

Chapter 10

Social class and Art & Design education

A significant omission

Adrian Burgess and Lesley Burgess

In this chapter we investigate the way ‘classed’ practices permeate art and design education. We do so by drawing on the educational trajectory and recent experiences of PGCE Art & Design (A&D) students at the Institute of Education (IOE), University College London (UCL), exploring the ways in which ‘classism’ may be unwittingly reproduced across the different ‘fields’ of art education. Drawing on Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’ (Bourdieu 1987: 50) primarily those of ‘habitus’, by which he means: ‘a complex schema of psychological and embodied social dispositions which shape relational ways of being’ (Mallman 2019: 25) and the more commonly used term ‘capital’, we chart the way the social trajectory of art educators involves the movement through a path of inter-relating fields. These fields exert specific influences and pose differing challenges and opportunities for student-teachers depending upon their social class background. We are at the same time seeking to interrogate how the student-teachers’ ‘habitus’ is moulded by their specific social trajectories and what implications this may have for their practices as teachers.

The chapter is divided into three sections: the first provides the wider context in both art and education, exploring contemporary sociological approaches to thinking about class and briefly outlining our methodology; the second section focuses on A&D PGCE students’ complex and contradictory self-understandings in relation to class and their reflections on its impact on their educational journey. The final section discusses implications for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and proffers ways in which art and design educators might be encouraged to refuse conformity, challenge unspoken ‘classism’ and work towards cultural democracy.

Introduction: de-classification – the wider context

In many discussions about art, class is often the elephant in the room.
(Grayson Perry 2006)

Teachers are constantly encouraged to consider the significance of race, gender, Special Educational Needs and disability for an inclusive learning environment

and, more recently, heteronormativity and mental health; class is invariably omitted in the art curriculum (Sweeney 2017). This omission is not limited to A&D education, nor to education per se. The Equality Act (UK Government 2010) lists nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief and sex/sexual orientation. All public sector organisations are obliged to take steps to prevent discriminatory employment practices based on any of these grounds (see Bradley 2016). Class is notably absent: as a result class has no protection in law. However, while twenty countries in the EU have protection for socio-economic status, Britain has none.

We are not suggesting that social class is overlooked in education – hundreds of articles are written about it each year. Google can locate 3,580,000,000 references to *education and social class* in just 0.51 seconds and 1,740,000,000 results in 0.47 seconds if you add ‘English’ to the search. There are well-rehearsed narratives about the ‘underachievement’ of young people from ‘disadvantaged backgrounds’ and measures such as the ‘pupil premium’, introduced in 2011, were designed to provide additional resources to support the education of these young people. However, in much political discourse and in many official reports, a lack of ‘aspiration’, along with poor behaviour, is foregrounded as the explanation for the low attainment of many working-class young people (Menzies 2013; Crenna-Jennings 2018). This ‘deficit model’ of underachievement, with its emphasis on the supposed individual and/or cultural failings of those who are failed by the education system (Reay 2017) dovetails with the pervasive ‘ideological discourse’ of ‘neoliberal meritocracy’ (Littler 2018: 10), which purports that the education system offers all students the opportunity for ‘upward mobility’. That is, if an individual works hard and stays out of trouble they will be rewarded regardless of their class background (race or gender). As such the UK’s ‘meritocratic’ education system makes the resultant inequalities appear equitable. Yet, as Bourdieu (1984) points out, the idea that success in education is the result of innate ability and hard work, is a result of the misrecognition of the cause and effect of class.

That such a view could be so pervasive is ironic given that the UK has some of the most socially segregated schools and universities in the developed world. For example, despite the relentless rhetoric about ‘widening participation’, research conducted for the Sutton Trust in 2013 found that middle-class students were three times more likely to go to elite universities than working class students with the same grades (cited in Reay 2017: 118). The same belief in meritocracy can be found across all phases of art education (Hatton 2015; 2019) and permeates the art industries:

One interesting finding from the 2018 Panic! report was how many people in the arts still believe very strongly in meritocracy. They don’t see their own privilege. Fail to realise that you do not succeed just through merit, you do it through all those invisible supports.

(Lomax 2019: np.)

This meritocratic, aspirational agenda, championed by both New Labour and Coalition/Conservative governments, has been widely challenged (e.g. Carter-Wall 2012; Exley 2019; Littler 2018; Lawler and Payne 2018) for failing to acknowledge the role of unequal distributions of material and symbolic resources; in Bourdieu's (1986) terms, of different forms of capital: economic-cultural-social. It also fails to recognise the way 'classism', or what Bourdieu calls 'class racism' (Swartz 1997: 169), permeates society. As Owen Jones (2016) explains:

'Aspiration' has been redefined to mean individual self-enrichment: to scramble up the social ladder and become middle class. Social problems like poverty and unemployment were once understood as injustices that sprang from flaws within capitalism which, at the very least, had to be addressed. Yet today they have become understood as the consequences of personal behaviour, individual defects and even choice.

(p. 10)

Nonetheless, despite its critics, the fostering of individual aspiration remains high on the agenda for many schools and colleges seduced by the ideology of meritocracy and preoccupied with their performance in league tables. Although this is perhaps most noticeable in the STEM subjects, it permeates the whole curriculum, finding its way into A&D (NASUWT 2015). Visits to PGCE A&D students on placements in schools across London provide worrying evidence that this is increasingly the case, especially in Academies, where, all too often, A&D teachers resist creative risk-taking and 'disobedient pedagogies' which embrace a 'non-compliance that opens up new ways of thinking and acting' (Atkinson 2018: 195). Instead they resort to concentrating on formal elements and self-expression, reproducing tried and tested exemplars to ensure high grades; too often ignoring the experiences and subjectivity of the learner and the relational nature of learning.

We believe it is important to restate that the English education system, including the A&D curriculum, is predicated on middle-class cultural values dismissing or devaluing cultures which sit outside its remit.

