Inclusive Practices, Inclusive Pedagogies

Learning from Widening Participation Research in Art and Design Higher Education

Edited by Dipti Bhagat and Peter O'Neill

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Contents

General Introduction
from Professor John Last

This volume was initiated in 2008 as a co-commission between Arts Council England, (ACE) the Art Design and Media Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy (ADM-HEA) the National Arts Learning Network (NALN, now a part of ukadia, the UK Art and Design Institutions' Association) and the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD). Each of these bodies have a strong core commitment not only to the arts and to Arts and Design education but also to widening access and participation to these subjects through their study at FE, undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Initial meetings between the four bodies identified the value in bringing together and celebrating a significant range of projects and research aimed at improving access and widening participation which deserved to be shared with the subject community in the arts and with the HE sector more widely. It also identified some areas that merited further research, driven by a collective awareness that there remained much work still to be done, and that notwithstanding some successful work, any idea that widening access and participation had been fully addressed must be avoided.

A competitive selection process led to the appointment of Dr Dipti Bhagat and Dr Peter O'Neil as editors, supported by an editorial advisory board. The advisory board would like to thank Dipti and Peter for their commitment to the project.

Since 2008 there have been significant central policy changes, which have affected funding for both the arts and for higher education. Given these changes, which threaten the ability of these areas to continue to work on widening access and participation, we believe that the need to continue, and to improve our working practices remains a key activity if the progress that has been made is not to be put at jeopardy.

This volume shows the commitment of the arts and design sector in HE to take seriously the need to widen participation and gives examples of projects that have had significant success in doing this. It also shows the complexity of the task and illustrates the difficulties we all face in being successful. Notwithstanding these difficulties, we remain optimistic that the creativity and commitment of the Art and Design sector will see further progress made and hope that we may see a successor volume at a future point which will be able to demonstrate this progress.

Professor John Last
CHEAD Executive & chair of the Editorial advisory board,
on behalf of the Board.

CHEAD

CHEAD is the association of 71 educational institutions with degree or postgraduate provision in Art and Design, represented by their most senior academic concerned with Art and Design. CHEAD provides leadership and an inclusive, cohesive body for and on behalf of Art and Design higher education in the UK four nations, advancing knowledge and understanding in the sector and promoting the sector's interests to others. CHEAD focuses on art and design subjects; these subjects relate closely to other subjects – for example: media, performing arts, architecture, and art and design history – CHEAD welcomes interaction with and between these subjects. CHEAD Executive members and officers, in carrying out the business of the organisation, place the wider interests of the sector first. CHEAD shares with its members the objective of enhancing the student experience of HE in Art and Design, and respects the independent and diverse approaches adopted by members in this regard.

Christoph Raatz, CHEAD

ukadia

The United Kingdom Arts and Design Institutions' Association (ukadia) is a group of specialist arts and design institutions from across the UK's higher and further education sectors. We aim:

— to promote, nationally and internationally, the key contributions of specialist colleges to the UK's world-renowned reputation in visual arts, performance and the creative and cultural industries
— to work together as a network to widen participation in Higher Education and encourage mobility into professions serving the creative and cultural industries.

ukadia incorporates the National Arts Learning Network (NALN), which works to widen participation through progression agreements, and commissioning research into barriers to arts Higher Education.

Mark Crawley, NALN/ukadia

ADM-HEA

ADM-HEA is the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media. As part of the HEA, ADM's objectives are to work in partnership with institutions and sector bodies to promote cultural change and inclusion through evidence-informed practice that will support the enhancement of the learning experience of all students. We work with individual academics, subject communities and institutions across the UK while recognising the distinctive policy contexts and priorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We aim to provide the best available knowledge and shared expertise to lead research and evaluation, improving the quality of learning and teaching.

Carolyn Bew, ADM-HEA

Arts Council England

Arts Council England works to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art, and carnival to crafts. Great art inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves, and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2011 and 2015, we will invest £1.4 billion of public money from government and a further £0.85 billion from the National Lottery to create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

In 2010 we published 'Achieving Great Art for Everyone', a strategic framework outlining a ten year vision for the arts in England. In the publication we set out priorities to support artistically led approaches to diversity and the creation of equal opportunities to enter the arts workforce. In 2010 the creative case for diversity was launched, moving beyond moral, economic and legal arguments to simply state that greater diversity will lead to more relevant, innovative, experimental and high quality art.

Anne Appelbaum, ACE

Notes on Contributors

Bernadette Blair has written widely and presented research on feedback and assessment in art and design both here in the UK and internationally and has championed and been instrumental in studio curriculum development. She is an executive member of GLAD (Group for Learning in Art & Design) and a member of the ADM-HEA art & design reference group. She is currently Academic Director for studio-based pedagogy in the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture at Kingston University, London, UK.

Darryll Bravenboer is the Associate Dean Academic Development at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University. Previously, he worked as Lifelong Learning Network Director in the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Hertfordshire. He has extensive experience of developing vocational and work-based higher education provision that serve to widen access to higher education and respond to the needs of a wide range of employment sectors, including the Creative and Cultural Industries.

Penny Jane Burke is Professor of Education at Roehampton University, and the founder and Director of the London Paulo Friere Institute. She was previously Head of the School of Education Foundations and Policy Studies at the Institute of Education, University of London. She is widely published both as the sole and co-author of books, chapters in books and articles

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Emily Candela is a researcher publishing on contemporary art and education, and an artist working across media and within several collaborative contexts. She leads participatory projects as a community artist and gallery educator with organisations such as the Institute of Contemporary Arts and Museum of London. Her current MRes research at the London Consortium focuses on the interface of science and material culture.

Helen Connor, IES Principal Associate Fellow, Associate Director of the CIHE (Council for Industry and Higher Education), has extensive experience of policy research on education and employment, focusing on higher education and graduate employment. She has up-to-date knowledge of trends and developments in the higher education sector, especially those which impact on the actions of HEIs, and has a wide range of contacts with and knowledge of the HE sector, employers and representative bodies. Recently her work has involved exploring the role of vocational higher education in meeting employers' needs, and providing consultancy on innovative HE-business interactions.

Fiona Dean studied Fine Art at the Glasgow School of Art and received her PhD from the University of Stirling. She has numerous awards, including a Wingate Scholarship, Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship and British Council Researcher Exchange Award. Fiona is an associate lecturer at Glasgow University and runs *fugitivespaces*, developing artist-led programmes of research and education aimed at developing new spaces of engagement, most recently, *LEARN* with Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art and *Making Space* with Glasgow Women's Library.

Bess Frimodig is an artist who makes as well as researches the hand printed image. She is in her final year as a PhD Candidate at UWE Bristol at the Centre of Fine Art Print Research, focusing on the topic 'An Honourable practice: Printmaking and Social Engagement'. Her work can be found in the permanent collections of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt,

Penang State Museum Art Gallery in Malaysia and in international private collections. Bess regularly publishes and lectures on print history and the social role of art through printmaking. She has lived around the world since an early age starting in Sweden, then moving to Japan, USA and England and other countries in between. Her prints are shown around the world, and so printmaking remains her flying carpet.

Jane Graves (1937-2011) Jane described herself as a ballet dancer who washed up at Oxford – English Literature – and then at the London School of Economics for social work training. After having four children she taught cultural studies at Central Saint Martins, 1968-1996, devising a socio-cultural studies programme for three Masters courses in design. She trained as a specialist dyslexia tutor and found this work amongst the richest and most exciting in her life. Retiring on grounds of ill health she practiced as a psychoanalytical psychotherapist till 2006, while writing and lecturing about psychoanalysis and art and design. She was very fond of a good time.

Janey Hagger has worked as the Progression Manager at Central Saint Martins since 2005, where she has developed a widening participation progression programme. Prior to working at CSM, she worked extensively in public arts with young people and communities across North London. She has taught in further education, for the Tutor Resource project (Islington Play and Youth Service) and on the Weekend Academy at the Byam Shaw School of Art. She has her own art practice.

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She has been involved in the Widening Participation programme at CSM for the last five years supporting students in their efforts to gain places on the BA Degree courses and also giving tutorial support once their courses are underway. She has an MA in Feminist Theory, History and Criticism in the Visual Arts, a PG Certificate in Higher Education and maintains a studio-based visual practice.

Wil Hunt is a researcher with six years' experience working in the field of education, careers and training. His main research interests are in the areas of widening participation in learning, Higher Education, graduate careers, student finance and student support. Recent projects have included a study of the early careers of creative graduates, an analysis of PhD career trajectories, a qualitative assessment of the impact of the New Student Support Arrangements on HEIs, the Student Income and Expenditure Survey, and a study of adults' perceptions of university.

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Jackie McManus is Head of Widening Participation Programmes at University of the Arts London. Jackie previously managed outreach programmes for local education authorities, before working as a researcher for the Unemployment Unit (now the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion) where she specialised in developing policy on young people's education and employment rights. Highly committed to social justice in art and design, Jackie has initiated a range of innovative programmes to widen participation at UAL. She is a Fellow of the RSA.

Ken Neil is Head of the Forum for Critical Inquiry at The Glasgow School of Art. Ken Neil and Eileen Reid support a range of activities and initiatives for widening access and participation at GSA, including summer schools, bridging programmes, research-led courses and study trips. Neil is Convenor of the GSA Widening Participation Group.

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Eileen Reid is Head of Widening Participation at The Glasgow School of Art. Reid leads the Access to Creative Education Scotland (ACES) project for the Scottish art and design sector. Reid and Ken Neil support a range of activities and initiatives for widening access and participation at GSA, including summer schools, bridging programmes, research-led courses and study trips.

Keith Russell is a design and communication philosopher currently working on a theory of the uses of glimpsing and the uses of fantasy in Anime and Manga. He is a senior lecturer in the school of Design, Communication and IT at the University of Newcastle, Australia.

Olivia Sagan is Head of the University College London MSc in Psychoanalytic Developmental Psychology. She continues to use narrative biography and audiovisual approaches to researching mental illness, learning and creativity. She is Principal Investigator on 'Thou Art' – a multi-partnership, user led research and development project exploring community-based art practice and its links to well-being and progression opportunities in the lives of mental health service users.

Karen Scopa is a visual artist, lecturer and researcher. She has worked with public arts organisations in Scotland and America, and has developed art and design curricula in the Scottish and English HE and FE sectors. She is currently the Higher Education HE Academy Academic Development Officer for the Scottish Higher Education Employability Forum (SHEEF). Karen also teaches Contextual Studies in Art and Design and maintains research interests in interdisciplinary practices and the status and role of the 'artist' in society in relation to: other disciplines; 'professionalism' within the Visual Arts; and the role and impact of arts education in shaping and informing future creative practices.

Stephanie Taylor is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Social Sciences. Her research explores processes of identification and subjectification through the analysis of talk data. She has conducted empirical research on creative identities, with Karen Littleton, and on the identities given by relationships to place and nation. Her most recent book is 'Narratives of Identity and Place' (Routledge, 2009). She has also edited and co-edited a number of texts, including on ethnography and discourse analysis.

Jane Tynan is a senior lecturer at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London. Her current research explores the cultural history of military clothing in twentieth century warfare and she is currently working on a book for Palgrave called 'Khaki: British army uniform and the making of the First World War civilian soldier.' She has also published papers on the history of British public art and design education and current perspectives on social class and student learning.

John Wood has generated several hundred publications and is Emeritus Professor of Design at Goldsmiths, University of London. His last book *Designing for Micro-Utopias* (Gower, 2007) reconciles ethical, environmental and philosophical aspects of design. He is co-founder and co-editor of the Journal of Writing in Creative Practice (Intellect), founder of the 'Attainable Utopias' Network, the Writing-PAD Network (over 70 partner universities), and the Metadesigners Network at «metadesigners.org».

Acknowledgements

Before embarking on this volume, we had already collaborated on an inclusive pedagogies project to enable first-year Design students at London Metropolitan University to gain confidence with the complexities of academic writing. Our own practice at London Met – a large urban university with one of the most diverse student bodies of any UK university – has informed our approach to thinking about Widening Participation Research in Higher Education. We quickly realised that Widening Participation Research had specific implications for HE practitioners, especially lecturers, in developing inclusive practices and inclusive pedagogies. We hope that practitioners will continue to take up the impetus of the work which we bring together in this volume in changing political contexts.

We would like to thank Anne Appelbaum, Carolyn Bew, Mark Crawley, John Last and Christoph Raatz for their confidence in us and for their unfailing support and advice throughout the book's gestation and growth. We also thank all the authors for their willingness to participate and the publishers for their permission to reproduce work here free of charge. Our thanks go to Tom Wilson for his excellent work on the design and layout of this volume, and to Maria Oliver for her very diligent oversight and management of the final production stages. Individually, Peter would like to thank the *Write Now* Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Dipti would like to thank Lorna Rosbottom for her close reading and sound advice.

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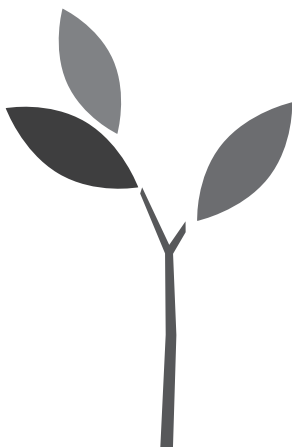
Part 1

Widening Participation: Towards Inclusive Practice

Chapter 1

Widening Participation
in Art and Design

Thinking about Widening Participation in Art and Design

This collection is dedicated to celebrating and making better known recent widening participation research in Higher Education Art and Design. The volume is needed for two reasons in particular. Firstly, Art and Design institutions have proactively embraced widening participation policy at the level of individual institutions and through collective action organised by bodies such as CHEAD (Council for Higher Education in Art and Design), NALN (National Arts Learning Network, now ukadia), ADM-HEA (Art Design Media Subject centre for the Higher Education Academy) and ACE (Arts Council England). This work, and its implications for achieving social justice in Art and Design Higher Education, deserve to be disseminated more widely within and beyond the sector. Secondly and more generally, widening participation, as a policy and as an educational aim, has some real affinities with the disciplines of Art and Design as 'creative' subjects, which see themselves as focusing on and depending on 'talent' rather than privilege. Indeed the Higher Education Funding Council for England's focus on widening participation seems to have adopted this term 'talent'. Our intention here and through the excerpts we anthologise is, however, to problematise and query this term and its associations with inherent

'giftedness'. As we will argue, such associations may be part of the problem, occluding the importance of socio-economic and cultural barriers to HE Art and Design for many potential students identified by widening participation policy.

In line with other recent commentators (e.g. Burke and MacManus, 2009; Reid in this anthology), the concepts of cultural capital, habitus and field, as conceived by Bourdieu (1977), are important themes of the volume. Cultural capital is perhaps particularly pertinent in Art and Design, where it can be argued that its pervasive implications are masked by notions attached to 'creativity' and 'talent'. Bourdieu's rigorous sociological perspective also offers a lens through which widening participation can be seen as encouraging a more radical critique of the university and more particularly of Art and Design. As some of the chapters will suggest, the 'liberal' nature of Art and Design and the focus on receptivity to more diverse 'talents' and offering the 'fruits of the academy' to wider student populations may in fact stand in the way of more fundamental changes to education, which a widening participation focus may require.

