and learning strategies to develop the potential of their undergraduates and graduates. A philosophy like Creatour can be co-produced with students and graduates and relevant others such as employers or practitioners, to reflect the discipline learning, discourses and practices. It is a philosophy that supports participants through university learning and beyond university through collaborative working, continuously developing and adapting for potential work in their industries of choice.

Employers from all sectors argue that working with complexity is needed to be successful in contemporary, global work (IBM 2010). Complexity is about working creatively, where graduates are able to work in many different ways and with many different people within the intricacies of contemporary global spaces (ibid). Other disciplines, just like the creative industries, involve careers which have many destinations, routes, actors, actions and iterations. Other disciplines may want to develop holistic philosophies for learning and working

within their specific spheres which help participants to work creatively, develop resilience and overcome obstacles in their journeys.

## **A Way Forward**

The *Literature Review* identified the literature around the creative industries, employability and higher education and reviewed recent British governments' policy and documentation around employability, the creative industries and higher education in England and Wales. The *Literature Review* was also informed by the research participants and the research findings and explored the salient themes of creative identity and belonging; creative learning through communities of practice; and the types of capital which undergraduates and graduates perceive as increasing the opportunities for creative work.

The following section of this chapter builds on the literature by developing a way forward that builds on this research and contextualises Creatour in relation to contemporary ideas about 'creativity' in learning, education and work. An argument for a collaborative creative approach is provided as a way forward in learning and working contexts which makes social, cultural, ethical and economic sense.

There are advocates (Neary and Winn 2009; Lingo and Tepper 2010; Wilson 2010; Kleiman 2011; Puttnam 2012) who believe creative approaches and creative learning will bring about creative solutions to modern day problems and global complexity. Learning is promoted as creative and social. Learning both in education and in work involves people participating and collaborating across boundaries, professions, disciplines and epistemologies.

The *Synthesis* chapter cited Puttnam who urges Britain to pursue creative methodologies with new ways of teaching, learning and engaging students to learn and to be creative in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because creativity is the only thing



that the world has left (2012). He argues that collaborative, creative learning that develops across boundaries and disciplines, will help solve the problems that endanger our planet and bring sustainability.

The *Literature Review* explored the criticism that government policy for the increased growth of the creative industries in Britain was exaggerated (Elliot and Atkinson 2007; Smith 2010). Although the creative industries grew in Britain, it was only parts of the sector that benefited and the diversity of its membership in the creative sectors did not increase (Reynolds 2014). Neelands and Choe argue that we need to address the balance between the social and the economic in “our creativity-preoccupied age” through “social, cultural and ethical critique” (Neelands and Choe 2010;301). Society should embrace social and responsible models of creativity, rather than ones driven by exclusion and private greed.

Wilson (2010) suggests that a focus on skill development and policy agendas for the creative industries has been and continues to be a panacea for increasing economic growth (Department for Culture Media and Sport 2006; Knell and Oakley 2007; London Government Association 2009; CBI 2010; Department of Culture Media and Sport 2013). Wilson argues that these policies need more critique and evaluation of their impact (ibid).

Wilson (2010) believes that defining the creative industries as discrete sectors as outlined in the following discourses (Department for Culture Media and Sport 1998; Florida 2002; Department for culture Media and Sport 2009; Cameron 2010) are no longer helpful. He presents a compelling argument for rethinking “our approach towards creativity, creative industries and the creative economy” (Wilson 2010;367). He believes that we need to embed a new discipline of social creativity breaking away from the unhelpful boundaries and demarcation of the creative industries and the belief that creativity is only for the talented and artistic. He asserts that everyone needs to be creative and endorses “social

creativity” which moves away from individualistic notions of creativity onto social collaboration that has no boundaries, a new discipline of social creativity, a practical idealism, practised first in the higher education sector in order to become embedded into practice (ibid).

Students learning and working collaboratively and creatively is a learning model that is espoused in early years and primary education. Students learn through cross-disciplinary topics. Teachers appeal to students’ curiosity and through play, invite them to solve problems or participate in scenarios or games. This way of teaching successfully engages learners and encourages them to be active, interactive and involved in their learning. Students are encouraged to collaborate in the process of learning as well as creating the outcomes: so they solve problems together; they find solutions through research and by becoming experts; they create things and produce artefacts; they produce plays; they invent stories; publish non-fiction books; collate poems; draft maps; they become familiar with a whole range of cross-curricular activities that can evidence their learning. Later in secondary school, this participatory, creative approach is replaced with teaching methodologies for discipline specific, discrete content learning which fits with GCSE and A level assessment and examination.

Neary observed that undergraduate students are becoming increasingly passive and too teacher focused in their HE learning. The emphasis on GCSE and A level success has ‘taught’ students to be pragmatic learners and to focus on the successful meeting of assessment criteria for these qualifications. Neary sought to rekindle the creative, playful, collaborative way of learning found in primary school years and bring it into the higher education experience as part of the ‘student as producer’ perspective (Neary and Winn 2009). Students can successfully meet assessment criteria through producing or creating their own research or piece of learning or knowledge. They can ‘add to’ knowledge, rather than merely ‘consume it’.

Wilson (2010) believes that the drawing of the boundaries of creative disciplines into 'the creative industries' has perhaps made each discipline too prescriptive, provided divisions in labour and made each less inclusive. Recent British government led strategies and policies promoting the discrete creative industries with their specific skills needs and specific creative talents may have paradoxically brought about less creativity.

An acknowledgment that specific skills are needed within disciplines is obvious. Each discipline such as ballet, fine art or architecture has requirements that one is proficient in the particular subject, i.e. has particular skills in dance, painting or design. Creativity is centred in the arts. However the packaging of disciplines into discrete creative industries has meant there is less collaboration and movement between them. There is less sharing of practice, culture, knowledge and wealth that can generate creative breakthroughs or new insights. Creativity thrives in the gaps between boundaries and the creativity in all of us needs to be connected (Wilson 2010). Human beings have incredible creative potential as shown through advances in science, medicine and technology. This creative potential in different collaborations and interactions could be limitless.

Kleiman (2011) argues that creativity is crucial in managing the chaos and complexities of global change in our lives, focusing particularly on higher education and work. Kleiman draws on research with 1500 CEOs (IBM 2010), from a variety of organisations including HE, who are working in 60 countries. The CEOs identify that managing complexity has become their most important need. Previously CEOs had identified the need to cope with change as being the most salient.

Managing complexity involves being able to work with many different kinds of people, in different ways and in differing contexts. Interestingly, Kleiman (2011;62.3) quotes the drama teacher Dorothy Heathcote and her use of *might*

which like the “magic if” (Stanislavski 1937;65) that I referred to in the *Synthesis* chapter, encourages curiosity, creative thinking, creative working and solutions.

“What *might* happen if we...?”

“What *if* ... happened, what would we do?”

Although they are different questions, they both help the actor to look at potential possibilities and participate in the action. They take away the fear of finding a ‘right’ answer and allow the actor to have a go, to contribute or collaborate. They also encourage actors to view things differently and find original or insightful contributions.

Kleiman (2011) citing Johassen et al (1997), describes how education has been influenced by dominant scientific paradigms from 300 years ago. The traditional, positivist, linear paradigm sees higher education as a closed system where learners, lecturers and the curriculum are a sum of their parts. Knowledge is something that is external to the system and can be acquired and quantified by the learners. The measuring of knowledge is used to assess the efficiency of the education system that transmits it (ibid).

The dominant models of employability which measure the acquisition of skills to meet employers’ needs reflect this positivist paradigm. Within this traditional paradigm, the efficiency of the education system to deliver employability skills to graduates is measured. The acquisition of skills to meet employers’ needs, transmitted from the education institution to the graduate, is assessed through university league tables, in particular The Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DHLE) and the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). In essence it is assessed by the graduate securing a job and the value (i.e. the salary) of that job. Gaining employment is complex and the current, dominant models of employability do not address this complexity. Graduate personal

biographies, socio-economic factors, social/cultural/economic capital, qualifications and experiences, industry cultures and practices and career aspirations are just some factors in that complexity.

In the previous chapter *Synthesis*, undergraduates referred to a dominant model of employability with an employer employing an employee to meet 'their needs' and this relationship having inequalities of power. The undergraduates view themselves as striving to be continually employable and this needs time, effort, contacts and money for development. Students and graduates view the requirement of contacts and money as unfair.