For most academic researchers and teachers today, 'working class culture' is a vacuous concept devoid of positive significance, creative capacity or distinct identity. ... Cultural expressions emerging from less affluent groups ... remain compatible with bourgeois hegemony, patriarchy and white privilege as long as they can be treated as either incorporable into a legitimated 'high culture', derivative from it as lower forms, or isolable in small enclaves

(Livingstone 1997: np.)

The argument about whose culture should be promoted in educational institutions has been raging for some time (see Willis 1990a; Reay 2004; Silva 2008). Ofsted's recent announcement of its plan to inspect 'Cultural Capital' in school – defined as 'the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens,

introducing them to the best that has been thought and said' (Artis 2019) – raises concerns that by refocusing on a traditional canon young people's access to the full breadth of visual and material culture is restricted (Cultural Learning Alliance 2019, Mansell 2019). This has implications both for students' developing attitudes and values, and their sense of belonging or alienation.

These debates are not restricted to education but permeate the whole artistic field. In a searing critique of Arts Council England's (ACE) 10-year strategy for the arts (2020), Wright et al. (2020) insist that its 'vague generalisations and arcane art-speak about "cultural communities", "a creative and cultural country", "ambition and quality" ... don't connect with most people ... what ACE understands by culture remains the relatively exclusive reserve of a minority' (p. 1). They further claim that ACE's strategy continues to uphold a system 'totally ensnared in a byzantine maze of targets, metrics, monitoring and evaluations' (p. 3), and worry that it will do nothing to prevent arts education 'disappearing from the curriculum for a rising generation of young people' (p. 5). Their response was to develop *ACE in a hole?: An alternative cultural strategy for England* (2020), which focuses instead on challenging injustice, being accountable to a wider demographic, adopting the role of an advocate for the arts – not just an auditor; encouraging risk-taking and experimentation and thereby avoiding shoring up 'dead culture'.

Publicly funded museums and galleries, important resources for teaching the critical and contextual component of the A&D curriculum in schools, can be seen as primarily catering to the middle-classes, despite the fact that for the Victorians the original philanthropic ambition was to open their doors to the poor and working classes (see Duncan 1995). The Warwick Commission (2015) identifies that they are still 'predominantly accessed by an unnecessarily narrow social, economic, ethnic and educated demographic that is not fully representative of the UK's population' (p. 32). Such assessments are reiterated even more forcefully by groups such as *Museums as Muck*, a Facebook group for people from working-class backgrounds who work in museums (Lawther 2018); parodied by artists such as Andrea Frazer and Hans Haacke; debated by Selwood (2018); Anna Cutler (2013) and reinforced by Sandell and Nightingale (2012) who claim that attempts to make museums more inclusive have slowed down or even reversed.

Rather than being at the vanguard of radical and subversive practices, as it often perceives itself, the art world is, according to Kenning and Kern (2013):

... at the vanguard of global capitalism and elite power – providing opportunities to store, accumulate and exhibit extreme personal wealth and to promote corporate and class power via sponsorship deals and philanthropic relations. The cultural prestige attached to contemporary art can also be used to reproduce hierarchies and exclusive networks, instil a neoliberal culture of competitive advantage, exploit unpaid or poorly paid labour, and contribute to landholder profit through culture-led gentrification

(p. 2).

Kenning (2019) draws attention to the fact that being an artist is a precarious occupation, with ability to succeed ‘severely skewed by pre-existent personal connections and behavioural knowledge, as well as access to financial support’ (p. 3). He points out that those who don’t make it, and most don’t, become what Sholette (2011) calls artistic ‘dark matter’ – that ‘obscure mass of “failed” artists’ (ibid.). Kenning points out that art college students are advised to consider a range of alternatives such as commercial work in the art industries, becoming technicians for successful artists, and, of course, art teaching. Taylor and O’Brien (2017), researching the structural inequalities in the creative industries, conclude: ‘for working class people “getting on” in the sector is as difficult as “getting in.”’ (p. 28).

It is against this background that our research with PGCE students should be considered.

Class – a slippery term

Class is obviously a difficult word, both in its range of meanings and its complexity in that particular meaning where it describes a social division.

(Williams 1976: 60)

Class has always been a difficult or slippery term: it is an ‘essentially contested concept’ (Bradley 2016: 69) where competing and contradictory definitions arise from radically different assumptions about the nature of society and social divisions. When Raymond Williams wrote the quotation above in the mid-1970s, Trade Union membership was approaching its all-time high of 12 million members – approximately 50% of the UK workforce (Tily 2018). It was prior to the decimation of the UK’s manufacturing industries and associated class-based communities under the Thatcher governments in the 1980s; the purported blurring of *distinctions* between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture (Bennett et al. 2009; Willis 1990b); and the rise to prominence of identity politics focusing on race, gender and sexuality largely to the exclusion of class (Bradley 2016; Crompton 2008; Sayer 2005). These, along with the growing influence of postmodernism and poststructuralism in the artworld and the academy – schools of thought that have had little time for or interest in class (Sayer 2005) – have made class an even more difficult and contested term today.

In 2002, the German sociologist Ulrich Beck famously stated that class had become a ‘Zombie Category’. He claimed that new forms of employment and educational opportunity had ‘liberated’ individuals from traditional roles and constraints, with society becoming ‘individualised’ and defined by a ‘reflexivity’ that made the ‘old’ class-based identities and patterns of life redundant (see Reay 2006: 288; Crompton 2008: 22). Summing up these changes, Edmunds and Turner (2002) claim that, ‘There is a sense in which the idiom of class has been replaced by a sense of fragility and fragmentation of identity in society’ (p. 12).