Such theorisations help us to understand what is meant by 'widening participation'. Widening participation has increasingly been seen as primarily addressing socio-economic class and increasing lower socio-economic groups' access to and success in Higher Education. While this is important, Bourdieu also offers a way to understand not only how class works as a barrier, but how socio-economic privilege works to thicken and complicate the barriers of age, disability, gender, race and sexuality. Thus, work to widen participation in Higher Education must address the totality of these barriers to offer real, structural change.

Another important theme of the volume is how definitions of 'widening participation' can be 'othering'. Instead, we will argue that best practice in widening participation demands an inclusive approach whereby so-called non-traditional groups are embraced in

truly participatory universities rather than being seen as problematic outsider groups in need of extra support in order to assimilate to the demands of academia. Our focus in this anthology is on research that aims to bring about a representative Higher Education rather than one which merely expands the existing sector in ways that perpetuate inequalities and exclusions. This is particularly important in the context of recent work on widening participation by Copland *et al.* (2008), Miriam David *et al.* (2009) and May and Bridger (2009), which recommends that widening participation will improve learning for *all* HE participants.

In the context of this recent work on widening participation we also consider who is responsible for widening participation in HE. Bourdieu's work revealed the complex involvement of all practitioners in perpetuating the engrained habits and ways of doing of particular fields. As such, we argue that it is imperative for *all* Higher Education practitioners to take responsibility not merely for widening access to and participation in Higher Education, but more radically to change the 'field' of Higher Education itself fundamentally, so as to provide for *all* students. This is necessary (perhaps more so) in a post-New Labour Britain where widening participation is being replaced in public debate and public policy by calls for social mobility.

Researching Widening Participation in Art and Design

The quality of much of the research into widening participation in general has come under considerable criticism. As David Watson has noted, the 'big message' in the Gorard report into the barriers to HE participation is that 'we don't really know what we think we know' (2006, p. 6). In light of their investigations, Gorard and Smith (2006) called for more full-scale research studies into widening participation issues and greater social-scientific rigour in order to better enable policy makers to identify barriers and what works to overcome them.

It is not surprising, then, that the Higher Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which commissioned the Gorard report, has pushed for more evidence-based research. In 2009, a volume edited by Miriam David and her colleagues (David *et al.,* 2009) brought together the results of seven Economic and Social Research Council Teaching and Learning research programme funded projects, the fruition of the kind of planned research that Gorard advocates. These articles taken together make the case for attention to widening participation as improving learning for all in Higher Education. Moreover, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) established its online *EvidenceNet* service, so that current research findings on widening participation and other important educational concerns are easily locatable (2011, «www.heacademy.ac.uk/evidencenet»).

Gorard and Smith's critique of widening participation research is important, not least because research needs to be as rigorous and persuasive as possible in order to convince stakeholders and policy makers of the need for change (Gorard *et al.,* 2006, p. 116). This is likely to become increasingly important if widening participation is to remain high on the agenda as the public sector moves into leaner times. However, we also suggest that the cumulative impact of a wider variety of work – some of which social scientific researchers might be inclined to dismiss – can make a powerful case for change and we hope that this volume will contribute to this goal. We argue that the diversity of existing research may in fact be a strength as it often arises from the particular positions of those who are on the front line of attempts to extend widening participation. Important voices would be silenced if this research is not listened to.

Research which represents a plurality of voices may also help to ensure that it is not only the old, established universities whose voice dominates. Research Council funding goes increasingly to more established universities and there is a danger that the agenda of these universities concerning widening participation will take precedence over the perhaps very different widening participation agenda of the

post-1992 universities which have embraced widening participation. This is a particular urgency for Art and Design as these programmes often take place in specialist and post-1992 institutions, reflecting the traditionally vocational and practice-based nature of these subjects. Practitioners on the widening participation frontline may be those least likely to attract research council funding, but their research voice needs to recognised and their findings will certainly enrich the widening participation debate.

Action Research, for example, can be a powerful methodology through which Art and Design practitioners may become involved in research debates while at the same time taking steps to enhance their practice and solve issues arising from or within day to day teaching and learning encounters. Action Research may have a reputation for being unplanned and unsystematic. However, this does not need to be the case, and Lin Norton's volume offers practical guidance for practitioners interested in carrying out pedagogical Action Research in a systematic and rigorous manner (Norton, 2009). The more practitioners who engage in this research, the more we will know about what innovations seem to be working and the more knowledge we will have of things which we can do in all our varied learning spaces to make them inclusive and effective study environments. Of course, Action Research is not only about pedagogy. It is also used by practitioners, for example those involved in student services, personal and academic support or admissions. In this way, individual institutional research will increase and universities will be able to make evidence-informed decisions about what works on their campuses. But this kind of research – properly disseminated – will also extend the widening participation conversation across campuses and bring about a more democratic research environment. Widening participation may also mean that we need to widen participation in the research conversation and realise that – in this complex field – planned, hierarchical and top-down research is not the only approach.

In addition to planned research (whether large or small-scale), we want to highlight the importance of theoretical reflection, in many disciplines the very essence of what is considered to be research but an area likely to be dismissed by those who take a social-scientific stance to what counts as valid investigation. Several of the articles we excerpt in this book offer this kind of reflection, and for us this is indeed worthwhile research, with the authors 'looking back' at their practice in sustained and interesting ways. While governments and policy-makers will always want to see hard data, we consider that practitioners – who are crucial to the success of the widening participation project – are just as likely to be persuaded to action by the rich picture and deep meanings which can emerge from such reflection.

Widening Participation: the Case for an Inclusive Approach

As has often been pointed out, widening participation is not a modern phenomenon. The establishment of the University of London external system in the nineteenth century and the Open University in the twentieth century are obvious examples of radical innovations to increase participation and social justice in university education. Moreover, current widening participation work in part builds on work around 'access' (not least for 'disadvantaged' youth and adults) in the 1980s and 1990s (cf. HEFCE, 1996) as UK HE moved from an elite to a mass system of education (Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 2), a transformation which was symbolised by and, to an extent, made a reality in 1992 when Polytechnics were given permission to become University degree awarding institutions.

Widening participation in its recent manifestation begins in the late 1990s, more specifically in 1997 when Blair and New Labour came to office on a campaign centred around 'education, education, education'. Two reports of that year – one into Further Education and one into Higher Education – were to provide the incentive for the new government to make widening access and participation in tertiary

education a priority. The Kennedy Report into Further Education (*Learning Works: Widening Participation in FE*) was the outcome of Helena Kennedy's FEFC (Further Education Funding Council) Widening Participation Committee. Kennedy notably extended her brief – which was to investigate how to *increase* participation in a market-driven FE – to lay emphasis on the need to *widen* participation (Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 3). At the same time Ron Dearing's Report into HE (*Higher Education in the Learning Society*, Dearing and Garrick, 1997) revealed the findings of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education. In part, the Dearing Report analysed patterns of social, ethnic and other forms of participation (Dearing and Garrick, 1997, chapter 7) and went so far as to recommend that in funding HE, the government should:

> …give priority to those institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation, and have in place a participation strategy, a mechanism for monitoring progress, and provision for review by the governing body of achievement.
>
> (Dearing and Garrick, 1997, recommendation 7.2;
> cf. Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 3).

Clearly, widening participation was now on the political landscape, though it may have still seemed very remote to most university practitioners. In 2000 Action on Access was established with its remit to coordinate HEFCE's widening participation efforts, and from 2001 Higher Education Institutions were expected to embed widening participation in their corporate strategy documents and practice (what follows refers primarily to the English policy context; for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, see Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 8-9).

From 1997 onwards, a dazzling array of pledges, policies and initiatives were implemented. One of New Labour's most famous pledges – to increase the 18-30 participation rate in Higher Education to 50% by the end of the decade – was made in the 2001 election manifesto and then included in the 2003 White Paper on the *Future of Higher*

Education. This pledge was not met under Labour, and under the Coalition government of 2010, widening particpation is no longer a policy priority. But despite this, in January 2010, at the start of the new decade, a HEFCE report (*Trends in Young Participation*, HEFCE, 2010) indicated that considerable progress was finally being made as participation rates for students from the most socially-disadvantaged areas indicated a rising trend and gave some optimism that the much attacked and often beleaguered widening participation agenda was in fact beginning to have some effect. According to HEFCE, participation by young people in the most disadvantaged 20 percent of neighbourhoods had increased by 50 percent during the last 15 years and 30 percent during the last five years alone (HEFCE, 2010).

The 2003 White Paper included a chapter on Fair Access. This included a firm statement of government intent:

> We must make certain that the opportunities that higher education brings are available to all those who have the potential to benefit from them, regardless of their background. This is not just about preventing active discrimination; it is about working actively to make sure that potential is recognised and fostered wherever it is found.
>
> (DFES, 2003, p. 67)

The White Paper continues:

> There is no simple means of achieving wider access. Success in opening up higher education to all who have the potential to benefit from it depends on building aspirations and attainment throughout all stages of education. Higher education institutions need to be supported in their efforts to reach out to students from non-traditional backgrounds, and provide them with the right pastoral and teaching support; young people and their families need to be encouraged to raise their aspirations and achieve

more of their potential in examinations prior to entry to higher education; and finally, there must be an effective and fair system of student support that takes into account the different circumstances of an increasingly varied student population.

(DFES, 2003, p. 68)

The government here alluded to some of its key, planned widening participation policy measures: founding and funding AimHigher, established in 2004 as a result of the integration of earlier initiatives to promote aspiration; financially recompensing universities which recruited students from backgrounds identified by the widening participation policy through extending access premiums to recognise the extra costs involved (raised from an additional 5% to 20%, DFES, 2003; HEFCE, 2004; cf. Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 7); reintroducing maintenance grants for students from low-income backgrounds; and introducing grants for eligible 16-19 students who participated in non-compulsory education. At the same time, the White Paper focused on maintaining world-class Higher Education in the UK, perhaps giving rise to tensions with its access agenda (Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 9) as it advocated raising student fees to pay for such excellence: up to £3000 a year from 2006 (the effects of which were to be ameliorated by the reintroduction of maintenance grants and OFFA (Office for Fair Access) bursaries provided by universities which chose to increase their fees (cf. McCaig and Adnett, 2009).

Widening Participation: For Whom?

In the UK social and political landscape, widening participation has tended to be about social class, in stark contrast to the US where the diversity agenda has often been dominated by issues of race and ethnicity. This emphasis on class is certainly useful as class distinctions are not only unusually hardened in the UK but also cut across other categories of diversity/exclusion, often deepening the barriers

of race, gender, disability, sexuality and age, barriers, which can also work in isolation (see David's gender focus which allows a fuller discussion of other barriers, 2009).

It is true that widening participation has often proclaimed an inclusive agenda and seen its remit as facilitating the participation of all under-represented groups including: age, disability, gender, geographical location/isolation, race and sexuality. Dearing's report analysed the participation of the first five of these categories (Dearing and Garrick, 1997, chapter 7), and Stephen Gorard and his colleagues adopted this broad and inclusive definition of widening participation in their research report to HEFCE into barriers to participation in Higher Education (Gorard *et al.* 2006). Caroline Hudson's research – for CHEAD – into widening participation in Art and Design adopted a similar approach (2006).

However, despite the prevalence of this inclusive definition, it is surely the case that – as policy – widening participation was, for New Labour, above all a matter of class equity, taking a colour-blind approach to social disadvantage (Pilkington, 2009, p. 17). As Andrew Pilkington shows (2009, p. 16), the funding letters of various secretaries of states to HEFCE from 1999 onwards did not mention race or ethnicity at all (despite Dearing's attention to ethnicity in his 1997 report) and the Labour government made it increasingly clear that the success of widening participation projects would be evaluated above all on their ability to reach students from the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups. When Action on Access was established in 2000, it declared that it would work with disadvantaged, mature and disabled students but did not stress race (HEFCE, 2000).

Race in the UK became a high-profile issue at the turn of the millennium. The Report of the Macpherson Inquiry of 1999 into the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 presented a picture of institutional racism in the Metropolitan police force and most other UK organ-

isations and institutions, including the universities. Blair and New Labour accepted the findings of this report and this led to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 specifying duties for Higher Education Institutions relating to widening participation for students and equal opportunities policies for staff (see Pilkington, 2009, p. 20). The Equality Challenge Unit, focusing largely on race, was established in 2001 to promote equality for staff and in 2006 expanded to cover student diversity and equality issues. The ECU was highly critical of the level of improvement of universities in this area in 2003 (with 45 of 130 HEIs deemed noncompliant with the new legislation). An Office of Public Management report the following year was less scathing, though still highly critical (Pilkington, 2009, pp. 20-21).

Despite this, race is often seen as a problem that has been solved, as BME (Black and minority ethnic) students are proportionally over-represented in UK Higher Education (in part because of the proportional over-representation of Asian students in HE). Similarly, the question of gender is often seen to have been solved, given the over-representation of women compared to men as students. Indeed, a HEFCE report in 2005 spoke of the 'closed gender gap' and the need to focus on young, disadvantaged men (HEFCE, 2005; David *et al.*, 2009, p. 31). However, as has been pointed out, this is based on figures for full-time participation for traditional, young students and may not tell the whole story (David *et al.*, 2009, p. 31).

Indeed, statistics which might seem to suggest that representation of BME students in HE is not a matter for concern in fact mask huge problems. In particular, there is under-representation of black students (cf. Connors *et al.*, 2004, on the need to avoid treating the minority ethnic population as a single, homogenous entity) and also BME students are more likely to be enrolled at post-1992 universities (Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 4, citing Jary and Thomas, 1999, on 'perverse access') and tend to underperform against their white counterparts.

Moreover, it is apparent that university faculty staff remain predominantly white (only 6.4% BME staff in 2007-08, ECU 2009, p. 3), reflecting the 2003 Equality Challenge Unit report's findings that equality had been more focused on gender than race (cf. Leathwood *et al.*, 2009, on the BME staff experience). This means that BME students are less likely to find role models among faculty staff than in many north American universities. They are also less likely to find diversity tackled as part of their intellectual experience of university, in contrast with the United States where a diversity class is often a compulsory aspect of students' General Education requirements.

If race has dropped off the radar, this has not been the case with disability. This is because of the Disability Act, which was extended to cover HE in 2001 (Special Educational Needs and Disabilty Act, SENDA, 2001). In 2005 the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was amended and extended to require HEIs to build disability equality into all its activities and functions (Waterfield and West, 2006, p. 24). The disability legislation mandates anticipatory adjustments to teaching and assessment practices and a National Disability Team established within Action on Access has attempted to mainstream disability issues. As a result, disability is the one and only area of widening participation where all staff members have been required to make changes to their practice (Waterfield and West, 2006, p. 1), though it may be doubted whether all have in fact done so.