Government rhetoric (Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) argues the promotion of student choice, students in the driving seat, student autonomy, increasing social mobility and widening participation for a wide diversity of learners, students and potential employees. In reality it appears that contemporary undergraduates/graduates feel they need more support to be able to access much needed resources.

As cited previously, Kleiman draws on the 1500 CEOs (IBM 2010) who identify that managing complexity has become their most important need. This confirms that the traditional employer and employee model is no longer appropriate. Global work has become very complex with its multi cultures, multi languages, multi models of working, strong and loose contractual ties and public and private sector organisation (ibid).

Kleiman argues that, the need to manage the complexities of the modern world, determines the knowledge or agency we need to navigate through it. Complexity cannot work with "straightforward cause and effect models and linear predictability" and "analytically fragmented approaches to understanding phenomena such as learning and teaching" (Kleiman 2011;62.4). Kleiman citing Morrison (2006) and Wheatley (2006), outlines how complexity, needs

“organic, non-linear approaches in which the relations within interconnected networks and the quality and dynamics of those relations and interconnections are the key elements” (Kleiman 2011;62.4).

Higher education institutions need to adopt these holistic approaches within their curricular, extra-curricular, co-curricular and academic practice. Universities should be, at the very least, working towards an organic approach through informal learning and pushing the boundaries of validation panels that are structuring formal learning (Kleiman 2011).

In my research, the undergraduate and graduate’s conceptualisation of creative employability within the undergraduate curriculum and the argument for Creatour, a contemporary philosophy for creative employability, sit with this need to work with complexity. Contemporary work is complex and organised through organic, non-linear, holistic approaches with interconnected networks and relations. The quality and fluidity within the dynamics of these connections, networks and communities is particularly salient. The participation, collaborations and actions of these dynamic groups, partnerships and networks bring creative strategies managing complexity.

Undergraduates in this research, from both dance and architecture disciplines, perceive creative work as produced through collaborative relationships within communities of practice, creative ensembles and consultative project teams across private, public and third sectors. This kind of creative employability or ‘complexability’ does not focus only on the quantifiable measurement of an individual’s skills to fit with an employer’s need. The metaphor in ‘complexability’ is not one of the employer seen as a parent figure or an expert figure, needing an obedient child or willing novice to work for them as the employee. Instead creative work is seen as interwoven, complex, participatory, working between multiple employers who have many needs or particular needs at particular times, or many diverse or conflicting needs. Some employers or

clients working within a traditional, positivist paradigm may need to be 'won over' and be persuaded that their specific needs are best fulfilled through new creative, collaborative or innovative practices or products.

Kleiman (2011;62.6) argues that "working on the edge of chaos" is a way to manage complexity. Influenced by ideas on systems, chaos and complexity (Stacy, Griffin et al. 2000; Tosey 2002), Kleiman identifies a point on "the complexity continuum" between stasis and chaos. Here creative insights are more likely to happen. Working on the edge of chaos, finds the optimum zone of working, "the zone of optimal operation". It lies between stasis, with its certainty of systems fixed structures and linear predictability; and chaos, where anything could happen (Kleiman 2011;62.6).

Kleiman talks of the constant "gravitational pull" of HE systems or in fact any system, to certainty and agreement, to stasis (Kleiman 2011;62.6). The stable and predictable world is difficult to change because change requires constant energy and is destabilising for those people involved. However to adapt to complexity, we need to be able to work in "the zone of optimal operation" and be able to be more creative and to take more risks (ibid). At this point, the system does not fall back into predictability nor does it fall into disorder. It is at the point where complexity, creativity and insight are more likely to be experienced.

There is agreement that students need new ways of learning in our contemporary, global world (Neary and Winn 2009; Wilson 2010; Kleiman 2011; Puttnam 2012). My research evidences that students want these creative, collaborative ways of learning within their creative undergraduate degrees and their focus is not only on the economic. These 'needs' and 'wants' echo the concept of the creative campus (Lingo and Tepper 2010;3), "where students and faculty members work together, face to face, to solve problems, improvise,

and experience new and non-routine ways of learning and engaging with each other”.

Creatour aims to be co-produced by those who are significant to the learning in the undergraduate curriculum and by those significant to learning for potential work. It intends to fit with and complement other creative perspectives (Neary and Winn 2009; Lingo and Tepper 2010; Wilson 2010; Kleiman 2011; Puttnam 2012), rather than replace their ideas or argue that this one is ‘better’. The arguments of these authors advocate for a holistic creative experience, with inclusive, creative approaches, experiential learning, collaborative partnerships and metaphors of the learner as artist, creator or producer of their work. These arguments sit comfortably with the conclusions within this research project. Their ideas validate this author’s findings and the interpretations made of undergraduate meanings of creative employability rooted in the undergraduate and graduate data which took a grounded approach. These creative perspectives (ibid) give validation to Creatour, as does the evidence from the undergraduates and the graduates themselves who have given positive feedback on this conceptualisation of employability in creative undergraduate degrees and the research conclusions.

Since the beginning of this research, Higher Education has been moving along a continuum from public sector institutions as a public good at one end, to numerous higher education training providers with private sector ideologies, focusing on the private good at the other. Education as a sector is being aggressively encouraged to participate in a free market from primary to higher education. A private ideology is palpable (Benn 2012) in the take up of academies in compulsory education, the increase of private providers to replace LEAs, the new private universities and an increase in HE private outsourcing and affiliations. Education is becoming more complex and chaotic. A free market brings reduced regulation and new providers (BBC 2011) claiming better choice, value for money and specialist courses. However in tandem, there are



increasing directives to develop the academic, the conservative and the traditional.

The current government desire to continue traditional positivist paradigms are evidenced with the recent Education Minister Gove's (Toynbee 2013) evangelical fervour to return to a 1950s academic curriculum assessed by end of year exams and the Coalition government's decision to focus on STEM disciplines in higher education (Morgan 2010) rather than humanities or social sciences.

As a lecturer in higher education, as a consultant in education and as a parent, my professional and personal experiences within education reveal a complex landscape that is as Kleiman (2011) describes, one of both stasis and chaos.

## **An Emphasis on the Student Experience**

The students in this research recognise that they need meaningful engagement with the industry they aspire to work within (the external factors) while having opportunities to gain confidence and understanding of their worth within it (the internal factors). This understanding is gained through reflection on their identity, attributes and agency for potential work in that area. Having the confidence to interact in the external environment, coupled with having the confidence in your internal environment, i.e. the self-belief that you are able 'to do it' is crucial to undergraduate and graduate development.

Creator recognises that both the external and the internal worlds are enmeshed in experiential learning bringing "learning as experience", "learning as doing", "learning as belonging" and "learning as becoming", reflecting Wenger's (2009;211) components of a social theory of learning.

The social collaboration of the community of practice develops participants' learning while giving meaning and identity through the experience. Creatour intends to act as a philosophy for learning, a way of life that is personal to the community of practice and how its members see themselves in relation to the world. This is why the term 'philosophy' is used, rather than strategy, methodology, framework or model which suggests an intervention that is systematic, rather than organic or holistic. The philosophy makes sense of the complexities of creative work. It does not intend to be a mechanistic metaphor or a fixed set of jigsaw pieces. It should be seen as a starting point in which to experiment, explore and add other areas that may be important, relevant or may have been previously over looked.