However, such claims, which always lacked empirical verification, have been strongly rebutted by a range of contemporary scholars, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative studies across empirical fields, and often drawing inspiration from Bourdieu's conceptual toolkit (McKenzie 2015; Reay 2006; Savage 2000; Skeggs 1997; 2004; Thatcher et al. 2016). For Bourdieu, class is not simply about a position in the social relations of production, but a multidimensional and relational concept that includes not just unequal distributions of wealth, 'economic capital', but also 'cultural' and 'social' capitals, the 'structuring' of these various capitals (e.g. whether a particular social actor or class fraction is relatively richer in 'cultural capital' or 'economic capital'), and 'trajectory' – where someone has come from, the fields they operate in and whether they are in the process of accumulating, dissipating and/or transforming the structure of their capitals (Bourdieu 1986). There is no space here to do justice to Bourdieu's complex understanding of class, which cannot be separated from his wider sociological project (Atkinson 2015; Swartz 1997), however, we suggest that it may be useful to think of 'capital' in Bourdieu's terminology as power. So, for example, when we say some group has a lot of 'cultural capital' it translates as having a lot of 'cultural power' – their tastes, preferences, mannerisms, qualifications, knowledge of certain practices are valued and give them both prestige (in certain fields) and access to opportunities that other less 'sanctified' ways of being, acting and knowing do not.

When it came to defining class, Bourdieu had little interest in constructing deductive lists of classes and class fractions, but rather worked inductively to explore how patterns of behaviour, tastes, and preferences corresponded to positions in social space. He explored how the dominant classes (those rich in capital) ensured the reproduction of their domination and imposed their visions (and divisions) on the social world, famously describing the key role education played in these processes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Moreover, for Bourdieu (1987), classes and class fractions were never static and rarely clearly defined, as he stated, 'in the reality of the social world, there are no more clear-cut boundaries, no more absolute breaks, than there are in the natural world', (p. 13). He suggests that the boundaries between classes are 'similar ... to the boundaries of a cloud or a forest ... a flame whose edges are in constant movement, oscillating around a line or surface' (ibid.).

Drawing on Bourdieu, the researchers mentioned above – among others – have engaged in what Reay (2006) describes as 'a reworking of class analysis', leading to a new approach which she claims is 'subtler and more nuanced than its predecessors ... but equally powerful' (p. 289). Reay (2017) claims that this approach demonstrates how class can shape people's lives without their active identification with it; how 'class is always lived on both a conscious and unconscious level' (p. 155). She explains how this has generated new insights that expose 'the unacknowledged normality of the middle classes ... and its corollary, the equally unacknowledged pathologisation and diminishing of the working class' (2006: 289). This approach has allowed us to understand how, far from negating the import of class, the aforementioned fragility and fragmentation of identity and

the processes of ‘individualisation’ take on particularly *classed* forms – that is how class works *through* the construction of new forms of subjectivity, often unacknowledged and implicit, but no less powerful for that (Savage 2000). It is within this ‘new’ or ‘cultural’ approach to class that we have attempted to position our research.

The art ‘teaching-class’

Although teaching has traditionally been regarded as a ‘middle-class profession’, a significant number of A&D teachers come from working-class backgrounds. Yet, Maguire (2005) points out that little work has been done to explore the way classed practices interpolate the lives and identities of teachers. She claims that there has been a ‘sidelining of the complexities and struggles involved for the teacher’ (p. 428). This is especially true for the student teacher, who is in a constant reflexive struggle to respond to unfamiliar circumstances as they move between different educational institutions. Importantly, Maguire reminds us that ‘not only can schools be excluding places for working class pupils. They can also be excluding for working class teachers’ (p.440.).

It is now fifteen years since Maguire made these observations and although research has been carried out to identify the impact of social class on teaching *per se*, and within the context of ITE (Dunne and Gazeley 2008), it has overwhelmingly focused on the social class of students, and what little research there has been on teachers’ social class (e.g. Hoadley and Ensor 2009; Lewis 2017) has tended to focus on how their class background influences their classroom practice rather than their more general experience of being or becoming teachers. Moreover, we have not been able to find *any* extant research that explores the impact of social class on the formation of A&D teachers.

Such research becomes much more pressing when we consider that the path into teaching A&D has become progressively more expensive in the years since Maguire’s study, and hence fraught with risk. With the removal of maintenance grants for most students in 1999, and all students in 2015; the introduction of tuition fees in 1998, their tripling to £3,000 in 2004 and again to £9,000 in 2010 for undergraduate degrees, along with the removal of training grants for A&D PGCE students and the introduction of course fees in 2013; the cost of what was once a state-funded transition into a public service profession has now been passed on to the student teacher. This has made it increasingly difficult for all students, but especially those from less affluent backgrounds, to follow a PGCE in A&D. It is, surely, no coincidence that the demographic of the course has changed in the ten years that we have been exploring this issue. In 2010 29.4% of the cohort following the A&D PGCE at IOE, UCL self-identified as working-class, while this year, 2019/20, the figure stands at 14.7%. From September 2020 the Department for Education have finally agreed that PGCE A&D students should be awarded a £9,000 bursary – it will be interesting to note whether this changes the demographic of the course.

Methodology

We conducted six focus groups/group discussions, and twelve one-on-one interviews with PGCE A&D students, across three cohorts of students, between 2010 and 2019. We intended to identify how participants think social class has impacted on their identity, attitudes and values throughout their time in education from home-life, through school, undergraduate education and as postgraduates in ITE. All members of each of the three cohorts were invited to participate and the focus groups were self-selecting and made up of student-teachers from a range of class backgrounds. The one-on-one interviews were made up of volunteers from the original focus groups.

The focus groups were very loosely structured. We started by inviting each participant to explain their relationship to social class, to define how they perceived themselves in terms of class and why. No *a priori* definitions of social class were provided, although participants were asked to consider their understanding of the term in advance of the focus groups. They were then invited to reflect on and share how class had influenced their personal trajectory through its different educational phases, providing an opportunity to compare and contrast their experiences with their peers. These personal narratives alerted them to the contradictions and complexities informing class identities and the role of art education in (mis)recognising and/or (re)producing inequalities. Bourdieu's understanding of 'social maieutics' is useful here – the significance of making the unconscious conscious – 'to make manifest covert tensions in our social relations' (Grenfell et al. 1998: 51). While our findings reveal the uncertainties and insecurities that most student teachers feel about class, its impact was clearly much more visceral, even humiliating, for working-class students.