In the middle of the decade, Stephen Gorard commented, in his extensive *Barriers* report, that there was recognition in the sector of the need for universities to attract and retain the new students implied by widening participation. However, he noted that there was little evidence of teaching and learning 'being adapted for diverse learners despite recognition in the literature that particular target groups, such as mature learners, have specific needs' (2006, p. 56); similarly, he noted that assessment practices had not changed to adapt to different educational backgrounds (2006, pp. 70-73) – even though varying forms of assessment benefits *all* students (p. 56; May

and Bridger, 2010, p. 20). If, as is surely the case, some progress was made in the five years after Gorard's report this is largely because of the impact of the disability legislation. It is largely from activity in this area that we are likely to learn the benefit of introducing inclusive pedagogies and practices more generally.

Moving to Inclusive Practice

Since 2006, one of the major developments in widening participation has been an increase in discussion amongst university staff on how to make equity and social justice a reality on our campuses. Whereas widening participation was often seen as something which policy makers and specialists in the area took care of, there seems to be an increasing realisation of the need for a joined-up approach where we are all responsible for widening participation on our campuses. This is exemplified by the Higher Education Academy report by Helen May and Kath Bridger: *Developing and Embedding Inclusive Policy and Practice* (2010; see also Action on Access's *Mainstreaming and Sustaining Widening Participation in Institutions*, 2009). This reports on the HEA's work with 10 institutions to move equality and widening participation 'from the margins to the mainstream', as Liz Thomas and her colleagues put it (Thomas *et al.*, 2005), embedding equity considerations within all aspects of the institution and seeing it as an ongoing process of quality enhancement. Indeed, Helen May referred to this approach at a HEA Equity Conference in January 2010 as developing a 'way of thinking' where it becomes automatic for all in HE to think about equity and where widening participation affects whatever we happen to be doing. We hope that this volume will help extend this widening participation consciousness to more practitioners in Art and Design.

In their report, May and Bridger (2010, pp. 84-86) articulate three frameworks for widening participation provision in which univer-

sities might position themselves in terms of how they attempt to enable students to succeed (building on Jones and Thomas, 2005; Waterfield and West, 2006; Shaw *et al.* 2007; Fuller *et al.* 2009; and McNaught, 2009):

a) modified provision (special arrangements to support individual students within existing system; described as an 'academic' approach by Shaw *et al.*, 2007)
b) alternative provision (arrangements made within the curriculum for particular groups of students; cf. Shaw *et al.,* 2007's 'differential' approach)
c) inclusive provision (flexible and anticipatory arrangements within the curriculum to help all students succeed; cf. Shaw *et al.,* 2007, who speak of a 'transformative' approach)

This HEA Report calls for universities to move in the direction of inclusive provision. But May and Bridger recognise that this is likely to be a continuum of practice (May and Bridger, 2010, p. 85) and that institutions will be at different stages of development towards being inclusive institutions:

Representing institutional differences as part of a continuum of progress towards an overarching aim provides a way of acknowledging that considerable work may have taken place to arrive at the first stage outlined above, and that goals may also need to be readjusted over time to go beyond the second. It also serves to remind institutions that equality and widening participation can never be completed and 'ticked off' the list; rather they are part of an ongoing process to facilitate the success of all students and enhance the student experience.

(May and Bridger, 2010, p. 86)

One happy aspect of this HEA report is that in their call to bring about fully inclusive institutions, May and Bridger recommend a

dual approach to change which is institutional but which also fully involves and engages the individuals who inhabit it:

> The dual approach to change, of the institution and individual, acknowledges that policies and strategies are not only interpreted and transformed into practice by those who work within the framework provided by them, but also that they are, almost inevitably, developed by individuals through the agency of their own personal and professional values, attitudes and beliefs. Hence the individual is at the heart of effecting transformative change.
>
> (May and Bridger, 2010, p. 84)

In line with May and Bridger's report, this volume argues that genuine widening participation in Art and Design requires a radical change in culture in which all participants in HE will need to participate and show a lead. Art and Design have responded proactively to the widening participation agenda. As we will see, NALN and CHEAD and other Art and Design bodies have carried out extensive work and research in interrogating the state of play in Art and Design and in recommending and facilitating good practice. Many individual practitioners have themselves been passionately engaged with social justice in their own teaching. This volume aims to give as much emphasis to these individuals as to commissioned research and to ensure that that individual voice is allowed to speak and be part of the dialogue for change that is emerging. We hope that the extended attention to widening participation in one subject area (cf. Jary and Jones, 2006, for a collection of articles on widening participation in the Social Sciences) will help illustrate how widening participation impacts all aspects of our practice and help prove recent claims – by for example Miriam David (David *et al.* 2009) – that the changes that widening participation brings about will benefit *all* students.

Not all university practitioners would agree that widening participation relates to them and some might prefer to resist the mindset

change called for by Bridger and May. There are surely understandable reasons for this attitude. These in part come from lecturers already overworked and undertaking increased administrative and other tasks and therefore wary of assuming new duties. But there may also be a sense that responsibility for widening participation lies beyond the university and that this is a task that needs to be addressed by others. As has been pointed out, children's life-choices are often determined well before the age of 16 when 5 or more good GCSEs can offer entry onto the 'royal route' to university (Stanton, 2008, pp. 9-26). Gorard's research certainly confirmed that the bulk of the work to widen participation lies outside the remit of universities and that when students from widening participation backgrounds apply, universities have a decent record of accepting them:

> In terms of the threshold of entering HE or not (rather than allocating places at specific HEIs), the admissions process is at least neutral or even favours those from less elevated backgrounds.
>
> (Gorard, 2006, p. 37)

Nevertheless, this volume concurs with Gorard's perspective that a publicly funded HE does have an obligation to tackle equity issues (cf. 2006, pp. 85-92, on the need for institutional changes). If they do not, universities are – as they always have been – contributing to the status quo, perpetuating and exacerbating inequality as they educate future citizens and professionals who remain unrepresentative of the modern democracy. If Gorard and others have shown the complexity of the problem, then this means that everybody will have a part to play in a solution. As the 2003 White Paper put it: 'Education must be a force for opportunity and social justice, not for the entrenchment of privilege' (DFES, 2003, p. 67). The seriousness of the matter can hardly be understated. Succeeding at widening participation means, as David Watson says, no less than contributing to social cohesion (2006, p. 2).

Widening Participation Research and Initiatives in Art and Design

In the context of these wider developments in widening participation – from adoption of government policy to widen access of identified, under-represented parts of the population to Higher Education, to a call for the transformation of the culture and field of Higher Education itself to enable sustainable and fully inclusive practices and provision – Art and Design as a sector offers significant examples of research of good practice. The focus of CHEAD, NALN, ADM-HEA and ACE has been to embed widening participation in all areas of the work of institutions they represent, as part of a subject-specific provision. That these particular organisations have acted often in concert to adopt, promote, enhance, support, map, research barriers to, and recommend ways to achieve widening participation initiatives across the Art and Design sector in the UK has meant that such work has embraced the totality of post-compulsory education, from access into Higher Education, progress through Higher Education – undergraduate and post-graduate study – to employment in the creative/cultural industries. Research by these organisations has often observed this learning lifecycle, not for any ease or apparent linearity or process; rather, this cycle reflects how each stage of entry into and progress through HE can be complex and yet offers rich opportunities to effect initiatives to undo barriers to widening participation.

Valuable and impressive work with this lifelong learning as a cycle is marked by (West Midlands) ACE's work with Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts), which examines the piloting of a strategic approach to engaging young people from diverse cultural backgrounds with the possibility of developing careers in the visual arts (ACE/ Iniva, 2008): that is, looking at pre-entry to Higher Education in Art and Design to examine and effect aspiration for careers after HE. NALN (see «www.ukadia.ac.uk») has developed a model of progression agreements between FE and HE institutions, designed

to promote progression into HE for vocational learners in Art and Design (Chapter 3.1 in this volume). Supporting programmes for vocational routes into HE have also been developed and researched to consider student experiences of effective pedagogies that enable HE entrants to transit smoothly into and progress through their new educational environment (Chapter 4.1 and «www.ukadia.ac.uk/en/progression-agreements»). Moreover, admissions research carried out for NALN (Chapter 2.2) reveals the subtle inequalities and exclusions, which might take place despite a commitment to fair and transparent admissions practices.

Substantial and detailed research was undertaken in 2005-2006 (Hudson, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2009a; Hudson and Jamieson, 2006; Hudson and Sutherland, 2006; all commissioned by CHEAD/ACE) to map, and contextualise within wider HE widening participation discourse, the state of widening participation research, policy, practice and pedagogy in HE Art and Design and to make recommendations for further work at institution level and within the sector – recommendations to which, in part, this anthology responds. Following on from a literature review and statistical and institution-based research to appraise widening participation, Hudson (for NALN) went on to track, across 2 years, 48 students from so-called widening participation backgrounds to examine their perceptions of progression to and through HE Art and Design (Hudson, 2009b). Through her study, Hudson offered a coherent rationale for improving learning experiences for diverse students, not merely for the benefit of students from widening participation backgrounds, but rather for the potential gain for Art and Design education more generally.

Recognising that many widening participation initiatives had been carried out with a focus on access to and progress through the undergraduate strata of Higher Education, NALN commissioned two complementary studies: to quantitatively map widening participation in taught postgraduate courses in Art and Design (Pollard *et al.* 2008; Chapter 10.2); and to qualitatively investigate the

experience of so-called non-traditional participants' work and study pathways to and perceptions of postgraduate Art and Design learning and careers (Taylor and Littleton, 2008; Chapter 10.3). Mapping participation and assessing student perception in post-graduate courses reveals that this strata of Art and Design, in the context of the overall post-graduate population, remains yet 'underworked' in terms of widening participation: women, Black and minority ethnic, and older students remain under-represented.

While this particular work may reveal how institutions continue to view so-called 'non-traditional' students as 'other', its strength has been to pay attention to students' voices and their experience of Higher Education in order to illuminate necessary feedback for HE practitioners. Indeed, Malik-Okon's research for ACE (2005) on the 'Participation of Black and minority ethnic students in Higher Education Art and Design' was focused to examine the extent to which BME students are 'othered' – excluded or discriminated against – in all aspects of Higher Education, from access and admissions, pedagogic processes and assessment, to graduate entry to employment. Malik-Okon's focus on Art and Design HE concluded that

> [w]idening participation initiatives aimed at increasing numbers or addressing diversity through representation and inclusion, will not be as effective as those which aim to transform structures and processes and enhance individual experiences.
>
> (Malik-Okon, 2005, p. 7)

This is sound advice. And it is offered again, if through a focus on cultural diversity, by ACE's most recent report in conjunction with *Third Text*, entitled *Beyond Cultural Diversity, the Case for Creativity* (Appignanesi, 2010), a collection of essays that argue for an inclusive British art, which reflects and speaks of and to 'a truly integrated British society' (p. 15). Appignanesi (Appignanesi, 2010, pp. 5-15) draws our attention to how policy discussions about cultural diversity – or equally widening participation – can work to differentiate, divide

and identify others' culture (whose exactly?): 'it focuses on the strain of separation between cultures' (p. 5). Rather, Appignanesi reminds us that 'culture' is inherently diverse within itself and asserts that a culturally diverse British art must thus be 'socially integrative' (p. 11). He and his colleagues – like the complement of authors in our anthology – argue for various ways 'to admit the fresh air of future inclusivity into the present' (p. 15). From this we might take instruction: that we re-conceptualise education as inherently participatory and work toward a socially-integrative Higher Education that reflects and speaks to *all* of British society. As this anthology goes on to show, it is the culture and field of Higher Education that must – and can – be transformed in order for Higher Education to be socially transformative in terms of social justice and achieving a truly participative democracy.

Researching Widening Participation in Art and Design: the Lifelong Approach

The main body of the volume is structured around a learning lifecycle: from pre-entry to entry, from further education to higher education, from undergraduate to postgraduate, from graduation to career and perhaps re-entry into higher education. Naturally, not all the same steps are involved for all students and for many this will be a recursive and complex process rather than a linear journey to success. This may be particularly the case for Art and Design, subjects which often have an appeal to mature students, many of whom are returning to education as a result of a midlife change of career.

Here we are influenced by the approach of Stephen Gorard and Caroline Hudson, who adopt a lifelong approach to their research on widening participation (Gorard *et al.*, 2006; Hudson, 2006). The lifelong approach is useful in that it illuminates the reality and complexity of students' experience of Higher Education. As well as showing us the barriers involved at various steps of the process (Gorard *et al.,*

2006), it also shows us that there are many points on the cycle where we can act to do something to increase the likelihood of genuinely widening participation and bringing about inclusivity. Given the complexity of widening participation, any solution will need such a comprehensive approach.

The lifelong approach to Higher Education is in accord with other aspects of adult educational policy in a neo-liberal era, where an increasingly flexible economy requires an increasingly flexible Higher Education to provide people with the skills they need as they need them. However, the degree structure of HE may militate against the flexible HE environment that is needed to make lifelong learning possible, in particular making it more difficult to transfer from FE to HE and making it difficult for students who drop out of study to re-enter later without having to begin afresh. One of the main suggestions of Stanton and his colleagues (in Copland *et al.*, 2008, pp. 3; 18, 59-60) is for a more flexible credit transfer system along the US model which would offer increased opportunities for people to participate in HE throughout their lives. This would be made easier if the UK degree classification system could be modified. Some steps in that direction are being investigated following the 2007 Burgess Report.

In the sections that follow, we first examine, in Section 2, questions of accessing Higher Education, looking at raising aspiration, the role of Further Education and facilitating smooth transition. The longest section, Section 3, looks at succeeding in Higher Education, examining how practitioners can promote inclusivity in all their pedagogical and assessment practices. Finally, Section 4 examines widening participation beyond the BA, looking at entry into the creative industries and into postgraduate study. Widening participation has too often been seen as stopping once students enter university. The scope of our volume shows that in many ways that is just the beginning of the story and that all the work around access may be futile if attention is not given to the rest of the student lifecycle and to reforming the universities to make them more representative and inclusive of modern Britain.
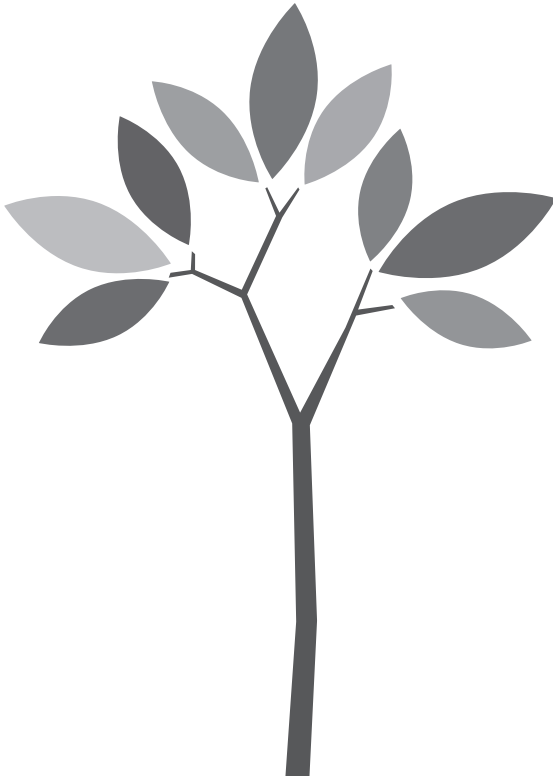
Part 2

Accessing Higher Education

Modern widening participation work builds on earlier work dedicated to 'access' for disadvantaged young people and adults (Jary and Jones, 2006, p. 3; HEFCE, 1996). As we have seen, widening participation is today much more encompassing as attention is paid to all aspects of the student lifecycle. Nevertheless, it remains crucial to encourage students to apply, support them through the process and facilitate change to make interviewers better able to identify students with potential to succeed.