## Evaluating Creatour

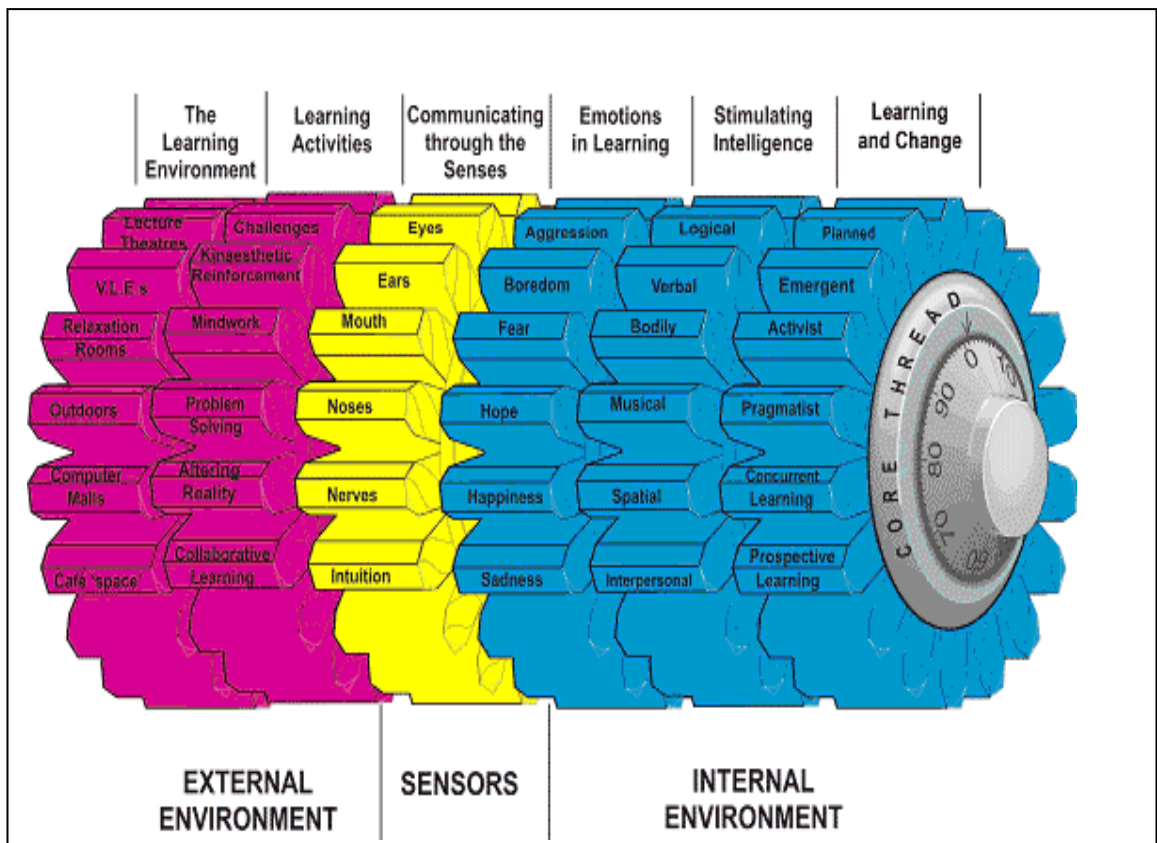
After developing Creatour, I began evaluating it and comparing it to other approaches that had been designed as heuristic frameworks for learning or development.

Creatour has some links to Colin Beard's work in *The Learning Combination Lock* (Beard and Wilson 2006;4). The Beard and Wilson (2006;5) lock brings together "all the main ingredients of the learning equation" and is intended to be used in education, training and coaching to represent "the complexity of the many possible experiential choices". Beard facilitates experiential learning in both education and work environments. The metaphor of the lock recognises the importance of the external and internal worlds. The learner interacts with the external world through their senses. The lock is a visual metaphor of six, rotating tumblers that represent the sophistication of experiential learning and how this intricacy has infinite combinations.

Beard draws on eclectic methodologies, environments and disciplines to stimulate learners' interests and to engage them with their learning. His work

acknowledges the importance of the learner's emotions and their senses. How people react to their physical environment and how different ways of learning can make the learner 'feel', are important. Beard's interest in Zoology and habitat is evident, particularly the importance of environment and how the individual relates to it. Individuals' 'being' and their sense of 'belonging' are key themes.

**Figure 18** The Learning Combination Lock (Beard and Wilson 2006;4)



The metaphor is explained below (Beard and Wilson 2006;5)

- The “external environment” refers to the people, place and space where the learning takes place. It is the “where” and “with whom” the learning happens, i.e. the learning activities and physical learning environment. The external environment with its people and places links to learners’ doing and belonging.
- The “Sensors” tumbler focuses on how the learners sense and feel the experience.
- The “internal environment” concerns where the learners experience with their “hearts” and “minds”. Where do they emotionally engage with what they are experiencing? The internal environment concerns the learners’ thinking and being. How do the participants internalise the experience? It focuses on emotions in their learning, reasoning and intelligence. Learning can become change.
- There are six philosophical considerations within the learning lock: belonging; doing; sensing; feeling; thinking and being.

Beard and Wilson (2013;8) emphasise that much consideration should go into planning learning and looking at the options for combinations. The planning and designing of experiential learning should be informed to avoid a random “one armed bandit” approach. Each of the tumblers should inform practice and choices. Beard and Wilson argue that the tumblers can be personalised to create new combination locks that target specific challenges and obstacles.

Creator and Learning Lock have similarities. They are both holistic metaphors, involving the whole being and are able to be applied to both education and work settings. They both focus on the complexities of the world and how experiences, places, people, culture and politics relate to one another. They

also both have considerations for the philosophical and how individuals perceive their selves in relation to the world.

## Original Contribution

Creator aims to address:

- a) The current dominant models of employability that are seen as having limited relevance when applied to creative subjects by creative students.
- b) A conceptualisation of creative employability that is meaningful and relevant for creative undergraduates and graduates.

Creator is specific to creative work. 'Complexability' and Creator intend to be an alternative conceptualisation for employability, specifically for creative employability, as a way to engage in complexity, as a way to bring together the academic/vocational higher education curriculum with an ongoing development for potential creative work. The fact that undergraduates, graduates and practitioners see it has applicability to other disciplines, has occurred organically.

When I began this research in 2009, research into the specifics of creative work and its links with employability was underdeveloped and Ball had been stressing the need for discrete research into the creative industries for several years (Ball 2003).

In 2013 this continued to be a concern. Vice-Chancellor of the University for the Creative Arts, Simon Ofield-Kerr, identified that the creative industries and its related work and education areas, still needed robust research and resources.

He argued research was needed to evidence the explicit value of the creative industries in the UK, in order to inform funding and to champion the importance of creative subjects in education (Ofield-Kerr 2013).

In the area of compulsory education, lobbying has had some success for the creative disciplines. Critical voices from the Cultural Learning Alliance through creative professionals, teachers, students and the media meant that recent Education Minister Michael Gove revised his previous plans and provided some space for creative subjects in the National Curriculum and developed new GCSEs and A levels in creative subjects (The Cultural Learning Alliance 2014). A House of Commons report documented that the government regretted its approach to performance management and a focus on subjects like science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) which has had a pronounced impact on creative disciplines and has led to “the continued diminution in the provision of dance, drama and other creative subjects” (House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee 2013;42). STEAM (adding in the arts) with business skills, are now promoted as important to the creative economy (The Creative industries Council 2014). It is being recognised that the *arts* are imperative to British life and to the British economy. There needs to be an interdisciplinary fusion of the arts and STEM subjects in education and for work (The Creative industries Council 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015).

In the area of higher education there is much rhetoric about the importance of students’ voices in their learning and of student choice. In 2009 there was very little evidence that governments had actively elicited student voices or listened to them (CBI/Universities UK 2009; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). In 2015, the main conduit for listening to students’ voices is through the National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS questionnaire invites students to give an indication of whether or not they enjoyed their experience as undergraduates. Essentially it works as a student satisfaction survey. Worryingly, the NSS

continues to be the main tool used to compare the 'quality' of courses across British universities and the questionnaire has become a powerful and influential mechanism by which to rate universities, which recent governments (both a Labour and a coalition one) support.

The NSS was introduced in 2005 and arose from Labour's idea to have a national survey that assessed teaching quality to inform students of university provision and to enable them to be "intelligent customers" (Department for Education and Skills 2003;47). The survey does not deliver to this original purpose and it has been highly criticised anecdotally by academics and evidenced as only measuring student subjective satisfaction (Attwood 2012). Clear trends have been revealed in student responses based on participants' sex, ethnicity, age and background (ibid). The survey does not reflect learners' development, standards in teaching, scholarship and intellectual development, the specifics of the university experience or any external evaluations of how institutions and courses compare.

The survey, despite its flaws, has meant that undergraduate feedback in the NSS carries immense power politically both at macro and micro level. Surprisingly students in 2014 are still not being invited to inform HE provision or to collaborate in HE planning by those within government departments.