Finally, while we readily recognise the significance of intersectionality (see Crenshaw 1989; Hatton 2019) and acknowledge that class is always inextricably gendered and 'raced' and intersects in complex ways with other forms of (dis)advantage (Bradley 2016), given the inherent complexity of all of these subjects and necessary limitations on space, our focus in this chapter remains exclusively on the classed nature of student-teachers' experience.

Complex and contradictory self-understandings in relation to class

When defining their class, PGCE A&D students revealed how their transitions through different fields resulted in complex, competing subjectivities providing insights into how conflicted many were about their class identity. Lahire (2011) points out that 'Sometimes contradictory socializing experiences, can in/cohabit the same body' (p. 186), especially for 'upwardly mobile' people who can find themselves navigating a complex and conflicted classed narrative.

During the focus groups, we introduced the term 'class-straddler' – to describe those who exist in both working-class and middle-class worlds and often feel as though they belong in neither (Lubrano 2004; hooks 2000). Participants from working-class backgrounds identified the term as a useful shorthand for their current

class position. For example, Carley and Tania explained how ‘going into the role of teacher’ represented a shift, one they were not altogether comfortable with:

CARLEY: I come from a working-class background but I would say now that I am lower middle-class cos my parents moved out to the suburbs and I had an education therefore going through college and going into the role of teacher I thought, I’ve gone into that kinda middle-class position despite my family’s background, *but I don’t fully belong there*. I guess I’m what you call a class-straddler.

Tania’s comments are perhaps the most telling; she gave a list of reasons (material/economic) why she might consider herself working class, before quoting her mother:

TANIA: I talked to my mum about what class I was before the focus group –because I couldn’t decide whether I was working-class or middle-class cos I don’t have any savings and don’t have a mortgage, don’t own anything and saved for this course by waitressing and cleaning so must really be working-class. But my mum said ‘no you’re not working-class you’re middle class because it’s your own fault if your waitressing cos we gave you every opportunity and as much support as we could so you could go to art college’ –which is true although I worked my way through college and lived with them cos they didn’t throw me out. *She said that ‘it’s your aspirations not your money that make you middle class – the drive to improve and re-educate yourself and keep learning’*. So I guess *if that’s the criteria* I’d say I’m middle class *but that’s not what I feel, I’d be happy to be called working class*.

Drawing on Bourdieu, Mallman (2019) points out that families don’t just pass on advantages or disadvantages of economic capital to their children, they also pass on *habitus* – ‘a complex schema of psychological and embodied social dispositions which shape relational ways of being’ (p. 25). Bourdieu (2002) describes how when an individual shifts into ‘field(s)’ at odds with their earlier habitus it creates a ‘dialectical confrontation’, which results in a *habitus-clivé* (p. 31). Sam Freidman (2016: 130) explains that when a person experiences *habitus-clivé*, or cleft habitus, due to a significant change in their ‘conditions of existence’, this often generates a sense of dislocation and internal division and divided loyalties. This can take varied forms. Lizzie articulates a strong attachment to her original habitus, with little apparent divided loyalty, yet articulates a distinct unease about fitting into a middle-class (teaching) environment:

LIZZIE: I’m very working class, lived on a council estate. I feel uncomfortable, even now, in a middle-class environment. Didn’t go to galleries, never talked about art at home. My dad didn’t finish school and my mum went to secretarial college... me and my sister were the first to go to university but *I’m still*

working class, without question, I'm still a part of my WC family, that's where I feel most comfortable... it's where I belong and feel I can relax and be myself.

Friedman (2016) explains how the shift from one field to another, when there is a mismatch between primary habitus and the habitus of the new field, can generate an inertia or *hysteresis* – an enduring attachment to a previous state which slows down or inhibits adaptation to a new one. In contrast, for middle-class student-teachers such as Hermione, any initial feelings of guilt experienced towards her privileged background were soon dismissed, any dislocation was little more than transitory:

HERMIONE: Very middle-class and very privileged, lucky to have had the upbringing I had... There have definitely been times in my life where I have wanted to cover up where I came from. I don't give a shit now... I grew up in an amazing house, lots of art and had all that lovely privilege and it made me feel embarrassed but now I think 'well fuck it I don't care. Isn't it who I am not where I come from that matters?'

Student-teachers like Hermione have a habitus imbued with the protection of dominant capitals (economic, cultural and social) which allow them to adapt to the artistic field and fields of education 'like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water, and takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). By contrast many working-class students-teachers face a conundrum as they are expected to reproduce a culture with which they have no instinctive investment (*illusio*), one very different to the family culture which shaped their primary habitus. This can create a challenging relationship to the processes of education.

School Art – relegated to the third bucket!

It is no coincidence that in 2018 the number of A&D teachers had dropped by 2,100 (15%) from its 2011 level of 13,900 (DfE 2019). A&D in the school curriculum has lost some of its status over the last decade. Like other arts subjects it has been pushed to the periphery of the curriculum, excluded from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), first introduced in 2010. Along with numerous ripostes from educationalists, over one hundred artists including Rachel Whiteread, Jeremy Deller, Lubaina Himid and Yinka Shonibare signed a letter published by *The Guardian* on 8th May 2018 (Ackroyd et al. 2018) expressing their 'grave concern about the exclusion of arts and creative subjects' from the EBacc, insisting 'Every child should have equal access to the benefits that the arts and culture bring, not just a privileged few.'