Raising aspirations is work which Art and Design has been keen to embrace, with much community and school activity being undertaken by the Art and Design community designed to encourage people to see HE as an option (cf. the University of the Arts London 'Arts and the Learning City' project (Bambridge et al., 2003) and the LID-funded 'Progression Project' (University of the Arts London, 2004)). In 2004, AimHigher was set up to organize this aspiration-raising work on a regional basis and to form partnerships among those involved in widening participation work. AimHigher was not without its critics, and in particular it was accused of 'soft targeting' rather than working with the most disadvantaged groups (McCaig, Stevens and Bowers-Brown, 2007). From 2008 onwards, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and HEFCE attempted to

ensure that AimHigher provide a better evidence base and stressed that bringing people from the most socio-economically deprived groups into HE would be the primary criterion on which evaluation of success will be based. Nevertheless, AimHigher was among the early targets of the 2010 Coalition government's public spending cuts.

But work on outreach and raising aspirations – however well-targeted and effective – will ultimately have little long-term impact unless students are also given opportunities to acquire the qualifications and skills needed for HE entry and unless universities adopt admissions procedures which are able to recognize the achievement and potential of students from non-traditional HE trajectories. Therefore, in this section we examine the crucial role of the FE colleges and work being done to establish FE-HE partnerships. We also look at the role of the admissions and interview process and how that can be a barrier which keeps out many able non-traditional students from HE, particularly from the more selective institutions. Finally, we look at work on transition into HE and how we can help students from widening participation backgrounds prepare to succeed in HE.

Chapter 2

Bringing Students
to Higher Education

In his discussion paper on widening participation, David Watson notes that the real 'fault-line' to participation in Higher Education is between those who succeed and those who fail at GCSE or post-16 education, with many of those students who fail already disengaged and disaffected informally from around the age of 14 (Watson, 2006, p. 5). Although reform of the old 'O level' had increased the numbers of students succeeding and continuing in education, the 'participation gain' brought about as a result may have been exhausted (Aston 2003, cited in Watson, 2006, p. 5). In this context, widening participation for universities has been a matter of bringing non-traditional students into Higher Education, that is bringing into Higher Education those who are not bound for what Nigel Brown and his colleagues have called the 'royal route' of at least '5+ good GCSEs, 2+ A levels, followed by a full-time degree' (Brown et al. 2004, p. 14).[1] Furthermore, application processes to Art and Design at HE are fraught with complexities, sometimes involving an additional year – and thus additional cost – in a FE general Art and Design Foundation course, and also an interview based on a portfolio of art and design work produced and edited in view of the course applied for.

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1   Writing in 2004, Brown and colleagues did not envisage that the 'royal route' would thicken as a barrier: more recently this 'route' can be expected to describe 10+ GCSEs and 4+ A levels.

How so-called 'non-traditional' applicants consider, choose and apply for Art and Design higher education, and how Art and Design higher education practices of admissions, interviews and outreach bring so-called 'non-traditional' applicants and communities into higher education Art and Design is the focus of the three papers in this section. Jackie McManus's study of working class young peoples' choice, application and admissions to a 'prestigious' Art and Design institution draws our attention to the ways in which the shift to mass education has also led to a further social stratification within higher education (Reay et.al., 2001 and 2005). Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus, and following the work on applicant choice by Diane Reay, Miriam David and Stephen Ball (2005), McManus shows how her young applicant interviewees express their classed 'sense of place' in the context of a 'prestigious' institution. This sense of place underpins working class young people's choice of, application to and admissions into Art and Design institutions perceived as prestigious. This extract shows how the 'traditional' Art and Design admissions practice of deploying portfolio examinations and interviews[2] is 'mysterious' to 'non-traditional' applicants, and while based in ideas of meritocracy in selection, may yet result in '[re-privileging] the privileged … [as] a form of social closure'. The portfolio-based interview is often perceived as meritocratic because the focus is apparently on work made and its potential, rather than the applicant's social identity.

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2   Portfolio examinations and portfolio-based interviews are more often than not a standard admissions procedure for Art and Design programmes at further education, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Applicants are expected to collate an edited portfolio of art/design work – including sketchbooks, works in progress and completed projects – that reflect, or show the potential to achieve, the 'grammar' of the discipline/subject for which they are applying (e.g. fine art, sculpture, photography, illustration, fashion design, textile design, graphic design, product design, etc). It is expected that this collection of work would have been made during a recent period of study, related to art and design such as at school, or a one year Foundation course, or a similar FE programme, or on a UG course for a PG application. Portfolios are sometimes examined by admissions tutors without the applicant present, as a basis for short-listing interview candidates; more often applicants are interviewed with their portfolio and are expected to speak to their work articulating their ideas while making the work and their aspirations, exemplified by their work, for the course for which they are applying.

However, as the portfolio is expected to show 'talent' and 'creativity' – to be identified and judged by interviewers – there is much room for exclusionary practices in such applicant selection processes. For, such attributes as 'talent' and 'creativity' are likely to be perceived as inherent/in-born, and embodied in the applicant and their work, rather than being recognised as markers of cultural capital, and thus social in origin. As cultural capital present at birth transforms into educational cultural capital via (classed) schooling (Gorard et. al., 2006), the privileged interview applicant is likely to demonstrate such privilege as individual achievement and thus potential. McManus draws our attention to the barriers – the 'social closure' – presented by a process which selects applicants based on work that demonstrates 'talent', 'creativity', 'achievement' and 'potential', and does not recognise these attributes to be rather, a reflection of privileged cultural capital. This extract reveals how working class young peoples' awareness of such barriers often directs them to deselect themselves from applying to institutions perceived to be prestigious, and not for 'people like us'.

Penny Jane Burke and Jackie McManus's report for NALN, *Art for a Few: Exclusion and Misrecognition in Art and Design Higher Education*, examines Art and Design Higher Education admissions processes and practices through 5 case studies involving analysis of institutions' admissions policy texts and statements, prospectuses and marketing information including websites, interviews with admissions tutors, and observations of actual, portfolio-based selection interviews. Burke and McManus alert us to 'how subtle inequalities and exclusions might take place despite a commitment to fair and transparent admissions practices' (p. 6). Yet 'transparency' does not equate to 'fairness', and Burke and McManus go on to show how admissions practices are often neither transparent nor fair. Their report reveals how the selection interview can work as a tool for assessment of applicants' demonstration of 'appropriate' – classed, gendered and raced – cultural capital. Their findings (based on a small selection of institutions it must be said) implicate admis-

sions and interview tutors in potentially inequitable, discriminatory, exclusionary practices and are in contrast with David Watson's claim that:

> WP is not about consistently perverse decisions by higher education admissions tutors. Especially in some universities, these gate-keepers can be pompous, narrow and seriously uninformed. But such traits have not created the system.
>
> (Watson, 2006, p. 7)

Burke and McManus, rather, argue that as '[p]ower operates on multiple levels… [a]ll individuals are implicated in complex sets of power relations as situated subjects' (p. 22, and below). Widening participation to create a more inclusive Higher Education can indeed be undermined by decisions (described as 'perverse' by Watson, and shown to be un-reflexively discriminatory, even if subtle, in Burke and McManus's report) made by individuals as much as by institutional practices and policies. Indeed, Burke and McManus reveal how individual admissions and interview tutors – and by extension all higher education practitioners – are co-constitutive with the institution in which they work. Thus Burke and McManus recommend that all individual HE practitioners must attend to undoing inequitable, discriminatory and exclusionary practices.

Fiona Dean's report, *Border Crossings: In/exclusions and higher education in art and design* offers a Scottish context of the selection processes through portfolio-based, entry interviews in a detailed study of one institution of Art and Design. Her empirical focus examined the thinking and direct, verbalised responses of 20 selectors (across all stages of the selection process) to the visual and written submissions of 75 wide ranging applicants (as a sample of over 600 applicants) to the First Year of BA (Hons) Art and Design programme. More explicitly than the study of Burke and McManus, Dean's analysis shows how significant/ powerful is the role of the selector in including or excluding applicants: that is 'who was looking, how

they looked and what they looked for' (below) while examining portfolios of visual and written work of applicants. Yet, Dean offers a differently nuanced interpretation of her findings than Burke and McManus. She suggests that in such an individualised approach to selection processes it is not easy to see the fixing of such barriers to entry as school qualifications or type of school attended, or an applicant's postcode or social class. However, individualised approaches to selection by its nature can indeed pose real challenges of how to make selection criteria transparent to applicants, refine – without blunting – diverse selection processes to achieve parity and reliability and share more widely this refined and diverse 'sense of purpose in selection/admissions processes'. This last recommendation – sharing an 'ethos' – is most wide ranging, and is envisaged by Dean as occurring through almost all HE practices, from open days to being explored and disseminated through pedagogical research. It is this potential reach that inclusive practices might have in all aspects of HE that illuminates the sum of this volume. Together, the recommendations offered by Burke and McManus, and Dean offer all HE practitioners many ways to understand and opportunities to embed inclusive practices.

The subtle, exclusionary practices of HE institutions are also challenged by Olivia Sagan, Emily Candela and Bess Frimodig's discussion of Art Higher Education outreach activities into so-called 'non-traditional' or under-represented communities. Their research into specific outreach programmes seeks to find alternatives to a 'picture of university outreach as sporadic, unevaluated, marginal in relation to a deemed 'core' business, with under-supported and under-recognised and sometimes under-qualified practitioners' (below). 'Outreach' as a top-down, 'parachute-in' model often redoubles the privileged place of HEIs as resourced and skilled, with 'non-traditional' or under-represented communities positioned, by contrast, as under-privileged, under-resourced, un-skilled – always othered. Indeed, this practice of outreach as persistent othering is reflected in McManus and Burke and McManus' work

included in this section: both texts point out how the naming of 'widening participation', 'non-traditional' applicants – as much as 'outreach communities' – fixes their peripheral, outsider status (the 'disaffected, disadvantaged, disengaged' being the 'every word starts with "dis"' of McManus's title). It is perhaps because outreach communities are perpetually othered that HE institutions marginalise and under-value outreach activities. Sagan, Candela and Frimodig problematise Arts outreach as 'aesthetic evangelism' (Kester, 1995, cited below), and call for the outreaching institution to develop a more complex view of the community with which they are working so as to progress to real partnerships where outreach might then have the opportunity to be genuinely transformative in terms of social justice, for both HEI and community. These texts together reiterate David Watson's concerns: 'Is HE simply a sorting device or does it have transformative possibilities? Unless it begins to deliver the latter, its social effects will be regressive' (Watson, 2006, p. 3).

Chapter 2.1

Every word starts with 'dis': the impact of class on choice, application and admissions to prestigious higher education art and design courses[1]
Jackie McManus

[…]

A Black young woman to whom I tried to explain 'widening participation' said to me 'Yeah every word you lot use starts with "dis"'. She meant terms such as 'disadvantaged', 'disaffected', and 'disengaged'. To 'diss' someone in youth, and particularly Black youth, culture, is to disrespect them. Her comment seemed to very aptly describe the disrespect with which so much of the academy treats working class students who are 'othered' and positioned as inferior to 'standard' middle class students (Burke, 2002), unless they have 'special talent' (ibid). This work sets out to challenge the deficit 'dis' model of working class students and to examine the structural barriers that prevent them from accessing the art and design academy.

[…]

The study focuses on the views and experiences of two groups of young people: thirty Year 10, 11 and 12 school students participating in the university's widening participation activities, and eleven USAD (University School of Art and Design) first year undergraduates who at the time of

the study had just started the second term of their course. Participants in the study were exclusively working class: the school students were all from areas, and schools, with low HE participation rates and the undergraduates were all recipients of opportunities bursaries (now HE Bursaries), which meant that they were from low income families with no history of HE participation. The school students were all interviewed in year groups and the undergraduates in one group; five of them were also interviewed individually. Additionally, I interviewed careers advisers and art teachers from areas of London with low HE progression rates, and a sample of USAD university staff involved in some capacity in either student recruitment or advice and guidance.

The group and individual interviews I conducted were framed around a series of questions. I wanted to discover what the school students thought of USAD's WP projects, whether they were considering studying art and design and, if so, if they would apply to USAD. I was also interested in any general plans for the future they might have and who, if anyone, they asked for advice and support. With the undergraduates I was looking at similar themes, taking a retrospective view of their recent experience of choosing and applying to USAD. I wanted to see why they had chosen to study art and design, what had made them choose USAD, what, if any, advice and guidance they had received and what the admissions process had been like for them. The structure of this chapter follows the process of applications and admissions looking at choice, applications and admissions in chronological order. It also includes observations made from an applications advice project with which I was involved this year (McManus et al., 2005), and their relevance to higher education art and design admissions in HE generally.

Choice

In spite of the popularity of the University's widening participation projects, the majority of the school students said that they would not apply to USAD because they had heard 'from everybody', including their teachers and the university's own staff working on WP projects, about the fierce

competition for places and the high academic standards expected of students. Indeed, the school students believed that it was a waste of time applying, and that the academic standards were beyond them.

It's a great place but you can't get in. (Year 12 school student)

I wouldn't go there, the work's too hard. (Year 10 school student)

Worryingly, the more contact the school students had with university staff the less likely they were to consider studying at the university. This was partly due to USAD staff working on the project, adopting protectionist strategies by telling participants of the competition for places so they could help them avoid the disappointment of a failed application. This practice confirmed the school students' belief that USAD was not for 'people like us' (Bourdieu, 1984). Burke (2002) highlights the dangers of atheoretical widening participation activities and projects that reinforce, rather than challenge, class inequalities.

The undergraduate students confirmed the experiences of the school students and complained that their own school and FE teachers had discouraged them from applying to USAD because they were 'setting their sights too high'. One student put it that: 'It's hard to be confident when everyone keeps telling you that you are not good enough'.