A purpose of this research study has been to listen to the student voice because there is evidence that it had been neglected in the employability discourse within the UK. I argue too that collaboration with students has also been absent in the discourse concerning the future of higher education in England. Government and employers appear still to be the main protagonists that influence the policy and strategy shaping HE's future. As well as the diverse student voice, there are the HE institutions themselves, the Higher Education Academy (HEA), research groups, research journals, not-for profit

groups, community groups and many other interested agencies that have specialist knowledge in the HE field and could be involved in future planning.

Student and graduate voices in this research evidenced that many do not relate to dominant models of employability and find them meaningless within their own disciplines. Creatour intends to be collaborative through working with students, lecturers, practitioners, employers and other significant partners to make learning meaningful.

Creatour has an original contribution to make. It takes a new perspective of employability and provides an alternative to dominant models of employability. This new approach has been developed from the ideas which underpin Parkour. I have added another dimension to the area of 'employability', as a scholarly field of research.

Creatour brings the physical, the mental, the supportive community and complexity to the concept of employability. Creatour creates a philosophy for creative development that is intrinsically inclusive, social, collaborative, experimental, experiential and supportive. Creative work is competitive; creative development does not need to be. Peer learning, teaching and support should be encouraged at every stage.

Creatour aims to work with the whole self. Participants support each other and develop as a community. The community seeks to be open and anyone can participate. Development aims to see routes and journeys differently, discovering alternative paths and finding mental and physical ways to overcome both physical and psychological hurdles, be they real or imagined. The metaphor of employability in Creatour means undergraduates and graduates utilise the creative community to support and develop at university and beyond as a way of life.



## **Creatour as a starting point**

Creatour is just a beginning. I would like to use it as a starting point to work in other disciplines to encourage them to embrace creative collaboration in their programmes. I believe that experiential and creative collaboration is a way that new ground can be broken and that universities in the future can find alternative pathways and solutions to local and global problems through discipline and trans-discipline collaborations (Puttnam 2012; Wilson 2010).

I believe that the creative, experiential and experimental has the potential to make a big impact on many of our challenges in work, life and society. I think individualism, neo-liberalism and a focus only on economic impact have meant that creative collaboration and taking creative risks has been neglected.

There is a clear business and commercial argument for creative thinking and creative working to compete in a complex, global market place. An overriding economic focus, has meant it has been challenging to explore alternative ways of working that maybe more sustainable, inclusive and ethical while also making economic sense. Schools, colleges and universities should focus on the experimental, creative and experiential because students with their infinite collaborations may begin to find new ways of working, creating and problem solving in places we have not already thought about or found.

## **Limitations of the Research**

The numbers involved in this research sample are relatively small. 68 graduates were involved in the first stage of this research which took a survey approach and 20 undergraduates in the second stage which used in depth interviews to gain rich qualitative data.

The small sample in the research was employed in order to be authentic and to generate rich data, with interpretations as close as possible to the meanings that were intended from the research participants themselves. Using the research data with others, aimed to validate these interpretations and add to them. I believe authenticity has been reached through theoretic sampling and also by taking the research findings back to the original research sample or their comparable equivalents (Charmaz 2006).

Theoretical sampling aims to corroborate interpretations, ideas and theories rather than increase the research sample's population. However through theoretical sampling, the reach of the research has become much wider than the initial sample of 88. The research findings were shared with undergraduates, graduates practitioners and employers. They have been disseminated at international and national conferences, at research groups, at university-wide meetings of academic and support staff and on development courses for multi-disciplinary academic staff. These groups have not been pre-selected or elected to be a part of the research. Undergraduates, graduates, lecturers, employers and practitioners have been involved in the iterations of the process and have been invited to give feedback throughout the research (see *Synthesis* chapter). Their commentary provided an argument for Creatour's wider application outside of specific, creative, undergraduate degrees.

A wider population was sought to give feedback on the research findings, theory and conceptualisation and to give an opportunity to those who had not been involved to participate. Groups outside of the original sample have been approached to ask for their views and gain pluralistic perspectives through asking:

“What do you think?”

“Do you agree with this?”

“What is missing or what would you add?”

“Is there a better way?”

The research has been organic, iterative and unpredictable. I did not anticipate an alternative creative perspective would emerge, which I call a philosophy to conceptualise the place of employability in the creative degree. I hope that by making all iterations transparent the reader is made aware that the research process has been structured and that all decisions have been made with care and thought. The evaluations from the comparative sample provide evidence that the research outcomes have integrity for the research participants and that the conclusions are robust. In an ideal world I would have liked to increase my sample and worked across more disciplines, with more institutions and collaborated with other researchers and practitioners within a larger research project.

In 2009, I expected that by the end of the research, I would have a list of graduate attributes that undergraduate and graduates perceived they needed for creative jobs. This ‘list’ would have been compared to an employers’ ‘list’. I imagined the new list would reveal some similarities or differences to the lists that employers from 2009 - 2014 said they wanted in their graduate recruits. I also expected that undergraduates, like employers, would believe that higher education provided both specific and transferable skills for work. I thought students were skill focused and wanted to collect their ‘bank’ of skills for graduate work because that is what employers say they require from their graduates.

I never anticipated that students would *not* be as skills focused as employers, or at least how employers are represented through government initiated literature. The undergraduates and graduates appeared to see the world with much more sophistication than the perspectives outlined in key documents (Archer and Davison 2008; CBI/Universities UK 2009; High Fliers Research 2009; Browne 2010; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). I came to

appreciate undergraduates and graduates acknowledge complexity, and perceive work in a global sense. They see global work has numerous combinations and collaborations which are needed in the creative process and to solve problems in creative work. They see the complexity like the CEOs that Kleiman cites (2011).

These undergraduates and graduates do not believe that by the time of graduation they should have acquired a somewhat arbitrary list of graduate attributes that employers say they need. They also do not think they should be pursuing as many examples of generic work experience on their CVs as possible, in order to show that they have the attributes and experience to become potential employees. In reality, they are savvy and see creative work as far more complicated and complex. They are also shrewd about how creative work becomes paid. They gain understanding that who they are, where they have come from, who they know and who they have interacted within the course of their degree will have far more impact, than what they can say 'they know' or say 'they can do'.

GCSEs, A levels and university degrees have been accused of 'dumbing down' the curriculum in the UK. I believe Labour and Coalition governments can be accused of having low expectations of students. Students are sceptical. They have personal and collective experiences and through them draw their own conclusions about what is important, regardless of the corporate line given by other interests.

In short, students observe how people are successful in creative work and see that it may not fit with what they initially believed or may have been taught to believe. The architecture students show they do not believe the meritocracy rhetoric that those with the most relevant skills and qualifications become employable, because they experience success being achieved largely through having contacts. This is why the third year students note that creative work is

not a meritocracy, “there are an awful lot of crap architects in the world” and “it is the same in other professions”.

Students learn that there are certain rules in creative work and these rules need to be learnt and be made explicit. Future students can be re-educated to understand how creative work is facilitated. The politically powerful are recognising an absence of diversity, Major’s (BBC 2013) and Gove’s (The Telegraph 2012) comments about success and power being held by the privileged, shows that Britain is becoming less inclusive or diverse (The Guardian 2014) rather than more so. This is confirmed by The Warwick Commission (2015).

## Recent Developments

Since the outset of this research there has been much debate, literature and development around the themes of HE, employability and the creative industries. The following gives an overview of very recent developments which I have included outside of *Literature Review* in order to contextualise my conclusions.

Higher education in England under the Coalition government has undergone dramatic change since the publication of the 2011 white paper (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011). The Coalition government brought a free market to the HE sector and is abolishing the cap on student HE numbers from 2015 (Morgan 2013). The new HE environment is unregulated and is endorsed by the Coalition government as a commercial and a demand led market.

The most immediate concern being expressed by many within HE is the need for regulation. The Higher Education Commission, a cross-party group of MPs

and representatives from business and HE, set out a case for the government to introduce a higher education bill as soon as possible. “Without it, we are in danger of a fire without a fire brigade” (King 2013;n.p.).

In chapter one *Research Overview*, I commented that providing numerical graduate salaries as evidence of the value of a degree in the discourses of university prospectuses and government policy has become common place. BIS (2013) published a ‘live’ document which collects research that argues the benefits of HE participation. It intends that researchers add new research as it becomes available. The research findings are listed against each of the items below (Figure 19) and there does not appear any critique of each area of literature or of its methodology or findings. It is more of a ‘mapping’ exercise of what has been undertaken in the research areas of the market and the wider benefits of higher education to individuals and society. It clearly aims to ‘sell’ HE to potential participants as evidence of ‘value for money’.