In a similar way to EBacc, Progress 8 (DfE 2019) can be seen to marginalise A&D. This accountability initiative, introduced in 2016, measures pupils' progress from 11–16 in eight subjects in order to inform schools' performance tables. A&D is relegated to Progress 8's third 'Bucket' along with Drama and Music (Maths and English are in 'Bucket 1', other EBacc subjects make up 'Bucket 2'), and

results from ‘third Bucket’ subjects are not included in performance tables. Amanda Spielman, Ofsted’s chief inspector, supports this emphasis on traditional academic subjects in secondary schools, claiming that they offer the best chance of progress to higher-level study (Jeffreys 2018: np.). She proposed that schools should ‘embrace creative subjects through extra activities such as plays, art clubs and orchestras’ (ibid.). Such a proposal fails to take into consideration the findings of the Social Mobility Commission research report *An Unequal Playing Field* (Donnelly et al. 2019), which points out that young people from low-income families are three times less likely than wealthier peers to engage in extra-curricular activities – they therefore risk being further excluded from the arts and other ‘creative subjects’.

The negative effect of these ‘developments’ is that A&D is rarely valued by pupils, parents or by many senior teachers in state schools, where it is seen as a ‘soft’ option – a release from the rigours of ‘real’ academic study, offering limited future rewards. It became clear in the interviews with participants that they were aware of the way A&D had been perceived in their secondary education. Participants from working-class families in particular spoke of the concerns voiced by their parents at the prospect of them focussing on A&D at examination and tertiary level.

ASHLEY: I was discouraged from following art by both my working class parents and my form teacher, my mum said I’d never get a decent job and my form tutor said I’d be wasting my intelligence.

While working-class parents dismissed A&D as a ‘soft’ and precarious option, middle-class parents were more accepting:

KATHERINE: My MC parents saw art as a valid option – they would prefer Doctor but Art was OK... cultural... acceptable, respectable enough. My school were ambivalent but supported my parents’ perceptions.

In this climate A&D can be seen as a ‘luxury subject’ which only those with already high accumulations of capital can indulge in. With this evidence we can begin to perceive the multiple, interlocking barriers to working-class participation in the arts – and the chance of working-class young people pursuing a career in the arts – including art teaching. The protection of capitals referred to earlier is missing. Working-class students lacking dominant cultural capital tend to feel like a ‘fish out of water’ in the context of arts, galleries and museums. Similarly they lack the social capital derived from networks of families and friends in the arts. Finally, they often lack the familial economic capital to support them through what in many cases involves five years of post-school education and training: foundation-year, undergraduate degree, PGCE – where they have been deprived of the bursaries afforded STEM subjects.

Art College

When I was a student at art college it was full of kids from all kinds of backgrounds, mainly misfits and outsiders. That is exactly why they were at art college. Art has become a respectable career path now, another professional option for the young and affluent. But what do all the wrong people do now? Where do they go – the misfits and the outsiders? If you can't do something meaningful through art because you can't afford to go to art college or even rent a studio, what happens to you?

(Gary Hume 2014)

It could be argued that art college is a place where students are encouraged to be subversive, to look for alternatives, to disrupt normative attitudes and values; a place where being different and going against the grain are valorised and rewarded. Certainly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s art college was seen as a viable and welcoming alternative to university by working class students (Le Grice 2011; Beck and Cornford 2012; Banks and Oakley 2016). More recently, as our findings suggest, rather than being inclusive, institutions welcoming students from all walks of life (as long as they can prove their artistic potential), often create in working-class students feelings of inadequacy, discomfort and marginalisation.

A damning report *Art for the Few* (2011) claimed that 'the art and design academy has a deeply embedded, institutionalised class and ethnically biased notion of a highly idealised student against whom they measure applicants' (Burke and McManus 2011: 669). It identified how, at interview, tutors routinely selected students from middle-class backgrounds in preference to those from working class families even though they claimed to be committed to widening participation. Although it is now nearly a decade since Burke and McManus released their findings, this situation has been seen little change (see: Spohrer 2015; Banks and Oakley 2016; Hatton 2019).

The claim that the prestigious 'old' universities don't recruit students from underprivileged groups is well rehearsed. For example, Reay et al. (2010) in their research into the relationship between social class and choice of university confirm that class is the main predictor of 'who goes where'. However, it is more surprising that art colleges now seem to be equally dismissive of – or dismissed by – students from working-class backgrounds.

PGCE students reported that they were only too aware that there were 'elite' art colleges too – colleges that were 'not for the likes of me'. As Gemma below explains:

GEMMA: I got an interview at [prestigious art college] and I thought I'm not gonna go, I'd got it in my head that I'm not gonna like art schools. I'm not gonna like that sort of cliquy setup I didn't think I'd fit into that... cos of my background... I didn't know anybody like that so I thought 'how on earth am

I gonna be able to be in this... I'd be the one with no friends, so I thought I'd be better off applying to a local university art course, I think I feel more comfortable going there – it just felt a bit more my level.

She was not alone. In our study a significant proportion of working-class students claimed they had ruled out applying to more prestigious institutions, preferring places where they thought they would be more comfortable:

MAI: I wouldn't have been comfortable going to a university that was more prestigious, I would feel really, really out of place with people from a posh background with lots of money – didn't want it.

McManus (2006) found that potential art students from schools in disadvantaged areas were put off applying to colleges such as USAD (University School of Art and Design) because they had been told by teachers and university staff that competition for places was fierce and academic standards were very high. McManus claims that even the widening participation tutors were reiterating this mantra to help students avoid disappointment (p. 75). Like the students in our research cohort they had picked up the clear message that the 'elite' USAD was 'not for the likes of us.'

While McManus' research focused exclusively on USAD (London), it is evident from focus group responses that the *distinction* between prestigious, predominantly middle-class institutions and devalued and stigmatised, often 'new', universities applied across the country, and is as applicable to the arts as it is to traditional university subjects – moreover, students were in little doubt of the status of their institutions and how this reflected on them:

JASMIN: The town I was in had two unis. I went to ex-poly and the other was a redbrick university. We called them the 'v necks' and they called us the 'dim-stitute' for WC although we did have a yacht design course which was filled with yar yar boys who were being financed by their parents to do a course, so the poshest of the posh had to hang out with the 'scummers'.