Careers advisers and teachers interviewed were very open about their reluctance to suggest that any but the most 'talented' young people apply to the university. One head of art at an FE college said that they deliberately steered their students away from USAD in the belief that they would find the place 'too overwhelming', recommending instead less prestigious places of study. Careers Advisers believed that the University's strategy of marketing itself as a prestigious and internationally renowned university discouraged working class young people from applying, making them opt instead for less 'prestigious' universities where they felt they were more likely to be accepted and to fit in.

[…]

The impact of both habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, cited in Reay et.al. 2005) can be seen at play in the feelings and intentions of the school students interviewed for my study. By participating in the university's widening participation projects, they find themselves in the unfamiliar field of an elitist university and have neither the habitus nor the 'right' cultural capital, socialised or affective, to feel that it is a place for 'people like them'. Although the school students often lived within close physical proximity of USAD (some of them a few streets away from a main site) their psychological and emotional distance from the university (Reay et al., 1997) led them to exclude themselves from a place from which they are excluded (Bourdieu, 1984). Interestingly, when the school students were asked what might change their mind about applying to USAD, they suggested meeting students who were 'people like us'. The undergraduate interviewees talked about issues of habitus in terms of the current difficulties that they were experiencing in attending a university largely populated by middle class students whose material capital gave them academic advantages, because they did not have to work and could afford better equipment and materials, and whose affective cultural capital gave them an assured confidence with which working class students could not identify. These students felt like fish-out-of-water when their working class habitus and capital encountered the field of elitist higher education.

Other constraints on working class applicants' choice include the geographical, the financial and the academic. Increasingly more working class students are living at home (particularly in London) for financial reasons to do with debt aversion (Callender, 2003) limiting the range of universities to which they can apply. Academically, middle class students (Reay et al., 1997) are more likely to have better A level results from 'better' schools and to have received private tuition than working class students, who were more likely to be working, as well as studying – 'practices which make the possibility of attaining grades which would make elite universities a realistic goal easy for some and far more difficult for others.' (Reay et al., 1997, p. 862).

[…]

Applications

Application to higher education art and design courses is complicated. It usually involves an extra unfunded year in further education, to undertake a general art and design foundation course, two possible routes of UCAS application (routes A and B) and, crucially, the production of a portfolio of art work which is the main determinant of who is admitted to art and design degrees. So important is the production of a portfolio, that private schools sometimes employ fractional USAD staff to give portfolio advice to their students.

My professional involvement with developing the USAD website provided opportunities to conduct interviews with academic staff about what they look for in applications and interviews. They reported that the putting together of a portfolio is extremely sophisticated. A portfolio is not just a general collection of recent artwork; it has to be tailored for each discipline: a portfolio for fashion is very different from a portfolio for fine art. Tutors are not just interested in finished work and a high level of skill, but also in sketch books, where students detail their research and inspiration, and record the development of ideas.

The issue of class and portfolio production is summed up in Universities UK's 2002 report 'Social Class and Participation' (p. 49):

> The strong emphasis on the portfolio for admission to art school makes it a very different matter from the typical admission to university –the portfolio process is complex and pupils from deprived areas where admission to art school is a rarity are often ill equipped to develop a portfolio of high standard. Further, they typically do not have access to adequate facilities and materials, either at school or at home.

Glasgow School of Art pioneered portfolio advice work in some of Glasgow's poorest schools. Staff working on the project stress that:

> There's a lot of work to do to get these portfolios up to scratch. If you go to some of the better schools around here and some of the private

schools, there's an enormous amount of resources spent on staff time and materials – pupils from these schools have their own studios virtually. We're dealing with kids in schools who have no room to do anything. This is why we are going to bring some of them into art school, to give them studio space. If you live in one of these tenements where are you going to set up your easel? It's one of the reasons why access in this subject is so difficult.

<div align="right">(UUK, 2002, p. 49)</div>

The undergraduate students I interviewed in 2003 talked about their difficulties in putting a portfolio together, the costs involved and bringing it for review:

> They [teachers] just didn't have time to help us all individually with our portfolios. I just kept thinking 'I've come all the way from the north-east and spent £300 of me Mam and Dad's money for nothing'.

> The whole portfolio thing, leaving it and coming back to see if you've got an interview, was a nightmare.

For working class applicants, the putting together of a portfolio is to art and design what essay writing is to HE generally: an 'institutional practice of mystery' (Lillis, 2001).

Interviews

[…]

In discussion with university tutors about what they were looking for at interview, they expressed a strong desire to be 'fair' although clearly there are differing definitions of what constitutes being 'fair' (Schwartz, 2004). When portfolios are very good, the interview is largely a formality, when they were in the mid range (the majority) then tutors use the interview to assess such 'attributes' as motivation, enthusiasm and interest and whether

these were students they could teach (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000). What this means in practice is that some applicants, predominantly those who are middle class, are able to talk their way onto the course.

Tutors revealed that the interview questions are the standard ones you would expect from any university course: 'Why do you want to come to this university?' 'Why do you want to study this course?' What is interesting and revealing were the standard art and design questions which are asked about the interviewee's interests and 'influences', questions such as: 'Who is your favourite artist or designer?' 'What was the last exhibition you saw?' 'What books do you read?' 'What's your favourite film?' 'What's your favourite shop?' These questions are ostensibly designed to reveal what influences a candidate's work and whether they can use a variety of media as research tools. What became clear, however, was that not only was there a clear list of likely interview questions, there was a list of almost canonical 'right' answers (McManus et al., 2005). Knowledge of contemporary artists was expected, as was attendance at certain galleries and exhibitions. Art house films and 'literature' were 'in'; mainstream and popular cinema was out. Shops had to be expensive and stylish or trendy and quirky. These questions are seen as standardised, neutral and objective, across the art and design academy, but are actually implicated in racialised and classed practices. The acceptable answers reflect white middle class habitus, cultural capital and 'taste.' Admissions tutors, albeit unconsciously, are looking to appoint in the image of their own habitus and cultural capital for reasons it could be argued, to do with concepts of 'high taste' (Bourdieu, 1991), feelings of familiarity and comfort, and pedagogical ideology and practices: this is a person of high taste (like me), this is someone I feel comfortable teaching and can teach (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000).

Admissions tutors would be horrified to think that their interview practices are discriminatory because, as Gillborn and Youdell (2000) point out in their research into secondary school admissions practices, 'many teachers are passionately committed to challenging the very inequality that they participate in reinforcing' (p. 134). However, like secondary school teach-

ers, university admissions tutors are increasingly required to select students on the basis of who will benefit most from the limited resources available; effectively 'rationing education' (p. 134) to certain privileged social and ethnic groups. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) use the analogy of medical triage, the system the medical profession, particularly in emergency situations, use to decide where to direct resources on the basis of who is most likely to benefit (in extreme cases, survive) and who will benefit the least (in extreme cases, die). They use this medical analogy to describe what currently happens in secondary school admissions processes, a system they call 'educational triage' and which, they argue, encourages the selection of white middle class students, particularly by the 'best' schools. The analogy of educational triage is equally applicable to higher education admissions where again, unaware of 'these particular fruits of their labour' (p. 222), the behaviour of admissions tutors belies their intentions to challenge inequality, constitutes 'academic gatekeeping' (Burke 2002, p. 85), re-privileges the privileged and is a form of social closure.

[…]

Chapter 2.2

Art for a Few: Exclusion and Misrecognition in Art and Design Higher Education Admissions[1]
Penny Jane Burke and Jackie McManus

[...]

Fair admissions is a key discourse at play in WP policy and in 2003 the government commissioned a report on admissions practices in higher education, chaired by Steven Schwartz, to examine 'the options that English higher education institutions should consider when assessing the merit of applicants for their courses, and to report on the principles underlying these options' (Schwartz, 2004, p. 4).

Schwartz concluded that some groups are under-represented in higher education and that admissions are a key factor in who participates. The final report was published in 2004 and highlighted five central principles for a fair admissions system:

1. transparency;
2. the selection of students able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and potential;
3. reliable and valid assessment methods;
4. minimizing barriers for applicants;
5. creating a professional system underpinned by 'appropriate institutional structures and processes'

<div align="right">(Schwartz, 2004, p. 7-8)</div>

Schwartz asserted, in his report, that there was no evidence of poor admissions practice in universities, but that there was a need for greater transparency of entry requirements and selection processes thereby conflating transparency and fairness, a notion that has acquired considerable currency in hegemonic discourses of HE admissions. This report argues that making admissions processes and practices clear and transparent does not render them 'fair' if they continue to discriminate against certain class, ethnic and gender groups and, further, that admissions practices within the art and design academy are neither transparent nor fair.

Higher education admissions continue to be high on the government's widening participation agenda, as indicated by then Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills John Denham's speech at the 2008 HEFCE conference:

> We have to look for…measures that will re-assure the public…based on the fundamental principle that universities decide whom they should admit. The answer lies…in openness, transparency and accountability. It lies in each university having a published admissions policy; being able to show that it has measures in hand to equip all those involved in admissions to implement the policy accurately and fairly; and in each university being able to assure itself that this is being done.
>
> (SPA, 2008, p. 11)

In summer 2009, HEFCE and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) required higher education institutes to submit a WP strategic assessment, bringing together WP strategies and admissions policies and procedures. HEFCE's and OFFA's guidance on how this document should be produced contains a strong emphasis on admissions:

> Although admissions remain an important aspect of institutional autonomy and academic autonomy and academic freedom, institutions should provide a high-level statement focusing on the principles of the institution's admissions policy, providing assurance of consistency, professionalism and fairness.
>
> (HEFCE, 2009, p. 8)

The government has also created an 'independent body': Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA), in response to the Schwartz report's recommendation that a 'central source of expertise and advice' (SPA, 2008:3) was needed to support higher education institutes' on the 'continuing development of fair admissions' (SPA, 2008, p. 1). SPA's (2009) draft guidance on admissions policies does not define what constitutes 'fairness' and indeed Schwartz's report (2004) revealed that there are varying understandings and interpretations of 'fairness' in the academy. SPA's draft guidelines seem mainly concerned with promoting transparency in higher education admissions which as we have said is the received translation of 'fair'.

[…]

One of the most striking themes to emerge from the data was the wide range of expectations of the candidates that admissions tutors bring to their decision-making and the selection process. The sheer breadth of the different kinds of characteristics and attributes the admissions tutors cited in terms of what they were looking for in potential students for their courses is noteworthy. For example, the expectations included the following points, expressed during the interviews with admissions tutors:

– wide knowledge of contemporary art
– some knowledge of fashion designability
– ability to visually interpret
– ability to develop ideas, visually and conceptually
– breadth of understanding of various media
– critical understanding
– particular interest
– demonstrate potential
– expected to visit the college/course/site
– willingness to budget for and cover the cost of resources
– has an easy journey into college
– 'unusual'
– 'on the edge of society'
– looking for evidence of inspiration

– critical analysis and thought-process
– use of colour
– communication of ideas
– enthusiasm
– motivation
– good at self-promotion
– vibrant
– strong visual portfolio
– 'talk really well'
– great team player
– 'incredibly interesting'
– 'incredibly entertaining'
– creative mind
– invention
– wit
– reflective
– organised
– ability to meet deadlines
– putting it on paper–in words
– not averse to writing
– ability to express themselves
– 'have they got something to say'
– onus on student to know about the course
– attended an open day
– 'You know it when you see it'
– knowledge of technology and computers

The range of different characteristics is particularly striking, considering that for the most part, the tutors were describing their expectations of 17 and 18 year olds before they had even started their courses. This highlights the complexity of notions of potential; for example to what extent is the candidate identified as having potential expected to already display certain attributes, skills and understanding? How are characteristics such as 'wit' and 'being unusual' or 'inventive' measured and judged and how can this be made 'transparent' and 'fair'? Certain characteristics identified as

important by the admissions tutors, such as 'having something to say' and being 'incredibly interesting' are steeped in value judgments that are arguably connected to historically privileged ways of being. These are tied in with ontological perspectives that value certain dispositions and attitudes more highly than others, and this is inextricably connected to classed and racialised inequalities and subjectivities. This raises significant questions and poses challenges about the processes of selection in terms of issues of equity, recognition and justice (Fraser, 1997).

Jenny Williams has argued that processes of selection are connected to 'polarising discourses', 'in which students are constructed as normal or abnormal, worthy or unworthy, acceptable or unacceptable' (Burke, 2002, p. 85). Williams explains:

> Meanings are constructed through explicit or more often implicit contrast; a positive rests upon the negative of something antithetical. The normal, the worthy student and the acceptable processes of admission are legitimised by references to the abnormal, the unworthy, the unacceptable.
>
> (Williams, 1997, p. 26)

In the context of Art and Design, the 'worthy' student seems to be associated with the 'unusual', the processes of creativity that involve risk-taking and invention (characteristics historically associated with white, eurocentric forms of masculinity). However, this is not a discourse about difference in relation to redressing social inequality and celebrating (ethnic and class) diversity. This is a discourse that is embedded in entitlement discourses and in middle-class judgments about what counts as valuable and tasteful (Skeggs, 2004).

Recognition is an important concept that helps shed light on selection processes. Recognition is about the politics of identity and the ways certain people have historically been misrecognised (Fraser, 1997). In the context of access to higher education, this is about the struggle to be recognized as a potential student of higher education (Burke, 2002, 2006). This concept helps to shed light on the struggles of candidates from working-class

and minority ethnic backgrounds to be recognized as 'worthy' of selection within a framework that validates and legitimizes the dispositions and subjectivities of the 'standard' or 'traditional' student of higher education. In the moment of the selection interview, judgments are being enacted, which are claimed to be 'fair' and 'transparent' and even 'value-free' but clearly (from the long list of quite specific and value-loaded sets of expectations) are embedded in histories of classed and racialised inequalities, mis/recognitions and complex power relations. It is important to note that individual admissions tutors are as implicated in such complex social relations and discourses as the candidates themselves. Thus, this is not about individual decisions but about racialised and classed policies, structures and discourses that constrain the possibilities for individuals to operate in inclusive ways.

One of the recurring themes in relation to expectations of candidates was good communication skills. This seemed to relate to all forms of communication, for example, written, spoken and the expression of creativity and ideas. Literature in the field focusing on academic literacies and widening participation has argued that linguistic capital operates as a form of exclusion because 'good communication' is judged from a white, middle-class perspective (Lillis, 1997, 2002; Burke and Hermershmidt, 2005; Burke and Jackson, 2007). Lea and Street (1997) propose a theoretical framework to help develop practices that might work towards inclusion. This involves understanding writing and other forms of communication as sets of social practices rather than simply as skills or techniques that are straightforwardly taught to students. This recognizes that communication is not only about developing certain skills (such as writing an introduction, proofreading or compiling a bibliography); it is about the complex decoding of tacit understandings and conventions and as such remain mysterious to those on the outside of academia (Francis et al., 2003; Burke and Jackson, 2007; Leathwood and Read, 2009).