**Figure 19** Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2013;6)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Benefits to Society</b></p> <p>Non-market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater social cohesion, trust and tolerance</li> <li>• Less crime</li> <li>• Political stability</li> <li>• Greater social mobility</li> <li>• Greater social capital</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Benefits to Society</b></p> <p>Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased tax revenues</li> <li>• Faster economic growth</li> <li>• Greater innovation and labour market flexibility</li> <li>• Increased productivity of co-workers</li> <li>• Reduced burden on public finances from co-ordination between policy areas such as health and crime prevention</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Benefits to the Individual</b></p> <p>Non-Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater propensity to vote</li> <li>• Greater propensity to volunteer</li> <li>• Greater propensity to trust and tolerate others</li> <li>• Lower propensity to commit (non-violent) crime</li> <li>• Better educational parenting</li> <li>• Longer life expectancy</li> <li>• Less likely to smoke</li> <li>• Less likely to drink excessively</li> <li>• Less likely to be obese</li> <li>• More likely to engage in preventative care</li> <li>• Better mental health</li> <li>• Greater life satisfaction</li> <li>• Better general health</li> </ul> | <p><b>Benefits to the Individual</b></p> <p>Market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher earnings</li> <li>• Less exposure to unemployment</li> <li>• Increased employability and skills development</li> <li>• Increased entrepreneurial activity and productivity</li> </ul>  |

I cite this document because of its use of language rather than for its research evidence. The language of the report clearly favours the economic context and this is 'sold' as evidence of the quantitative value of a degree. The overview above appears reasonably balanced with the non-market individual and society benefits set against the market individual and society benefits.

However in the detail of the research projects which the 'live' document includes there is an obvious focus on the financial, rather than the social, cultural or ethical as the following confirms. Many of the benefits listed relate to employers' or relate to the country's economic productivity. For example, the document (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2013;47) argues "individual market benefits" as "Increased employability and skills development" and cites two research studies. The benefits for graduates, are quoted next and are laid out exactly as they appear (including the bullet points) in the document:

Employers value graduates because they:

- Challenge how things are done and come at things from a different perspective
- Use their initiative and act without waiting for instruction
- Problem solving and flexibility
- Assimilate knowledge quickly and bring new ideas and energy

(Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2013;49)

The employers "value" or benefits above, appear to be benefits for the employer, rather than benefits for the individual. What graduates "value" in



employers, is not discussed. There appears an assumption that because the employer “values” or benefits from the graduate, the graduate automatically benefits from the employer with a promise of a potential job or salary.

Two more studies are cited for “individual market benefits” under “Increased entrepreneurial activity and productivity”. They are quoted below, again exactly as they appear, with bullet points:

- Individuals with higher levels of education have higher levels of entrepreneurial activity
- The productivity gain of education and training is around twice of the increase in wages.

(Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2013;50)

Overlooking whether the four studies above are robust, the language of the last two benefits quoted immediately above, suggest that higher education provides individual entrepreneurial skills so that individuals can make more money than they would without a higher education qualification. Entrepreneurial skills are described for individual financial gain and in the interests of employers and the interests of economic growth in general. Social enterprise is not seen as important. It implies that individuals want to make money and do not have interests in the social. My research revealed that undergraduates do want to work in social enterprise and feel very strongly about making an individual contribution to their and others’ communities. They are interested in the pursuit of a ‘good life’ for many and view university learning as having public benefits, ‘a public good’, as well as private gains.

The language used above within the 'live' document (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2013) suggests that participation in HE benefits the individual because employers value specific skills that HE has given them, so they get rewarded with an individual benefit, a paid job. The other message appears to be that HE participation makes individuals more entrepreneurial for their own benefit, i.e. able to make money for themselves, rather than only for their employers. The language of employability used in this BIS document (2013) fits with previous government rhetoric (Browne 2010; Wilson 2012; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011) which conceptualises employability as: financial profit; human skill acquisition to meet employers' skill needs (particularly private sector employers' skill needs); defined through human capital theory and an investment in skill acquisition, through education and training, to increase national, economic growth.

Entrepreneurial activity is seen as the relationship between the cost of education and salary gain. In summary, the focus of language in the report is on the financial profits of commercial enterprise, rather than the benefits of social, cultural or ethical enterprise.

Private enterprise continues to play a key role in Coalition government policy for economic growth and even shapes reforms in education with *Enterprise for All* encouraging children to start their own businesses at primary school (Lord Young 2014). Productivity, human capital and economic growth are elements of contemporary neoclassical growth theory (The Economist 2014). Economic growth is seen to rely on productivity gained through skill acquisition and human capital development. Neoclassical growth theory is dominant within government discourse and economic strategy. There has been little reform in economic policy despite a major recession and public pressure to learn from the 2008 financial crisis.

The University of Manchester had a lobbying group of economics students (Ward-Perkins and Earle 2013) who believed that neoclassical economic theory should no longer have a monopoly within UK economics courses. These students argued that syllabuses in 2013 remain unchanged after a bank bailout costing hundreds of billions and unemployment was quoted at 2.7 million.

At the moment an undergraduate, graduate or even a professional economist could easily go through their career without knowing anything substantive about other schools of thought, such as post-Keynesian, Austrian, institutional, Marxist, evolutionary, ecological or feminist economics. Such schools of thought are simply considered inferior or irrelevant for economic 'science'.

(Ward-Perkins and Earle 2013;n.p)

These students claim that economics students are not encouraged to be critical or to conduct their own research. The students argue that this means many graduates accept economics as truth, rather than as contested theory. The students believe that critical pluralism is currently absent within economic syllabi. They believe future economic courses must promote criticality. Students need to be opened up to pluralistic possibilities and to be able to research critically. They believe that future students need to be creative and to be encouraged to find new theory or solutions within economics.

The British governments (both Labour and Coalition) have not modified their conceptualisation of employability during this research project. Its discourse continues to be set within human capital theory and have a focus on skill acquisition to increase both individual and national economic gain.

The influential, government led, dominant discourse for employability, has proved itself to be flawed. Consequently the discourse has moved on within

graduate employability and within the academy. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) have organised many events around employability, like David Gibson's "embedding enterprise education into the academic curriculum to "enhance employability" and seminars that focus on employers' needs, mentoring, partnerships, assessments and tutor and student perceptions (The Higher Education Academy 2014;n.p.).

The HEA has moved on since the guidance document of 2012 which offered limited case studies to implement employability into pedagogy (Pegg, Waldock et al. 2012). Towards the end of 2013, the document *Defining and developing your approach to employability: a framework for higher education institutions* was launched (Cole and Tibby). The text recognises that there can be many approaches and many definitions of employability. This HEA document calls for a more flexible, cohesive, systematic and comprehensive approach. The document is less prescriptive than previous guidance. It sits more with my research which has argued that employability needs to be made explicit. I have argued that employability needs to be explored, defined and agreed at discipline and department level in pursuit of actions that have meaning for students and graduates within the discipline. I believe an approach to exploring meanings of employability should be holistic and collaborative, it should involve reflection and evaluation from all those within the HE programme and those in the work that the undergraduates aspire to move into. An approach to 'employability' should be immersed within the philosophy of the discipline.

Advice and guidance around employability and HE has become much more specialised and sophisticated. Paul Kleiman and Carolyn Bew (2014) at the HEA recognised that the standard 'employability agenda' did not well serve the creative arts disciplines. Rather than forcing all disciplines to fit a standard model of employability; they believe employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise should be following the discourses and practices of the creative disciplines themselves. They organised a summit to discuss ways to influence

the sector and explore possible strategy and policy. This approach is welcomed. Collaboration from those involved in the creative sectors will bring more significant and meaningful action. It opens up a powerful discourse of partnership, complexity and co-production by using holistic methodology.

## **Criticism of Coalition HE Policy**

Collini (2013) draws on two recent books McGettigan (2013) and Brown with Carasso (2013) that critique the UK's coalition government HE policies and argue that marketisation is not working because it is not appropriate to education. Collini is convincing and I draw on his critique to demonstrate that HE has become embroiled in an ideological, political experiment.