Will Atkinson (2015) observes how in the context of higher levels of participation by all young people in Higher Education 'class differences have become retranslated into ... differences between institutions and subject areas ... with working class young people gravitating towards local, vocation-centred, newer and often devalued universities on the basis of a sense of "fit" with their habitus while the capital-rich feel more "at home" in the older, more academic, prestigious universities' (p. 139). It appears that 'art college' is no exception and many may not be the viable and welcoming alternatives that they once were.

Even for those working-class students who did make it into art college, Donszelmann (2015) questions whether art college today is still a place where:

... all students have confidence that their own experiential background and cultural perspectives hold an equivalent potential to contribute in some way to the forming of their learning and eventually their professional contexts? Or do some students find themselves in a position of feeling that dimensions of their own specific experience have to be suppressed as ‘not relevant’ and outside the sphere of discussion, whereas other students may be privileged to feel no such inhibition?

(p. 18)

Such concerns were sadly all too often realised, in various ways, by the working-class participants in our research:

NADIA: I was thrown when I went to Art School – could see I didn’t fit in, most students were economically better off than me,... it was clear they were supported while I was working to pay my rent. They immediately associated their background with success – they talked with confidence about their work even when it was crap... they were getting away with it, you could see that they would be doing this for the rest of their life.

While it is clear that students like Nadia lacked a sense of belonging, and were acutely aware of being overlooked, lacking the confidence to challenge this *in situ*, their sense of injustice is tangible. For other working-class A&D students their expectations of not fitting in, their intuition that they would be like ‘fish out of water’ led them to attempt to ‘pass’ as middle-class by adopting what they perceived to be middle-class dress and speech codes. For example, Tania, who had been mocked at secondary school for not having the ‘right’ bag or shoes, recounts how:

TANIA: When I was at art college I was afraid that people would not want to be friends if they knew where I came from. So I went out and brought a new Barbour coat and new Doc Martins cos I thought that’s was what I’d seen art students wearing who wanted to look middle class -like everyone else – [I] looked really stupid when I turned up on the first day – cos I realised you could tell I was trying too hard – all brand new clothes uncomfortable and not like the others who were comfortable in theirs I couldn’t carry it off... they even shopped in charity shops, which I’d never have done.

While Gemma, by contrast, thought her casual clothes would help her fit in, but was equally destined for disappointment:

GEMMA: I thought everyone will be casual – you know a bit bohemian-trendy but not posh... so I turned up wearing jeans and a Ghostbusters T-shirt and the others were wearing designer jeans and Hollister T-shirts – lots of

brands you could really tell the difference... I could see them looking at me, I know what they were thinking...

As Skeggs (2012) explains it is not just a question of what is worn but how it's worn, with working-class students lacking the ability to 'embody the disposition' required (p. 270). This reinforces the assumption that one group has the 'right' code and the other needs to learn it.

Like dress, language and the embodied performance of speech acts – accent, vocabulary, gesture can be a clear marker of class and the 'normality of the middle-classes ... and its corollary, the ... pathologisation and diminishing of the working-class' (Reay et al. 2010: 6). It is the shifts between fields – family-school-art college-university – that trigger consciousness and subsequent self-consciousness of spoken language.

LIZZIE: People think because I have a particular accent... I'm a mixture of East London and Essex – that I'm stupid. I think the phrases I use and the way I express myself with my hands OR maybe my facial expression made me different at Art school... I was different to them... I've noticed that posh people aren't direct in what they say, they don't mean what they say, so if you are direct or blunt like me then you are callous, crude – rude –

MAYA: Art school much more middle class... I did when speaking – have to correct myself... main thing was use of language... very aware of... careful not to drop my 't's. Sometimes I used the wrong word or pronounced it wrongly. That was a give-away!

Other working-class students who didn't attempt to 'pass' for middle-class were soon made aware of their devalued status in the eyes of their middle-class peers:

LIZZIE: At art school they all wear the same thing – like Clarke's desert boots and then there was me strolling in with my Nike trainers and my pink puffer jacket and they all looked at me... laughed at me... I was always made to feel that I was an outsider, I wasn't their arty different, I was completely different... I wasn't conforming to what they believed to be arty and that questioned my status – within everything.

Although we cannot generalise from our small, exploratory sample to all working-class students who attend (elite) art colleges, a strong pattern can be identified: it is evident for many working-class students they were damned if they did, damned if they didn't! Far from a welcoming environment for 'kids from all kinds of backgrounds', art college was perceived to be, and experienced as, a middle-class environment in which 'class racism' was all too apparent.

This feeling of being a 'fish out of water', of not just being unaccepted, but unacceptable, led other students to actively dissimulate via the invention of a made-up middle-class backstory.

AISHA: I went to good art college and it was a culture shock even the posh location played a part in my thinking ‘I shouldn’t be here it’s not my area of London... When people asked what my parents did I never told the truth... I’d always lie and say my dad’s a GP and my mum’s a nurse – it just comes out so naturally [laughter]... In a way I lied to myself. Recently I have started being honest and saying ‘they are both disabled and both on income support’ rather than just lie... making things up... I think they could tell I didn’t have any money anyway.

CHLOE: ... like I lied about my parent’s background for nearly two and a half years cos I was so ashamed and just felt like horrible the whole time being there... um... some underlying feeling... you just didn’t want them to know... sensed they might not want to be friends with you?

A few of the PGCE students identified a significantly different response to their class identity, as Annie explains:

ANNIE: At my art college it almost worked in reverse, a reversed snobbery, where they’d say they are working class when they are not. Lots of people in art college were reluctant to say they were middle class, almost a guilt thing.