Such theoretical insights about the nature of writing and communication raise challenges for admissions policies and practices in relation to the commitment to widening educational participation, and more specifically to developing inclusive, equitable and anti- discriminatory practices. How

might admissions tutors best assess potential in relation to communication skills with regard to those candidates from traditionally under (mis) represented backgrounds, whose linguistic and literacy practices are often drawing on epistemological frameworks outside of those privileged in academia? Such candidates might not yet have access to the tools to decode the tacit academic conventions but this does not mean that they do not have the potential to participate in higher education. The ways that the candidate articulates and expresses her or his ideas in the interview situation, and the way this is judged and assessed, relates directly to the issues of habitus and subjectivity outlined earlier in this report.

The assumptions behind the claim that communication skills are central criterion in the selection process deserves close attention. The admission tutor in the following quotation emphasizes communication skills as essential, suggesting that communication skills are something an individual has naturally (rather than as something that is learned, developed and acquired through particular forms of capital):

> Well, I am looking for people who are *natural communicators* really. Because, essentially, what they are doing is communicating in the same way as painters communicate and poets communicate and authors communicate. My students communicate various things, making films about particular emotions, stories, whatever. So I am looking for someone who is a *good communicator.* Also, if they are going to successfully move on from the degree to work within the industry, that is, if you like, the main mast of the ship, being able to communicate. People won't work with you if you don't communicate or you can't communicate. It is essential. In the same way as I think it is essential for me and any teacher to be able to communicate. That is my stock in trade, to an extent. And I think that is one of the primary things. So one of the things I look for, I would always look for a *good ability with English.* Spoken as well as written. Partly because, again, there is so much *writing* involved with the course, and so much communication with people, that it is important that they can do that successfully, diplomatically. Obviously those are the kind of things that come with

age, in some respects, and some students aren't particularly diplomatic, but they might learn to be, after a few years.

The admissions tutor does admit that good communication might 'come with age' and be developed over time. However, simultaneously, she is claiming that an essential characteristic for successful candidates is the demonstration of being a 'natural communicator', implying that good communication is an ability that can be measured through the selection process and is inherent and fixed. Interestingly, in relation to her perspectives on judging a candidate's potential to develop communication skills, she explains:

> I have to say I sometimes think that interviewing and offering places to young men, at a particular time in their life, which is kind of mid to late teens, is not always the best time to really see what a person, grown, is going to be. And it is very difficult to make the assumption this person might change, because they might not. So from that point of view I think it is kind of difficult. And certainly with young women, as well, when they come in they can be very quiet and not very talkative because they are nervous. Or, conversely they can talk my ear off because they are nervous. It is kind of difficult, but you just have to try and gauge as best as you can, that they have those communicating skills.

This statement deserves closer analysis, to deconstruct the assumptions about gender shaping her assessment about a candidate's potential to develop good communication skills. She emphasizes the need to assess women and men differently on the basis of likely weaknesses that might be associated with being a man or being a woman. This is based on flawed biological assumptions about gender, which rest on notions that men and women are naturally different and inclined to certain kinds of behaviour (Epstein et al., 1997). Her approach then is informed by wider (implicitly sexist) assumptions about the differences between men and women. She suggests that a lack of maturity on the part of young men and a problem of nervousness in young women might be issues for admissions tutors to be aware of. Although she is talking about her desire to give the opportunity to the candidates to demonstrate their capacity to grow and develop,

she is also saying it's very hard to gauge whether or not there is 'really' the potential for development. She reiterates the point that having such skills is either present or it is not (whether that is in terms of potential or actual skill). She explains that it is 'very difficult to make the assumption this person might change, because they might not'. In her statement, communication skills emerges as a set of fixed attributes, as something that is inherent in terms of ability and to some extent fixed and judgments should be made in relation to the differences between men and women.

The admissions tutors' accounts of their expectations reflect wider discourses and understandings about intelligence and ability. Their understandings are shaped by deeply embedded assumptions about the nature of ability, which have been taken up by policy and embedded in assessment frameworks and practices, including the assessment process involved in admissions practices. David Gillborn (2008) traces highly problematic but nonetheless hegemonic discourses of ability to those assertions made by a group of US psychologists presented in the 1990s as 'experts in intelligence and allied fields' who claimed that ability is genetic and tied to racial background (Gillborn, 2008, p. 112). Although most policy makers would distance themselves publicly from such claims, Gillborn argues that 'policymakers in Britain act as if they fundamentally accept the same simple view of intelligence (although they substitute the term ability as a relatively fixed and measurable quality that differs between individuals)' (Gillborn, 2008, p. 112). He further explains that policy makers seem to believe that ability is 'some inner quality or potential' (Gillborn, 2008, p. 114).

Gillborn's critique of ability builds on the insights of sociological theory such as that of Bourdieu outlined above. Such theoretical insights are important in teasing out the assumptions behind judgments about candidates' potential ability, which are constructed as natural and innate but are socially connected to habitus and cultural capital. This critique helps to expose the ways that social inequalities are unwittingly reproduced through the very admissions frameworks that have been designed by policymakers to be 'fair' and 'transparent'. This is not about individual racism or classism; it is far more insidious and complex than that. This is about

histories of institutional racism and classism that have seeped into the very structures, practices and discourses in higher education that are attempting to eradicate social inequality. It is only by deconstructing the criteria (often itself implicit and vague), which informs individual admissions tutor's decision-making processes, that an understanding of the depth of the problem of the operation of exclusion can be made visible.

[…]

This report argues that admissions practices are tied up with complex operations of exclusion, which privilege the habitus, subjectivities and cultural and linguistic capital of 'traditional' students, who tend to come from white, middle-class backgrounds. Although admissions systems are designed to be 'fair' and 'transparent', the lack of attention to complex sets of inequalities, differences and mis/recognitions, we argue, undermines the project of widening participation to art and design courses in higher education. The focus on individual practices rather than wider sets of discursive practices helps to hide the workings of inequality in processes of selection.

This research raises conceptual and theoretical issues for understanding processes of exclusion and mis/recognition at play in higher education and disciplinary fields, most specifically art and design. There are also important practical and professional implications to consider from the analysis of the data offered in this report. A key dimension of this concerns the processes of selection, judgment and recognition in the decisions being made through art and design admissions frameworks. We have argued that admissions tutors' decisions about individual candidates must be understood in relation to the wider contexts in which these decisions are located and embedded. This necessitates that institutional and strategic frameworks are developed in order to support admissions tutors in the complex processes of decision-making they are engaged in and responsible for, and that issues of inclusion and equity are placed at the centre of this process. It is important to highlight that this is not simply about creating transparency, although being explicit and clear about the expectations is an important dimension of creating inclusive admissions practices. This

is about engaging admissions tutors in reflecting on the ways that their decisions might be shaped by the (discriminatory) values and perspectives shaping how candidates are (or are not) recognized as having talent, ability and potential. Furthermore, there are implications for the kinds of reflective and critical practices encouraged, or not encouraged, on art and design teacher development and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, including how art and design HE teachers are subject to 'regulatory discourses' (Atkinson, Brown and England, 2006).

Although we feel it is crucial to resist the creation of a 'how to' list, or a set of tick boxes, we do want to suggest that there are steps that must be taken to ensure a more inclusive and socially just set of admissions practices. We make the following recommendations with the caveat that there are no universal rules to ensure inclusion, equality and anti-discrimination, not least because these issues are contextual and different individuals bring to those contexts complex formations of identity.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Institutions, departments and course teams must be as explicit as possible about the criteria they are drawing on in the selection process, including the more implicit dimensions of the process;

2. Such advice and information should include practical issues, such as what constitutes a 'good' portfolio, but should be underpinned by sensitivities to the ways certain expectations might be unwittingly excluding those candidates who don't yet have access to particular forms of cultural capital;

3. Such information must be made as accessible to candidates as possible, and must not rely on prior knowledge or understanding of asking the 'right kinds of questions';

4. Institutions should provide all staff involved in admissions with carefully designed continuing professional development (CPD), which includes close attention to equitable, anti-discriminatory practices, including the subtle processes of mis/recognition highlighted in this report;

5. Admissions tutors should understand that simply having a set of standard questions for an interview, which all candidates are asked, is not the same as being 'fair'. Rather admissions tutors should be required to consider how those questions might privilege particular values and perspectives at the expense of candidates from traditionally under (mis) represented backgrounds;

6. Interview questions therefore should avoid being value-loaded, or should be designed to value different sets of experiences and perspectives, taking into account the candidates' age and socio-cultural background;

7. Admissions tutors must be made accountable by the institution in making their decisions against criteria that places value on equitable and inclusive practices, so that this is an explicit and central part of the selection process;

8. Admissions teams must be held accountable by their institution in relation to their instruments of assessment (including for example, criteria for judging portfolios, interview questions, tests), which must be fit for purpose not only in selecting candidates with potential, but doing so in ways that are equitable, anti-discriminatory and inclusive;

9. The art and design academy needs to carefully scrutinise the potentially discriminatory role of internal progression schemes, and foundation diplomas, in the admissions process;

10. The art and design academy needs to further investigate the extent to which the inequitable admissions practices described in this report reflect equally discriminatory curriculum and pedagogical practices.

Chapter 2.3

Border Crossings: In/exclusion and higher education in art and design[1]
Fiona Dean

Undertaken within a Scottish institution, prior to its shift to UCAS, this research identified and explored *individual* and *institutional* factors and their effects on applicants' chances of entry to First Year of BA(Hons) Fine Art and Design. Qualitatively, it tracked and observed more than 20 selectors as they directly verbalised responses to the visual and written submissions of some 75 applicants, as their applications moved through the various stages of the selection process. A broader quantitative look, examined how this detail played out more widely across *all* applicants – those who did gain entry as well as those who did not. In doing so, it makes visible the complexity of the admissions process to art and design and lays open the diverse ways that selectors reach understanding of the qualities in an applicant and their portfolio that affect chances of in/exclusion.

Individual and Institutional Factors

If there was any sense that in/exclusion to higher education in the arts and design might be determined or resolved simply by altering indicators and num-

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bers in terms of social class, educational route or the spatiality of where an individual lives, then this study offers a different kind of view. It poses questions of indicators, revealing more complex processes of looking and decision-making, in which selectors often try to see beyond the surface of the visual and written in search of the individual. It reveals a process in which little is fixed; where new work can look old and older work can look new and it is not always or only visual submissions, qualification levels or experience that affects chances of entry, but a dynamic and shifting array of factors. In doing so it demonstrates shifting ideas of risk and the often, pronounced distinction and distance between higher education and different kinds of learning contexts, such as schools and further education. The study shows the diversity of *institutional* and *individual* factors that can affect applicants' chances as they move through the key stages of admissions from initial portfolio review, to interview and entry/non-entry. What constitutes *potential* is key and is bound up in ideas of *readiness* and *teachability*, revealing the changing balance in what is looked for in a process that is fraught with risk, chance, ethics, trust and emotional dilemmas. As applicants' chances of in/exclusion displace across selectors, the factors that affect the possibility of entry take new forms and combinations that are rooted in qualities that *applicants* bring with them as well as what *selectors* bring into the process. How these fold together can lead to very different outcomes.

1. Indicators of in/exclusion: social class dynamic

A wide number of variables were investigated in terms of in/exclusion. As a key indicator, social class was looked at in detail, both singularly and dynamically in relation to wide ranging factors such as gender, ethnicity, postcode and type of school. The influence of social class on its own was not found to have significant effect across any of the key stages, however, the following relations are of importance:

— Social class and schools identified as under-represented in higher education

Unexpectedly higher numbers of applicants from such schools came from professional and intermediate social classes, more than 3 times as many

as those from semi and unskilled backgrounds. When entry chances were factored in, compared to applicants from semi and unskilled backgrounds, twice as many candidates from such target schools who gained entry were from professional and intermediate classes.

These findings reinforce that even within targeted schools the social make-up of individuals is potentially heterogeneous, suggesting that those applying and gaining entry are still more likely to come from groups already better represented in higher education. This raises questions on the targeting of resources, reinforcing the need to go beyond broad percentage based targets for widening access and single indicators of in/exclusion such as social class and type of school. It suggests that more complex, multi-modelling and context specific means of monitoring, such as 'catchment area context statistics' (HEFCE, 1999, p. 10) and individual orientated data are necessary to enable greater understanding of the characteristics of who applies and who actually gains entry.

— Social class and portfolio scores

This correlation was examined to explore whether social class had effect on higher or lower scores of visual work submitted; the *quality* of an applicant's work. The findings showed that social class *did not* have significant effect on how an applicant was scored. This is a critical finding in terms of individual ability, standards and widening access. In this context, overall, applicants from diverse social backgrounds did not score significantly different from one another in terms of their visual submissions; neither did social class significantly affect chances of interview or entry.

While once *inside* the admissions process, factors such as social class, age, type of school, and ethnicity, did not significantly affect how a candidate moved through the key stages, the findings reinforce the need to encourage a more diverse body of applicants and monitor entry and progression rates. Compared to applicants from semi and unskilled backgrounds, more than 5 times as many applicants came from professional and intermediate classes – 57.6% compared to 11.2%. More pronouncedly, in comparison

with white applicants, submissions from black and minority ethnic groups accounted for a fraction – less than 4% of applicants. These absences, reinforce the need for more detailed work that engages with the kinds of sociological and cultural factors that inhibit and encourage an individual's decision to study – particularly in relation to curriculum content and modes of delivery – such as parental experience, distinctions across different ethnic groups (Gayle *et al*, 2003; Modood and Shiner, 1994) and the influence of familial and institutional habitus on decision and choice of place to study (Reay *et al* 2002b).

2. Narratives of in/exclusion: departmental effects and devolved processes of looking

[…]

Across all areas of the selection process, the only constantly significant factor that did affect how applicants tracked through admissions were scored, as well as interview and entry chances, was the influence of individual selectors and subject areas.

What selectors looked for:

[…]

— *potential:* in this study, potential was a key attribute and was most often relayed as an applicant's capacity to be/become an independent learner.

[…]

— *readiness:* potential was bound up in selectors' ideas of an applicant's *readiness* to be/become an independent learner, ready to learn on and through the course applied to.

[…]

— *teachability:* potential and readiness also related to ideas of an applicant's teachability, a facility in candidates not only to learn but also to make learning their own.

[…]

— *kinds of knowledge: readiness*, *teachability* and *potential* were not tied to a fixed expectation of the kinds and levels of knowledge an applicant should have but again shifted in relation to the individual applicant and who was doing the looking and selecting. This led to an array of possibilities, from 'no excuse for not being informed' to a struggle to make allowances for 'someone that maybe doesn't have that opportunity'. Kinds of knowledge could sometimes be linked to highly specific subject needs and individual perspectives and at others, emerged as a broader concern for applicants to have an idea of the field and critical awareness. While many selectors struggled to make sense of distinctions in an individual's experience and the role of others, such as schools and family in influencing understanding, responsibility *to* know was often part of evaluating an applicant's readiness for further study; relaying learner motivation.