Collini (2013) claims that price does not reflect quality and quality cannot be assured by price. He argues that increasing student numbers within an unregulated HE market cannot assure quality for those students. The abolishment of the cap in student university numbers cannot guarantee high quality provision for all, or social mobility or provide limitless places for those wanting to access the most prestigious and coveted HE institutions. Maintaining privilege is a commodity within HE that is deliberately exclusive. Collini names Harvard, Yale and Princeton with their capped numbers of undergraduates to five or six thousand, compared to Oxbridge and Bristol with twelve or thirteen thousand undergraduates (Collini 2013;8).

Collini (ibid) argues that "the international evidence of improvement of standards as a result of increased marketisation is, to say the least, mixed". Collini quotes Brown with Carasso (2013) who assert marketisation may damage quality, lower standards, create grade inflation and encourage an acceptance of plagiarism and cheating. It also diverts resources away from teaching and learning to activities such as marketing, enrolment and administration.

Collini claims that along with marketisation, the REF has brought a preoccupation for tactical choice of research topics, marketing, research ranking, strategy and game playing rather than an increased focus on the quality of teaching, the quality of learning and the quality of the student experience (Collini 2013;11). Collini (2013) and other authors (Brown and Carasso 2013; McGettigan 2013) provide a depressing forecast,

...higher education in England is currently subject to an 'experiment', implemented as Brown puts it 'without any control' or fallback position ... in spite of the copious evidence from America, Australia and now Britain ... showing the very clear limitations of markets as a means of providing an effective, efficient and fair higher education system.

(Collini 2013;11)

The example that holds the most impact for me about this 'experiment' within HE is Collini's reference to the BBC. I quote it in full because it seems to have such resonance that the HE landscape may have changed irreparably.

Future historians, pondering changes in British society from the 1980s onwards, will struggle to account for the following curious fact. Although British business enterprises have an extremely mixed record (frequently posting gigantic losses, mostly failing to match overseas competitors, scarcely benefiting the weaker groups in society), and although such arm's length public institutions as museums and galleries, the BBC and the universities have by and large a very good record (universally acknowledged creativity, streets ahead of most of their international peers, positive forces for human development and social cohesion), nonetheless over the past three decades politicians have repeatedly attempted to force the second set of institutions to change so that they more closely resemble the first. Some of those historians may even

wonder why at the time there was so little concerted protest at this deeply implausible programme. But they will at least record that, alongside its many other achievements, the coalition government took the decisive steps in helping to turn some first-rate universities into third-rate companies.

If you still think the time for criticism is over, perhaps you'd better think again.

(Collini 2013;12)

## **The Future of the Creative Economy**

On December 5 2013 Chancellor George Osborne announced that in 2014 there would be 30,000 more student places and that the cap on student numbers from 2015 would be lifted (HM Treasury 2013). £50 million a year was to be made available to fund science and engineering students "to ensure that institutions provide places in the subjects most needed in the economy (ibid). Osborne claimed the new loans will be financed by selling the old student loan book.

However there was much criticism that these loans would be unaffordable and a deficit was likely. Andrew McGettigan (2013;17) critiques that the announcement was a Coalition government ploy to cover up a black hole of a 570m shortfall and was designed to avert the budget crisis in HE funding.

Nick Petford, vice-chancellor of the University of Northampton showed concern for humanities and arts subjects which continue to be over looked within government funding. Petford asserts the need for funding within the creative arts to boost the creative economy. He believes technology subjects should be

funded but so too should creative technology, fashion, design and the arts which also drive economic growth (Ramesh 2013).

Evaluating current creative growth remains challenging. Statistical evidence for the growth of the creative economy is presented differently. Various statistics are published, for example, government data sets the growth of the creative sector's gross value added (GVA) in 2012 as 9.4 per cent, nearly six times faster than that of the rest of the economy (DCMS 2014;7). DCMS in 2015 claim employment within the creative economy grew by 2.6% between 2012 and 2013, a higher rate than the British economy as a whole 1.6% (2015;7). *The Guardian* declare that the creative industries have grown from 11.5% of the overall service sector in 2009 to 16.1% in 2011 and this growth is reported to be three times more than the average, since the 2008 financial crisis (Reynolds 2014;14). However, all sources show that there has been growth in the creative industries. There are recommendations to support sustained growth through increased funding, particularly around strategy to open up the creative industries to a diversity of membership (The Creative industries Council 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015).

My research has provided strong evidence to support this need for inclusion within the creative economy. The creative industries currently favour the privileged few who have access to the gatekeepers of work. These gatekeepers hold the key to a privileged membership. These privileged clubs seem impenetrable to a diversity of new members who are keen to become creative workers. An article in *The Guardian* (Higdon 2014) promoted an argument for creative working in all areas of the economy and in particular called for new government policies and strategies to make the creative economy more inclusive to new membership. I argued that creative working and inclusion makes economic, social and ethical sense.

A report (Straw and Warner 2014) in the same week echoed my findings and suggested that the UK needs to embrace regional and ethnic diversity if it wants



to improve the economy. The document from the Institute for Public Policy Research evidences the low recruitment to the creative industries of non-white and those from less well-off backgrounds. Straw and Warner draw on research by Creative Skill Set (2013), who publish the proportion of non-white people in the creative sector fell between 2009 and 2012 and is roughly half of that in the rest of the economy (Straw and Warner 2014;29).

The report argued that this exclusion is a threat to competitiveness in the creative economy. The report called for the government to invest outside of London and look for policies and strategies to support inclusion to open a closed sector. It (ibid) cited BIS (2012) who are backing sectors that are perceived as likely to have prospects for success in the future in terms of generating increased value added and employment in the UK economy.

Straw and Warner argued that the creative industries have been overlooked and that an industrial strategy needs to be in place for the creative industries to match other industrial strategies which are in place for 11 sectors. The report also recommended more coherent strategies and policies, as currently the creative industries are affected by “a multitude of overlapping government interventions” (Straw and Warner 2014;3).

The findings of Straw and Warner (ibid) support my research conclusions that current models are not working. New perspectives are needed. A way forward needs to embrace diversity and ensure that new members are supported to enter rewarding, creative work. The Warwick Commission (2015) argue that the creative and cultural ecosystem in Britain is disconnected in terms of policy, strategy and funding. They call for a national plan drawn up by DCMS, BIS, DfE, The Creative Industries Council and the Creative Industries Federation, that recognises the interconnectivity of the parts and brings coherence, unity and diversity for the creative economy and all areas of a British cultural life.

# Creative Work and Education – a Way Forward

This research which employed a grounded approach has brought a new idea or theory (Hage 1972) to the construction of employability with Creatour philosophy. Creatour is a contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective for creative employability. It provides an alternative philosophy to the dominant models of skill development and skill acquisition to meet employers' needs. I argue that 'complexability' is a more appropriate word than 'employability', to describe what graduates should develop for potential creative work. Complexability is having the necessary social, cultural and economic capital, along with a sophisticated creative agency. This agency means working in different ways, with different people, in different places, in different spaces and with different cultures, often across disciplines and boundaries. Creatour develops this, in order for undergraduates and graduates to sustain a 'good' working life.

This thesis and Creatour brought answers to the research questions: *How is creative employability conceptualised through undergraduate and graduate voices? Do undergraduates and graduates believe employability can be acquired in the undergraduate experience? What place should employability have in creative undergraduate degrees?*

This research has captured the voices of current students studying on undergraduate degrees in the creative industries and of those that have recently graduated from these courses. It has asked them about what they believe is needed within a contemporary, creative undergraduate experience to develop them for potential, creative work.

I believe that Creatour only scrapes a little from the superficial top of a creative iceberg. There is huge potential for the creative disciplines in the global world.

I also believe the term the 'creative industries' has run its course. It is not a helpful term and like Wilson (2010) I agree that it encourages a separatist approach to the creative disciplines which isolates them, discourages collaboration and discourages the crossing of boundaries, disciplines and epistemologies. Creativity should be recognised as part of everything.

In the UK, creativity should become mainstream in education and training. Learning and collaborating creatively needs to become every day practice. A creative curriculum from primary to higher education should be common place. I believe we need to inspire students to be able to research, to create and to produce new thinking, processes and products in every part of their lives, thereby encouraging curiosity, independence, tenacity and resilience for contemporary living. We need new learners to challenge the status quo, to interrogate privilege and open up diversity.