She goes on to describe how her working-classness gave her a certain status among her peers and tutors, although with an important caveat:

ANNIE: when we did our degree show we had to put a profile statement on the website – I remember writing in my profile ‘I am working class and grew up on an estate, I’ve got a funny accent – that makes me instantly cool in the art world’. Students they just loved it, the tutors wanted everyone to see it. I became instantly cool, in the art world being *working class was cool – edgy, but still not one of them!*

This has resonances with Grayson Perry’s suggestion that:

... there are definite advantages for an artist not coming from a middle-class background. Working-class credentials can be flaunted as a badge of authenticity, the exotically vulgar bit o’ rough who won’t swallow all that polite middle-class bulls***. The downside is that it took an awful lot of therapy to rid me of the feeling that someone was going to tap me on the shoulder and say: ‘Get out of here’.

(Perry 2006: np.)

As the final sentence suggests, the ‘advantages’ of being working class in the artworld come at a cost of an enduring feeling of never *really* belonging and the psychic work required to overcome this – even for the vanishingly small minority who achieve exulted positions in the field. Reay et al (2005) insists that it is important to

understand the emotional cost of being an outsider; identifying feelings of loss, guilt, fear, insecurity and shame can be experienced by working-class students in predominantly middle-class fields. Moreover, Skeggs (2004) draws attention to the power dynamics involved in positioning the working class as ‘cool-edgy’, highlighting:

[the] myriad of ways that the middle-class create value for themselves, not only through processes of distancing and denigration but also through appropriation and affect of attribution and how this can abdicate responsibility for the relationships in which one is repeatedly reproducing power and difference

(p. 118).

While the situation for working-class students at art college is evidently more complex than a case of straightforward exclusion and/or cultural denigration, our research suggests that the disadvantages significantly outweigh any advantages. Certain aspects of working-classness (or attributes the middle class project onto the working class), may be celebrated (or fetishised) at art college and in the artistic field more broadly. But this should not detract from the significant obstacles working-class students face in institutions that Hatton (2015) describes as ‘in danger of becoming finishing schools for white middle-class participants’ (p.8).

Social class: a missing link in Art education?

Development as a teacher has been conceptualised as a complex internal process that includes ‘struggling’ with questions such as ‘who am I as a teacher?’ and ‘what kind of teacher do I want to become?’

(van Rijswijk 2018)

Despite recognising the importance social class had played in their own education, when discussing the efficacy of introducing *issues* of social class into their teaching, a number of participants argued that this was untenable: ‘a step too far’ (Maya) even ‘a retrograde step ... it would only serve to reinforce stereotypes’ (Katherine). Student-teachers were quick to point out that they were committed to creating a ‘level playing field’ and differentiating to meet the needs of all pupils. However, some believed that foregrounding issues of social class might lead to ‘inclusion fatigue’, as Nadia asserts, ‘we can’t keep adding “isms” to art teaching – we already have sexism, racism, inter-culturalism to consider – it would be too tokenistic’.

Other responses were more open to engaging constructively with issues of social class and showed an awareness of the dereliction of a curriculum that fails to introduce a wide range of visual and material culture.

ELLIE: I think issues of social class are of huge importance to secondary art and design, in particular to the working class who are under-represented in the arts and in urban culture, apart from in contemporary music. I think teachers need to give thought to projects/themes which students from these groups could/would relate to. A key to this would be encouraging or nurturing art relating to the popular culture of these social groups and art which concerns their history, their built environment and their values, not just reinforcing the cultural capital of middle classes.

Many participants were keen to share their knowledge of working-class artists or artworks that referenced social class. They readily came up with a list of suitable candidates: Jeremy Deller, Tracey Emin, Mark Leckey, Sarah Lucas, Gillian Wearing, Mark Wallinger, Sean Edwards, Kehinde Wiley, Banksy, id-iom, Martin Parr, Grayson Perry, Gavin Turk, Andrea Fraser and Santiago Sierra, photographers LaToya Ruby Frazier, Tish Murtha, Richard Billingham, the collective 'Assemble' and the Edgware Road Project, SUPERFLEX, community collaborations fostered by the South London Gallery and the *Rogue Game* project developed by Can Altay in collaboration with Sophie Warren and Jonathan Mosley from Spike Island in Bristol. They also referred to texts on participation (Bishop 2006), socially engaged art (Helguera 2011; Thompson 2015, 2017 and relational aesthetics (Kester 2013), recognising how these texts advocated a move away from a focus on the individual artist towards art collectives and collaborative art production with diverse communities. A few had also read critiques of the social turn and understood that some of these practices were in fact less than democratic and all too easily subsumed into the fine art/high art lexicon (see Bishop 2012; Miller 2016; Bonham-Carter and Mann 2017). What is perhaps more worrying is that only a small minority of participants had been afforded the opportunity to introduce these artists into schemes of work in their teaching practice placements or develop collaborative practices with their students – although over half expressed the desire to develop their practice in this way.

Reproduction of inequality needs to be disrupted

The complexities of classism and class analysis can be overwhelming for art and design post-graduates embarking on a career in teaching. Questioning whose cultural capital is being promoted, adding 'class' to the list of 'isms' already in place and encouraging collaborative practices can be seen as steps in the right direction but perhaps doing little more than papering over the cracks. Throughout their first few years in education, and especially in initial teacher education, A&D teachers are bombarded with changing policies and new initiatives. This is coupled with media messages about the slow demise and devaluing of arts subjects in secondary schools (Jeffreys 2018; Busby 2018; Sharratt 2019). Beginning teachers are also constantly haunted by the pressures of performativity which can all too easily erode agency and any desire to become an agent of change (Ball et al. 2012).