— *risk and risk taking*: the shifting combination of factors that constituted readiness, potential and teachability were often tied into different perceptions of risk across selectors. Risk-taking and unpredictability in an applicant and their work were often qualities that many selectors desired. However, again, depending on who was looking, too much and too many experiences might present a challenge to learning and teaching that took an applicant *beyond* entry. Potential, readiness and teachability were often a conflation of selectors' desire for uncertainty and risk, and an applicant's willingness to step out of a 'comfort' zone and engage with/within these kinds of processes. However, the search for risk was often a balance; not too much or too little, just 'somewhere in the middle'.

How selectors looked:

[…]

— *ontology*: reaching understanding of an applicant and their work was often a multi sensorial process of looking, touching and experiencing visual work that could have physical and emotional effect, both pulling selectors in or pushing them away.

[…]

— *looking beyond*: reaching understanding also often involved looking past what and how someone was taught; beyond the effects of a good school, course or teacher; the 'aesthetics of presentation' or a 'glossy portfolio' in order to get to individual experience.

[…]

— *ethics and emotions*: these factors combined to make admissions, for some selectors, one of the most emotional jobs they had to do, as they grappled with 'all that hope' and struggled to make sense of the kinds of chances a candidate had as well as the consequences of their decisions on the individual.

[…]

While responsibility to know was a crucial part of determining a candidate's readiness and capacity for independent learning, many selectors did struggle emotionally. What is critical to note is that any expectation of skill, knowledge of subject areas and the wider field of art and design was not bound by social class and could, in most cases, be elided by selectors' belief in the 'individual' and the 'commitment' and desire of an applicant to learn through the course. This was a process that actively sought out potential to be an independent learner through commitment and motivation to study.

3. Interview and entry chances across all applicants: significant factors

[…]

How selectors came to an understanding of individual applicants also influenced use of the diverse mechanisms available to them, in particular the interview. Here selectors' uncertainty in terms of visual work could be positively affected by meeting the person and visa versa. For many selectors, the interview was a pre-admissions counselling opportunity, essential to reaching understanding of the applicant, their experiences and how this related to the visual and written submission; finding out 'what kind of person' they were, and if they were 'more mature' than the 'work represents'. Importantly, this allowed many borderline and lower scoring applicants to make it through, however, it could also lead to the exclusion of higher scoring applicants – the 'impressive folder' that didn't extend to the person or 'something underneath'.

[…]

Specialist areas

Interview chances […] were not only affected – as might have been expected – by the numbers of applicants to specific areas but again came back to how selectors looked.

— In three specialist areas, in comparison with applicants to all other areas, probability of entry rose from 26% to 47%, 51% and 59% across each of the three disciplines

Qualifications

— Compared to applicants qualified in both English and Art, candidates qualified in Art but *not* qualified in English had less probability of entry, with chances dropping from 26% to 10%.

Applicants applying to the 3 selection areas noted above still showed slightly increased chances of entry.

— Compared to applicants qualified in both English and Art, candidates qualified in English but not qualified in Art had increased probability of entry, with chances rising from 26% to 53%.

Applicants applying to the 3 selection areas noted above again showed slightly increased chances of entry.

These departmental and qualification effects are of particular importance and have to be interpreted carefully. Qualifications in English and Art are indicated in much application guidance material as necessary to an applicant's submission and most applicants came equipped with qualifications in English and Art. Yet in this process, the 'cult of the grade' (Bourdieu and Passeron, in Brown and Scase, 1994, p. 55) is brought into question; an applicant could have a range of qualifications, from HNC to HND and not feel the effects of increased chances of entry. Brown and Scase (1994) suggest that qualifications can relay ability to 'jump through […] hoops' (p. 138) and in this process it may offer part of a more complex explanation. Selectors looked for applicants and work that went 'beyond' what was taught formally, to what they were 'teaching themselves'. This idea of a potential positive effect from the absence of a subject related qualification clearly merits further, longer-term investigation, as does the negative effect of not being qualified in English. When viewed in relation to a visually based programme it may suggest different priorities in what is looked for in an applicant, or levels of importance of specific qualifications. It raises important questions in terms of articulation between learning contexts, reinforcing the idea that individual applicant experience, how it is conveyed and how selectors work to reach understanding may play the most significant part in how applicants' chances of in/exclusion play out.

The findings present considerable implications and challenges across a number of areas, particularly strategies to monitor, widen and understand in/exclusion. One of the strengths of this selection process was that one

size did not fit all and any sense of predictability in what led to in/exclusion did not always play out. This was a system in which chances of entry were not solely dependent on applicants achieving high portfolio scores or coming equipped with good qualification levels in Art; neither was it dependent on the type of school attended, postcode area a person lived in or their social class. A diversity of influencing factors such as kinds of knowledge, social and cultural capital flitted in and out, however, what led to rejection for one person could be the very factors that included another. Importantly, the study suggests a more dynamic search for *potential* in applicants that extends beyond the one dimensionality of single indicators.

It showed that the key factor that affected applicants' chances most significantly was a dependency on *who* was looking, *how* they looked and *what* they looked for. Such an individualised approach presents a challenge – how might processes of selection where little seems fixed, be articulated with greater transparency to applicants, providers and funders without stifling the very complexity that constitutes part of its potential strengths? Part of the solution may lie in how a depth and care of practice – demonstrated by many selectors – might extend more widely through a shared ethos and sense of purpose in selection/admissions processes.

The following propositions try to engage with this need for complexity – not to make more complicated – but in an attempt to unpack and develop the potential of selectors' processes more strategically. They are presented developmentally and as areas for future research.

1. **Articulation between schools, further education and higher education**
    The findings from the study reinforce a very real need for cross sector exchange, research and development in order to understand the distance and difference in and between learning and teaching contexts. The unusual influence of qualifications, particularly English and Art, is especially relevant to SCQF and SQA and how credits and qualifications transfer into different levels of entry. Importantly, if and how the qualification effect might occur within the selection processes of other institutions of art and design as well as possible longer term effects, offers a criti-

cal area for further investigation. Increased networks between different educational sites, schools, Further and Higher Education, could allow staff to shadow processes such as admissions, assessment and learning and teaching practices. This offers opportunity for Continuing Professional Development in the sharing, research and development of practice relevant to cross sector understanding. It would also enable the unpacking of ideas of potential, readiness, risk and teachablity across different contexts; questioning examination processes and criteria, the kinds of influence that they have on the nature of work being produced and its relation to the qualities looked for in an individual and their portfolio.

2. **Context specific indicators and the student experience**
The study suggests a need for different kinds and combinations of indicators of in/exclusion that are more multi-layered and micro, engaging with individual experiences. The quantitative and qualitative work shows that institutions need to continually test and question the appropriateness of single indicators to their specific applicant and student body, as well as the learning and teaching context. This idea of context specificness, potentially affects the allocation of resources and forms of practice necessary to address in/exclusion more meaningfully. This is critical as there is clearly a need to encourage a broader, more ethnically and socially diverse body of applicants. This requires wider forms of monitoring and different methods of coming to understanding of the range of factors that affect in/exclusion – both individual and institutional. The importance of extended longitudinal qualitative and quantitative work that charts student retention, withdrawals, leaves of absence and exit qualifications in relation to entry level information and students' experiences of learning and teaching is a key area for development. This could enable greater understanding of the complex of factors that affect an individual's journey into and through art and design education.

3. **Pre-admissions counselling and information**
While much widening access work in the arts focuses on the development of visual work and portfolios, this study reinforces the need for greater pre and post admissions advice, counselling and feedback,

in order to understand the differences between learning contexts and the reasons for non entry. Such advice could make applicants/providers aware of the shifting odds of in/exclusion across selection areas, encouraging questions of the process, assisting with choice and decision-making and achieving a greater sense of cross-sectoral ownership of the process.

4. Interviews

As questions of subjectivity and lack of equality in interview processes grow, it is important to recognise that in many selection areas, the interview served an important counselling purpose, critical to an applicant's chances of entry. The interview could provide a means of stepping outside of portfolio scores and qualifications to reach other kinds of understanding of the individual. Rather than erase such potential, the challenge is to identify and have confidence in where processes work and agree, ensure and articulate parity in purpose and approach across interviewers.

5. Visible criteria

The development of a visual resource of portfolio submissions could show the different ways that the visual relates to written criteria, articulating and making visible what qualities such as *potential, readiness, teachability* and *risk* look like. It could demonstrate difference across selection areas and disciplines visually, which would be key in showing what selectors look for and how they look; that there is no single way of doing things. Part of these *visible criteria* would include making chance visible, allowing applicants to see the different and shifting odds of in/ exclusion across selection areas. This could have significant effect on the kinds of informed choices and decisions applicants can make.

6. Open days

Open days provide sites for much more varied work, geared towards different and diverse audiences. Smaller and more intimate conversations between staff, students and applicants could enable greater dialogue. Student accounts of experiences of admissions could be shared;

teachers and providers could relay their experiences of admissions; staff across disciplines could show and discuss how admissions processes relate to learning and teaching. All of these could open up forums for discussion and exchange necessary to articulating understanding.

7. Devolved and shared criteria

One of the dangers of overly devolved processes is achieving parity in procedures and methods. Similarly, too generic and potentially over-burdening criteria in the selection process may lead to a loss of the very factors that allow flexibility and engagement with difference.

Developing more meaningful forms of staff development in relation to admissions, selection and assessment is critical. This involves time for reflection and greater crossings between academic, support and administrative staff to allow processes to work more dynamically; reflecting on practice in order to develop shared ownership and understanding of purpose, ethos and criteria for admissions. This kind of work could help point the way forward for an admissions process in which the challenge may be to retain a diversity of approaches while ensuring that staff and potential applicants understand the different ways of looking and shifting levels of chance.

8. Learning and teaching research

The study reveals a complexity of approaches within admissions to art and design and suggests a very real gap and need to get inside of processes as they happen. Understanding and making connections between admissions and learning and teaching – pedagogy – could enhance understanding on a number of levels. If *potential, readiness* and *teachability* are tied into a search for independence and learner motivation, capacity building of potential applicants and within the sector has to address in greater depth the factors and attributes that constitute independent learning, risk and risk taking. Investigating how, what and where students learn, in particular what constitutes risk to both learners and teachers, could open the way for joint staff/ student, as well as cross sector research.

9. Wider strategies and educational change

The study reinforces that kinds of admissions information, where it resides and in what format are critical to consider if a greater diversity of applicants is to be encouraged. Much admissions information is only accessible to those who have made a decision to study – those looking for information. While institutional links with formal sites such as schools and further education are important to develop, strategies to widen access – particularly in the arts – have the potential to be much more proactive in seeking out and encouraging a socially and ethnically diverse body of applicants, by engaging with audiences through new sites, spaces and approaches. Greater consideration of individual access to information and the potential effects of shifting art practice into informal sites could encourage more radical engagement with the politics of in/exclusion. The work of artists/educators such as Ewald (2000), Lacy (1996) and Manglano-Ovalle (1994), signal how these approaches might become integrated into higher education research and development that extends, alters and re-frames the work of artists, educators and institutions within wider, social, cultural and policy contexts. The challenge for art schools is to become critically involved in the terrain of in/exclusion, exploring, testing and making visible what practice can bring that is different.

[…]

Chapter 2.4

Insight on OutReach: Towards a critical practice [1]
Olivia Sagan, Emily Candela and Bess Frimodig

[…]

Insight on OutReach: old allegiances and new alignments

> Educational practice is very often situated between the extremes of 'elite' and 'democratic' views of creativity.
>
> (Banaji et al, 2006, p. 13)

The University of the Arts London has an Access Agreement which commits the university to spending 12.5% of its additional fee income on outreach. A vital role of the UAL Widening Participation Department is the planning, delivery and sustaining of a portfolio of this outreach activity. Each of the university's six colleges has its own structure of outreach management and delivery, leading sometimes to 'WP fiefdoms, where colleagues use WP as one-upmanship' (WP Manager), yet there is a rich portfolio of partners, initiatives and documentation of work.

Insight on OutReach set out to observe and document a slice of this activity, spotlighting four case studies of creative outreach projects run by the university in partnership with schools, Colleges of Further Education (FE),

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1   This is excerpted from: Sagan, O. Candela, E. and Frimodig, B. (2010) 'Insight on OutReach: Towards a critical practice'. *International Journal of Education through Art*, 6(2). pp. 145-161

community groups, charitable foundations and art and design foundations. The project began with a pilot case study of an outreach project (Talent Shop) based at London College of Communication in 2007. This was a collaboration with the Ideas Foundation, the National Maritime Museum and a number of schools.

Each case study was undertaken by an outreach practitioner at UAL after successfully submitting a proposal in a competitive process. A key aim of the project was to enable practitioners who had not undertaken research before to participate. They were asked to consider certain questions, asking, for example how effective a force UAL outreach projects were for widening participation in the arts and art education and which elements of their outreach project, if any, made it effective.

The project aimed to explore, problematise and critique the current model of arts outreach in HE, to encourage a broader and more radicalised view of outreach amongst practitioners, and to forge a tighter connection between the widening participation agenda and the individual remit of practitioners. This research brought to the surface an abundance of observations, reflections and questions about art practice, pedagogy, partnerships, recruitment, evaluation, widening participation, and the issue of what university outreach *does*.

The four UAL projects covered in this research involved partnerships with community organisations and schools. Each strove to bring groups that are under-represented in HAE (Higher Arts Education) into the art college environment. In reflecting on their projects, the researcher-practitioners noted an array of successes, shortfalls, limitations, perceived weaknesses and wishes for the outreach programmes of their colleges. One raised doubts about the effectiveness of outreach work that aims to provide progression routes into UAL, because, as she noted, the participants on her project were 'likely to lack the academic requirements to enable their participation in our colleges' (Sagan and Candela, 2009, p. 14), and that the aim of the project seemed to stray from progression to a vague notion of art as 'therapy' (ibid., p. 29). This points to questions regarding who

is the imagined community for this outreach, and its overall purpose. If goals are not discussed, there is a risk that outreach projects might proceed automatically, not acting as the force for change that its link with widening participation demands:

> I also find art college very un-political and unaware socially – there is a misconception that art college is liberal and open. Because widening participation can often be de-politicised it becomes less about social justice and more about organising some nice workshops with some poor kids.
>
> <div align="right">(UAL outreach practitioner)</div>

Most researcher-practitioners involved in *Insight on OutReach* reflected upon opportunities that their projects offered to learn from their outreach 'audience'. They were aware of the ways that their work acted within the university itself:

> …the project has had an impact on widening participation in-reach as well. It has also given us an insight into student lives and the challenges that young people face…
>
> <div align="right">(Sagan and Candela, 2009, p. 52)</div>

Developments that can seem like setbacks or deviations from the project plans can, upon reflection, offer the chance for the outreaching institution to develop a more complex view of the community with which they are working. Another practitioner found that her ideal of a 'less structured' approach to the workshops did not suit the needs of her partner.