It is recognised that diversity in the creative economy is needed for it to flourish (Florida 2003; Hutton et al 2007; Straw and Warner 2014; The Warwick Commission 2015). The UK should modernise its policies, teaching and learning strategies to bring new creative members into the economy. As Major (2012) and Gove (2013) have observed, privilege often replicates privilege. We now need to find new ways to open up the membership of privileged circles in the UK (Higdon 2014) and bring in much needed diversity and creativity.

Future qualifications, their associated learning and teaching strategies and institutional policies should have creativity at their core. I firmly agree with Puttnam (2012); we need to find new ways to engage with contemporary students and graduates who are our future. Creativity should be espoused as a way to learn and to work. Creativity is needed to problem solve, to overcome obstacles and find the solutions for many of our challenging problems for sustaining an ethical and 'good life' for all. Learning and working creatively makes social, cultural and economic sense.

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# APPENDIX I

## Dissemination and Feedback

These findings have been disseminated at the following events, teaching sessions and conferences:

1. Ten staff workshops with staff (academic and support staff) at a post 1992 university on definitions of employability and its place in the undergraduate curriculum.
2. Meetings with first and third year undergraduates and graduates of creative degrees in both pre and post 1992 universities.
3. Conversations with academics involved in creative degrees in both pre and post 1992 universities.
4. Conversations with creative practitioners and creative employers.
5. Pedagogic interest groups and transdisciplinary research groups in the faculties of a post 1992 university.
6. Shared with cohorts of students on a Masters programme, Education Practice MA and with cohorts of students on a mixed discipline Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PgCert in HE) at a post 1992 university.

7. A student conference organised by undergraduate students –Taking Over the Academy. Kingston University June 2011. Student workshop - *What is creative employability?*
8. Responding to Employers: Moving into the Mainstream - An Employer Engagement and Employability Conference. De Montfort University. June 2010. Employer workshop - *Using conceptual models on professional degree programmes to enhance student learning.*
9. Education in a Changing Environment 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference. University of Salford. July 2011. *Creative Degrees and Creative Employability*
10. SRHE Annual Conference. Newport. December 2011 - *Student Voices - Are creative jobs closed to new members, or can employability be acquired through the undergraduate experience?*
11. Conference of Academic Librarians. De Montfort University. July 2012 Keynote - *Meanings of Employability.*
12. SRHE Annual Conference. Newport. December 2012 - *What is a degree for? – Using students' contributions to explore meaningful models of employability for creative degrees, creative aspirations and creative work.*
13. SRHE Annual Conference. Newport. December 2013 - *Experiencing Employability – first and final year undergraduate perspectives of “The Employability Agenda”.*

14. Creative interest groups, post-graduate creative students and creative transdisciplinary research groups in a post 1992 university 2015.

# APPENDIX II

Have you completed a Creative Degree?

How useful has your degree been to you?

What would you retain or change in your degree?

*Please help in this important research to help other students and lecturers to learn from your expertise and experience. Thank you for giving your time, this is very much appreciated.*

## Information about the Research

The research involves graduates who completed their undergraduate degree in a UK university in 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009 in a creative area such as:

*Advertising, Architecture, Art, Antiques, Computer and Video games, Crafts, Dance, Design, Drama, Fashion, Film and Video, Journalism, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Software and Computer services, Television and Radio.*

This survey is investigating recent graduates' experiences of **acquiring employability** (*that is the skills, understanding and personal attributes which make*



*graduates more likely to gain desired employment)* from their undergraduate degrees programmes.

Please complete this survey, your experiences are really important. By participating in this survey you are giving informed consent. All data will be anonymised and no university or course will be identified in the research.

## Ethical Issues

- This survey is contributing to my research for my PhD at De Montfort University, Leicester. The research has been given ethical approval by the University.
- You have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time after completing the survey and without giving a reason. Please contact me directly should you wish to withdraw.
- I will ensure participants cannot be recognised from the data included in my thesis, which is a public document. I will take care of information you give me, it will be securely stored and password protected.

## Contacts

Further information can be obtained from the research student Rachel Higdon,

[rhigdon@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:rhigdon@dmu.ac.uk), telephone 0116 257 7761

or by contacting the Research Supervisor Mary Tyler by e-mail [mt Tyler@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mt Tyler@dmu.ac.uk) or by post at De Montfort University, Hawthorn Building, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BH

**Thank you again**

## Creative Degree Programmes

1. What is the full title of your undergraduate degree?

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2. What is the name of the university or college where you undertook your degree?

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3. Why did you initially choose to enrol on your degree programme?  
(please select only one)

To be a scholar and learn in a subject that interested me

To obtain a graduate job in the specific area of my degree subject

To obtain a graduate level job in a broader area or discipline

Other

please state \_\_\_\_\_

4. What year did you complete your degree? (tick appropriate box)

2006  2007  2008  2009

5. Are you?

male  female

6. What area best reflects the subject of your degree? (tick only one box)

- Advertising
- Architecture
- Art
- Computer and video games
- Crafts
- Dance
- Design
- Drama
- Fashion
- Film and Video
- Journalism
- Music

Performing Arts

Publishing

Software and computer services

Television and radio

Other

please state

---

7. Please give the age at which you graduated?

21

22

23

24

25

26 to 30

31 to 40

41 to 50

51 to 60

61+

8. Having graduated which of the following statements do you feel best applies to you now? (please select only one)

My degree helped me to get the job I really wanted

My degree helped me to get a good job but not the one I really wanted

My degree helped me to get a better job than I would have done without a degree

My degree has had little or no impact on my job prospects

My degree has hindered my job prospects

Other

Please state \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did you have to complete any work experience as part of your undergraduate degree programme?

yes  no

10. How useful was this work experience in developing your employability following graduation?

invaluable  very useful  useful  quite useful  not useful

not applicable as had no work experience as part of degree

11. Please indicate what are you doing now?

*(select area or areas which apply to your present situation and indicate if they relate or not to your degree subject).*

|                                | related to degree        | not related to degree    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Permanent full-time employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Permanent part-time employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Temporary full-time            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Temporary part -time           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Contract working               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self - employed                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Undertaking further study      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Paid work experience           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unpaid work experience         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volunteering                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Currently unemployed           | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| Family carer                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| Other                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |

Please state \_\_\_\_\_

12. If you are employed, would you describe your employment as at graduate level?

yes  no  not relevant as unemployed

13. Should degrees address **acquiring employability** as an integral part of their programme?

yes  no  other

please state \_\_\_\_\_

14. In your opinion and reflecting back on your own undergraduate degree which areas should be given attention to **acquire employability** as part of the overall degree programme?

*Please reflect on the following variables and indicate the level of attention you feel each should have in your undergraduate degree.*

|                                     | significant              | moderate                 | limited                  | none                     |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ability to work independently       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Academic thinking                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Business and commercial awareness   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Career planning                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Creativity                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Course input from employers         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Decision making and analysis skills | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|                                       |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Developing your character/personality | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Entrepreneurship                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Flexibility/adaptability              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrity                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Intellectual ability                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| International/global perspectives     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| IT Skills (general)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leadership                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Literacy                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Numeracy                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Oral communication skills             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Originality                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Oversees professional work experience | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Planning and organisational skills    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Problem solving                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional work experience          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reflection                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Research skills                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self and time-management              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self- confidence                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Subject knowledge                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Team working skills                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Working under pressure                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



15. On reflection what was it within your degree programme that helped to prepare you most for employment and why?

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16. Was employability discussed as part of your education prior to university?

yes  no  can't remember  don't know

17. Reflecting back upon your degree experience, how successful was it in helping you to identify and **acquire employability skills**?