The current neoliberal education system, with its emphasis on standards, assessment league tables and inspections has led to teaching to the test and prescribed pedagogies – which can be seen to privilege fixed knowledge, conformity and conservatism and lead to less-engaged learners (Brill et al. 2018). Ball et al. (2012) insists it is ‘impossible to over-estimate the significance of this ... complex of surveillance, monitoring, tracking, coordinating, reporting, targeting’ (p. 52). He also claims we must resist this ‘meddlesome’ state and find ways ‘to eradicate the damage done to the creativity, wellbeing, and enthusiasm of teachers ... by the regime of performativity’ (2018: 235). Subject to ever increasing centralised control and accountability measures covering every aspect of their work, teachers are left with little time/opportunity to reflect critically on how class continues to influence their personal and professional lives and impinge on teacher identity. Therefore it is essential that an understanding of the significance of social class is introduced and investigated during the ITE/PGCE year. Bernstein (1970) famously stated that ‘education cannot compensate for society’. However, Thompson (2015) points out that what teacher educators can’t do is just ignore these injustices, they have a responsibility to ensure that their student-teachers are cognisant of these issues and recognise how they influence attitudes and values, their own and others. Certainly, education cannot alone be held responsible for righting social injustices, but as Gorard (2010) argued, *contra* Bernstein, ‘Education can compensate for society – a bit’.

Accordingly, Sarah Amsler (2014) insists that we have to challenge the notion that education has become a ‘politically barren field of activity, into which no critical life can seep and upon which nothing critically creative or transformative can possibly grow’ (p.1). She recognises that this requires an engagement with ‘troublesome knowledge’ and ‘discomforting encounters’. She acknowledges that this engagement can be ‘genuinely uncomfortable’ and ‘understandably, it is resisted’. This prompts her to pose the question ‘What practices have the potential to make people more receptive to discomfort as a critical emotion, and to engage critically and generously in encounters with difference, ambiguity and unfamiliarity?’ Among other strategies, she identifies the need to find spaces for ‘multiple experiences to be in the same room at the same time’ (2014: 9). The IOE focus groups proved an important vehicle for engaging with such encounters. They reveal how social class has strongly influenced the participant student-teachers’ identities as they transition between the different ‘fields’ of education and that it continues to inform their choices, attitude and values and their feelings of self-worth as they enter the profession. The strategies and tactics working-class student-teachers have adopted to ameliorate discomforting encounters, including practices aimed at ‘passing’ as middle-class such as altering their accents, dressing differently, even inventing middle-class back-stories – all draw attention to the fact that the classless society remains a myth.

Transitions from one phase to another act as liminal states where identity is (re)shaped or reinforced; these transitions can be fluid and empowering for some but alienating and disempowering for others. ITE needs to provide a space to

make often implicit assumptions and anxieties around class explicit and to ensure that student-teachers have access to a language – an idiom of class – that enables them to name their experience, to think and work through issues of economic, social and cultural inequality with confidence. Caroline Stevenson’s 2015 research makes it clear that if university tutors have a better understanding of students’ journeys it may help them shape and diversify future curriculum. She suggests that class (along with race) ‘remains an under-theorized field of art education, in which art tutors require support while they work reflexively around such themes’ (cited in Hatton 2015: 9).

Kenning (2018) posits two options. The first is to provide A&D students (and student-teachers) with ‘a discursive space to actively address these social issues and so contribute to political debates and struggles within the context of their own present and future working lives and within a cultural tradition of critical art and radical art education’ (p. 15). The second is to maintain the status quo and allow professional practice *and professional training* to ‘reinforce and reproduce elite power and social and cultural inequality through the production of neoliberal subjects’ (ibid.).

A&D educators have a choice; but first they have to be introduced to the discourse and enter the debate. If this has not happened already in their art education then it needs to in ITE. We suggest the first step is to encourage student teachers to reflect upon, recognise and articulate how class has influenced their own (and their peers’) trajectories and to begin to recognise the subtle and socially divisive ways class distinctions are perpetuated. In doing so we can begin to see how hard-wired attitudes and values can be easily and unwittingly reproduced in approaches to teaching and attitudes displayed towards students. If this is a tall order for artists and art institutions, as Kenning (2018) suggests, then it will prove even harder for A&D teachers, especially beginning teachers. But if these layers of complexity are not raised and discussed during art college/university courses, then post-graduate teacher education has a responsibility to add them to its remit. It is important that student-teachers are given the opportunity in ITE to recognise how ‘class racism’ is perpetrated. Only with this recognition can they begin to revise not just the content of their lessons but their approach to pedagogy. What cannot be overlooked is the role of education as a cultural intermediary (in galleries and museums as well as in schools and universities), and the ways it frames ‘relevant’ or ‘acceptable’ cultural forms. Choices made by policy makers, schools and individual teachers are responsible for legitimating particular categories of culture – it is also possible for them to both challenge and change them too.

This all points towards the type of critical, politically aware approach to participatory pedagogy promoted by Henri Giroux (2013; 2018; 2019), an approach criticised in the past as too rhetorical, too abstract and failing to give concrete examples of how it plays out in practice (Ellsworth 1989; Breuing 2011). Giroux insists that there isn’t one simple solution, rather there are many – and these are developed in response to different cohorts and contexts. However, it is interesting

to note that a number of ‘concrete’ alternatives to the status quo are offered in this book: ‘Disobedient Pedagogies’ are promoted by Dennis Atkinson in Chapter 4; ‘Critical Citizenry’ by Hall and Thomson in Chapter 2; community based / socially engaged approaches by Morgan Tipping in Chapter 3 and Anton Franks in Chapter 12. In their different ways they can all be seen to promote a critical, participatory pedagogy, one in which students and teachers see knowledge as personally meaningful, and pupils as active agents engaged in ‘dialogic learning manifested in multiple perspectives and the sharing of ideas’ (Brown and Renshaw 2006: 248). All give some consideration to the role art and design can play in promoting social justice and holding a mirror to practices which are socially exclusive. We see it as important to engage with participatory and critical pedagogies to change the sort of Art education that gets taught – in the future. It is also important to understand the challenges faced, and the struggles engaged in by (beginning) teachers. While there is a vast literature on students’ experience of education and teachers’ lesson content and pedagogy, to date there has been little attention on teachers, as people themselves.

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