successful  adequate  unsuccessful  don't know

18. How could your degree have been developed to help you **acquire greater employability**?

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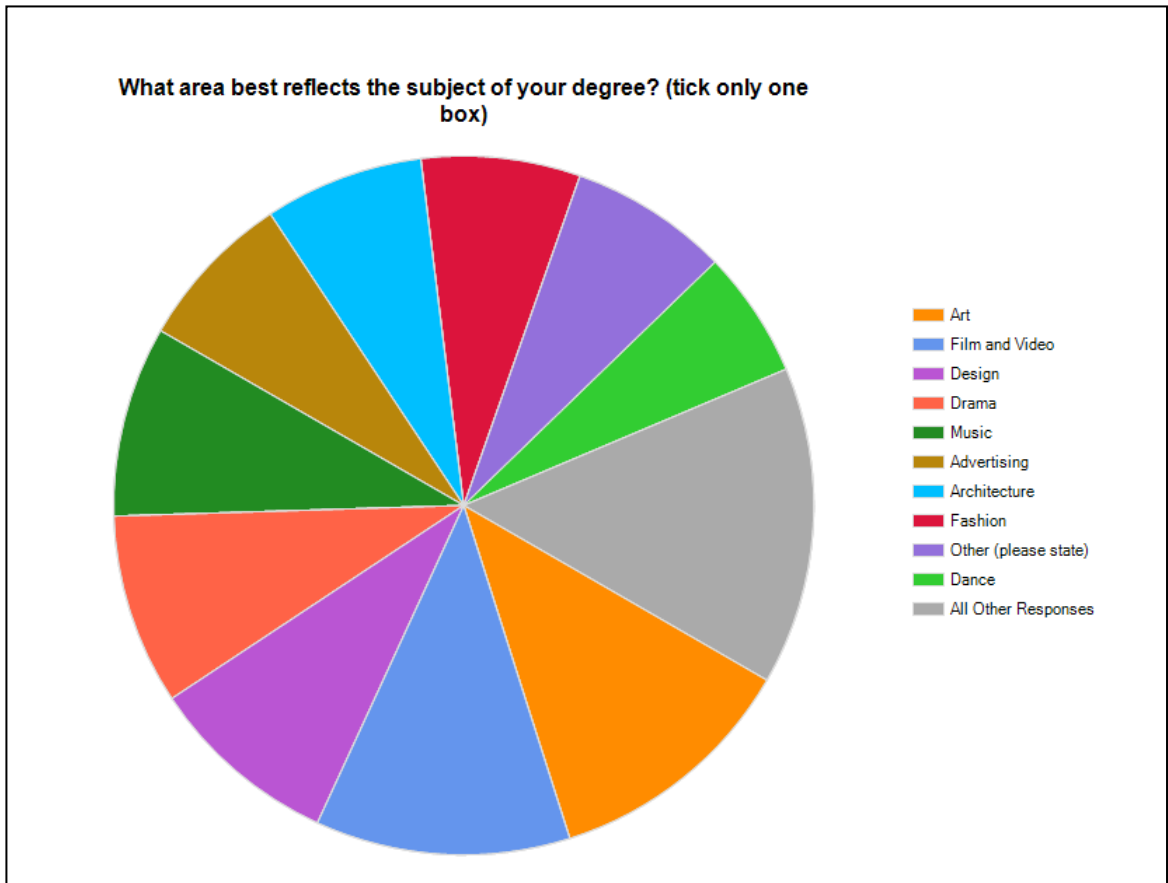
19. What if anything has inhibited you from achieving your work aspirations?

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# APPENDIX III

## Overview of the Creative Disciplines



Other responses:

Journalism and Publishing, Game Art, Media Software and Art and Business

# APPENDIX IV

## Information Sheet

As part of my PhD study at De Montfort University, Leicester, I am researching undergraduates.

My research is about undergraduates' and graduates' experiences of their creative undergraduate degrees in:

*Advertising, Architecture, Art, Antiques, Computer and Video games, Crafts, Dance, Design, Drama, Fashion, Film and Video, Journalism, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Software and Computer services, Television and Radio.*

I am intending to conduct interviews and discussions in order to understand your story, your experiences and your undergraduate time at university.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The resulting information maybe used as part of my university assignment. This thesis is a public document.

I will endeavour to make sure you cannot be recognised from the information I include in my thesis. I will take care of any information you give me; it will be stored in a secure place and may be used in subsequent publications.

You have the right to withdraw from the research up to 10 days after the interview has taken place, without giving a reason. Please contact me directly if you wish to withdraw.

***Thank you for giving your time, this is very much appreciated.***

### My contact details

Rachel Higdon,  
[rhigdon@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:rhigdon@dmu.ac.uk), telephone 0116 257 7761

### **My Research Supervisor's contact details**

Mary Tyler by e-mail [mt Tyler@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mt Tyler@dmu.ac.uk)  
or by post at De Montfort University, Hawthorn Building, The Gateway,  
Leicester  
LE1 9BH

**Thank you again**

# Interview Consent Form

Researcher: Rachel Higdon

Research Study: Students' and graduates' experiences of their creative undergraduate degrees in:

*Advertising, Architecture, Art, Antiques, Computer and Video games, Crafts, Dance, Design, Drama, Fashion, Film and Video, Journalism, Music, Performing Arts, Publishing, Software and Computer services, Television and Radio.*

Please indicate your consent by placing a tick in the box against each of the following statements as appropriate.

1. *I have read the attached information sheet*
2. *I understand the purpose of the research and what I am being asked to do*
3. *I am aware that I can withdraw up to 10 days after the interview has taken place without giving a reason.*
4. *I give consent for the information collected to be included in the thesis which may be read by members of the public*
5. *I give consent for the information collected to be included in articles in relevant journals and other publications*
6. *I give consent that I may be contacted for a further interview after graduating*

Consent given by:

Conditions agreed by:

Name:

Name: Rachel Higdon

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date:

Participant's contact details:

e-mail:

telephone number:

mobile :

address:

## My contact details

Rachel Higdon,

[rhigdon@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:rhigdon@dmu.ac.uk), telephone 0116 257 7761

### **My Research Supervisor's contact details**

Mary Tyler by e-mail [mtyler@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mtyler@dmu.ac.uk)

or by post at De Montfort University, Hawthorn Building, The Gateway,  
Leicester  
LE1 9BH

## **Creative Degree Programmes**

### **Interview Questions – semi-structured framework**

#### **Entry student questions**

- 1. You have just started at DMU and it is early days, what is your understanding of what graduates do when they leave?  
probing: if you are not sure, what are some of the possibilities for work after your degree?**
- 2. Tell me your story about where you have come from and how you came to be at DMU studying your course?**
- 3. Who or what has influenced you or helped you to get to this point?– how?**
- 4. At this point in time, what do you think you want to do when you leave this course?**
- 5. What do you think you need to have to get that kind of work  
Emphasis: work being paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time?**
- 6. What experiences do you think you will have within your degree that will help you to work when you graduate?  
Probing: part of the course? Outside the course? In your own time? Volunteering?**
- 7. Do you expect to be part of any work experience?  
Probing: What kind of experience? How will work experience will be useful to you?**
- 8. When you graduate would you have changed in any way - how?**
- 9. What kind of things may get in your way in terms of obtaining work when you graduate?**
- 10. Was employability talked about at school/college? - What do you understand it to mean?**
- 11. Final questions to gain specific information if needed: what did you study before you came here, where did you study, why did you choose a degree, What do you understand employability to mean? What is the full title of your degree?**

## **Final students Questions**

- 1. What is your understanding of what graduates do when they leave your degree?  
Probing: if you are not sure, what are some of the possibilities for work after your degree?**
- 2. Tell me your story about how you came to be at DMU, doing this degree and what you would like to do when you leave?  
Probing: what kind of things do you think you would like to do? What do others do?**
- 3. What do you need, to get this kind of work?**
- 4. What in your recent experience within and beyond DMU, has helped to prepare you most for work?**
- 5. How could your degree and time at university have been developed to prepare you for work?**
- 6. What kind of things may get in the way of your aspirations?**
- 7. Have you had any experience that you see as especially relevant to future work? - How has it been useful?  
Probing- volunteered? Part-time work? Projects outside DMU?  
  
How do you obtain work experience?**
- 8. Who has influenced you or helped you most during your time at university?**
- 9. What will you need to help you achieve your graduate aspirations?**
- 10. Who will you need to help you achieve your graduate aspirations?**
- 11. How have you changed/developed since you began your degree?**
- 12. How do you see yourself in future, after graduation?  
Background questions**
- 13. Where do your aspirations come from?**
- 14. How would you describe yourself?**
- 15. Why did you choose to do your degree?**
- 16. Was employability talked about before you came to university? –  
What is your current understanding of what this means?**

**Rachel Higdon 2012**