> [For the school] It was important that the project took into account school curriculum demands, was delivered in a similar way to the school lessons, covered lots of technical information […], and that all [students studying this art form] from Year 12 participated. After discussion, we agreed that Part A of the project was to be designed along these lines, with Part B being less structured.
>
> <div align="right">(Sagan and Candela, 2009, p. 32)</div>

In drawing together some of the people, ideas and activities that make up the university's disparate but vivacious outreach activities, *Insight on OutReach* made a step toward further discussion and debate, and, hopefully toward a future *critical* community of practice which enables outreach practitioners to professionalise their experience and knowledge and share those difficult questions with others working in the same territory. Overall, revealed in this work were characteristics of outreach which were by no means specific to this university. It is these characteristics, and their suggestion of a particular model, stance and approach to outreach, which are seen as problematic, in that by and large they reproduce a cultural order within which 'high' arts (including HAE) and community arts are conceived of at best, as unequal partners. Such characteristics and perspectives are shared by many a large organisation that has adjusted (commendably) to the demands of changes in policy and funding, and is attempting to address its responsibility towards widening the participation in the arts of still under-represented groups of people. That said, the unsettling of this status quo is important not only politically and pedagogically, but culturally; the unseating of assumption, stereotype and aesthetic ennui being *the* business, arguably, of both community arts and critical art education.

One of these characteristics is the relative 'sprawling' and untracked nature of outreach work across UAL, complicated, no doubt by the university's composition of 6 colleges and numerous sites – without taking into account the extra sites of the outreach projects. A more coherent approach might increase effectiveness but also consolidate the practices and knowledges, including the invaluable tacit knowledge of outreach (Polyani, 1962) which commonly is lost, evaporating at the projects' end. Such consolidation and sharing might include attempts at documentation, debate and dissemination but would need to steer clear of endorsing a standardised approach which might further erode autonomy and the individual outreach response of each college and community venue to its locality.

A second characteristic is that there is no consistent approach to evaluation which might be used principally as formative and developmental, leading to better allocation and use of the university's substantial outreach

resource and expertise. Whilst not advocating that we take on an approach to evaluation which suggests social impact can be evaluated, or that confidence can be measured, or that well-being can be mapped (as is currently fashionable in evaluation of third sector work) neither is it helpful that as artists and teachers, community developers and researchers, we delegate the task of measurement and evaluation to 'others' – rather than attempt to develop creative, fit-for-purpose evaluative tools and approaches, working, for example with an 'illuminative evaluation' approach. This uses qualitative methods to explore operations, procedures, rationale and difficulties within a particular initiative and is concerned with description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction (Parlett & Hamilton, 1977).

A third characteristic which, again, is rather typical of outreach activity is the widespread lack of training, support and career recognition of our outreach practitioners. In addition, unlike other practitioners, they have largely 'escaped', for example, the demands of the audit and assessment culture, pressures to become 'reflective practitioners', or to engage in Continuing Professional Development. While no doubt some of this has maintained the practitioner in a space of relative autonomy and liberty, this has also rooted this practitioner as 'other' to the mainstream, with the cost that this entails. This peripheral character of outreach leads to one further characteristic: that much outreach work is peppered with pedagogic practices which are sometimes outmoded, usually unobserved and invariably under-theorised. Additionally, much university outreach work is estranged from recent developments and theories in community art or participatory 'high' art practices, some of which have been described earlier in this article. It is specifically an informed sharing of debate between these two areas that we are promoting in this article.

This picture of university outreach as sporadic, unevaluated, marginal in relation to a deemed 'core' business, with under-supported and under-recognised and sometimes under-qualified practitioners, is a residue of a 1980s approach to outreach which is still ubiquitous today. One researcher-practitioner in *Insight on OutReach*, pondering the socio-political imperative of

widening participation objectives with which university outreach projects are charged, asks: 'can we realistically do this within our widening participation teams?' This hints at an intellectual isolation of some practitioners, and their seclusion from relevant ideology, strategy and planning. It also reflects a culture in which outreach activity is invariably relegated to a silo, regarded as a quaint adjunct to core business, or simply overlooked. More politically problematic, this culture permits a paternalistic, top-down, 'parachute in' model of outreach, in which those with the resources, skills (and privilege) drop in on those who have less, and share a lesser status vis-à-vis the parachuter and the organisation represented. The direction of transfer remains largely intact, with 'us' outreaching to 'them' in a one-way traffic which usually (although not always) reinforces a method by which the out-reacher may not seek to actively learn from those parachuted into, let alone transfer those lessons back to the high / education / cultural organisation with the view to changing our culture and practices. There are resonances here of noblesse oblige, of 'aesthetic evangelism' (Kester, 1995) and our long and enigmatic relationship with *charity*. Community arts may have a tendency to become patronising and almost colonial with 'well intentioned gestures for democratization' objectifying ethnicity and 'otherness' out of a 'lust for authentic histories and identities' (Kwon 2002, p. 139) instead of practicing an equal exchange of a same level of professionalism, interests and knowledge transfer.

Changing this geography is a job not to be underestimated – even given the relatively sophisticated approach to HAE outreach work when compared, in at least one investigation, with the situation in the U.S. (UAL, 2004). Such change needs to be first and foremost a change reflecting an *embedded* widening participation ethos and politic. There needs to be maximum buy-in and participation of its labour force and a full, if gradual, acknowledgement by practitioners of the political, ethical and creative nature of their endeavours. Any worthwhile change needs to be congruent with an art and design university – which, however much an attempt to collapse differences proceeds, *is* different to other universities with a difference that in many ways needs to be celebrated rather than ironed out.

This change also needs to address some of the theoretical limitations of working in a 1980s vein – and here links, for example, with the National Arts Learning Network (NALN) and other prominent organisations, play an important part in leading the HAE establishment into a more informed and provocative debate about outreach and widening participation. This change in addition needs to confront some of its relationship problems. We need to genuinely experiment with ways of working, building trust and engaging in partnerships with organisations within empowering relationships from which we seek to *learn*; about two way relationships; about redistribution of resources and about how the face of art and design education needs to change in order to widen access and broaden the symbols and texts which are the currency of artistic production.

And finally, rather more prosaically, any change needs to be efficient in cost terms. This is not because we can or even should measure the impact of the arts and outreach endeavours using a tidy metric, but because once again, we cannot afford to be saddled with a 1980s laissez faire model of educational initiative. This will simply, in the long run, damage the potential for a sustainable approach to widening participation. A lack of accounting rigour will also feed into the hands of sceptics of widening participation, and reinforce charges of spurious uses of public funds. All of this lays a burden on outreach work that it has frequently shirked from carrying: that of being an agent of social justice, rather than an arts club.

Outreach to insight

> …the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are.
>> (Foucault as quoted in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 216)

Discussions around community art and outreach can be politically fraught. There are territorial boundaries at risk, issues around access to resources, threatened identities, and practitioners positioned variously along an extended continuum of political awareness and belief. Acknowledgement

of these tensions and vibrancy is, we argue, wanting in many arts institutions, in art education, and by some accounts, amongst artists working in the social realm themselves. We welcome a critical social engagement by *and between* outreach, community art, art education and fine art practice, and suggest that the boundaries between these are, in fact, both more porous and contested than current policy and practice suggest.

The relative successes or weaknesses of the outreach activities involved in *Insight on OutReach* aside, this project, taken as a whole initiative, opened up a much-needed space to begin reflecting on, and openly discussing, art's social engagement in the context of HAE outreach. This belated, but very welcome outcome was made possible, however, through the funding and support of the Department for Widening Participation at the university. This in itself suggests a continued eschewal of a whole-organisation approach to addressing some of the vital issues of social justice and the arts, and a relative sidelining of the political implications of this debate to the remit of widening participation alone, within arts education.

Initiatives in higher education are frequently characterised by a clamouring for certainty. This article instead calls for a tolerance of *un*certainty in debate. In calling for deeper critical reflection, we invoke the notion of 'negative capability' (Bion, 1970), the capability *not* to know; and not to clamour after immediate answers, in what is highly complex political and socio-cultural terrain. Arguably, such capability is also profoundly important in leadership (Simpson and French, 2006) yet current management styles aggressively preclude this. Such 'not knowing', more tolerated and indeed valued in artistic practice than in either management or education, might lead to more creative thinking around the outreach efforts of HAE institutions and an unsettling of previously little-questioned positions that underpin the issues. We believe that the model of questioning taking place in the discourse of 'high' art around socially engaged fine art practice – in terms of ethics, power relations and the political positioning of art – and much of the ground it has covered, can be drawn upon in a re-energised discussion of HAE outreach practices. As a practice open to debate and uncertainty (like the work of the fine artist), outreach itself can comprise

a form of questioning on the part of HAE institutions of their social and political position.

As a first step, let's consider HAE outreach as a way to connect rather than reaching out. This would enable operating on an equal level where learning is shared by the practitioner and the participant. Equality is thus sought as an interchange on a democratic level, all the while with the knowledge of challenges that might stand in the way of this. This might compel an unsettling and shaking up of positions [...].

The main points from this article, which such an airing of uncertainties might address, involve questions of artistic integrity, pedagogy, political engagement and social justice. Included would be an overhaul of what dialogic, reciprocal relationships between artist/audience/participant and arts institution/outreach organisation might look and feel like, and how fruitful collaboration that undermines the boundaries between these entities might develop. Such a debate would be informed by how 'othering' takes place through the intricate web of unspoken power dynamics generated through prevailing regulatory discourses (Atkinson, Brown and England, 2006). Addressed too would be questions of precisely how discourses and their practices, language and assumptions validate some and relegate others to silos, and maintain a polarity wherein 'high' arts continue on their high and others are left othered (Burke and McManus, 2009).

Such questioning would also address who the imagined subjects of outreach, of community arts, of high arts, indeed of widening participation in the arts *are*. What are the moral responsibilities to the 'others' created by such assumptions? It is particularly at the point of design and intention that assumptions and stereotypes, if not caricatures, prevail. Much of the lore which spins its assumptions and stereotypes about community engagement is underpinned by very deeply engrained notions of *deficit*. This perspective, in which the outreached *to* are seen to be lacking, or less than, in terms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) education, creative capability, motivation, resilience or independence, results in the inevitable 'one way traffic' of outreach.

Art has traditionally unseated positions and education has, in its finer hours, been celebrated as transformative, whilst also, however, being adept at reproducing the uneven class, gender and race relations of broader society (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Both involve, at their best, risk, uncertainty and argument. And despite sometimes trying to pretend otherwise, both exist within a socio-political context which constricts them *and* hails them as morally responsible, particularly in times of greatest inequity. One might begin with a simple question. If I am *outreaching,* what mechanisms serve to keep the *outreached to* at such ossified arms length?

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Chapter 3

Further Education and Widening Participation: Making Progress Possible

Geoff Stanton and his colleagues' book, *Unfinished Business in Widening Participation: the End of the Beginning* (Copland *et al.* 2008), marks a decade of work on widening participation following the Kennedy Report into Further Education. One of the most striking conclusions of the volume is that the scale of deeply engrained inequities means that, if there is to be any genuine widening participation, Further Education is likely to prove key to any solution (Hall and David, 2008; Stanton, 2008). The 'royal route' to university is in general decided by the age of 16 (Stanton, 2008, p. 9), and those who do not attain the necessary five or more good GCSEs will in general need to pursue post-compulsory education in the FE sector.

FE colleges, unlike universities, do have a good track record of appealing to underprivileged students and adults and are already carrying out extensive 'Higher Education in Further Education' through teaching HND/Cs, Foundation degrees and Bachelor Degrees (Brown, 2008, p. 63). However, as has been pointed out, it can be difficult to transfer credit easily from FE to courses of study at Higher Education Institutions (cf. Stanton, 2008, p. 5). Moreover, underfunding of FE compared to HE works against the very students from widening participation backgrounds that the government seeks to bring into HE (Stanton, 2008, pp. 21-22). In short, if widening participation is to be a reality, FE colleges need to become better funded and not seen as a second

or even third-hand option (cf. Hall and David, 2008, p. 43-53). Richard Brown offers a comparison with north American Community Colleges, which in many cases are locally prestigious institutions, with relatively generous funding and a proven track record in attracting non-traditional students and facilitating transfer to four-year Higher Education institutions, thanks not least to a more flexible system of credit which facilitates re-entry at various points in the lifecycle (Brown, 2008, p. 58).

In 2004 HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council established Lifelong Learning Networks (HEFCE, 2004b), which in 2011 numbered around 30. These were designed to provide greater clarity and flexibility for students seeking to move from FE to HE and, in accordance with the principles of lifelong learning, to enable students to 'move between different kinds of vocational and academic programmes as their interests, needs and abilities develop' (HEFCE, 2004b). Part of the work of the LLNs has been to set up progression agreements between colleges and universities. These may in some cases guarantee progression to university for so-called 'non-traditional' students if established goals are met; in other cases, they may work to make curricular changes and provide better information to students to make progression more achievable (see HEFCE, 2008, for a useful discussion of various models for progression agreements).

The National Arts Learning Network, in particular, carried out extensive work – as a HEFCE-funded Lifelong Learning Network dedicated to Art, Design and Performing Arts – to facilitate Progression Agreements between 19 Arts colleges and local FE institutions. NALN's expertise provided inside knowledge into the realities of practice-based Art and Design courses to make progression more of a realistic possibility for students. In this chapter Darryll Bravenboer, formerly of the MOVE Lifelong Learning Network for the East of England, argues that institutional autonomy over admissions to HE continues to reproduce students unrepresentative of the modern population and suggests that cross-institutional approaches to progression accords in the creative and cultural industries sector at Norwich University College of the Arts have gone some way to challenge this depressing picture.

Chapter 3.1

Progression and Fair Access to Higher Education in the Creative Industries Sector
Darryll Bravenboer

Introduction to the policy context for progression and fair access

In this chapter, I will be arguing that the relationships between further and higher education institutions can be crucial in either promoting fair access to higher education or reinforcing the barriers that limit opportunities for progression through vocational routes. I will be introducing some of the policy initiatives targeted at enhancing fair access and analysing how the principles of fair access described within the Schwartz Report (September 2004) are constructed to reinforce the institutional autonomy of Universities in determining what constitutes 'merit and potential'. I will then describe how the use of progression accords can establish constructive relationships between further and higher education institutions to promote wider understanding and recognition of vocational qualifications. In particular, I will be describing an example of the positive impact of the introduction of progression accords in the creative industries sector in the East of England.

The Future of Higher Education White Paper (DfES: 2003) argued that if the higher education sector was to respond to the needs of lifelong learning this would require a fundamental change in approaches and attitudes to vocational progression:

Lifelong learning therefore implies a fundamental shift from the 'once

in a lifetime' approach to higher education to one of educational progression linked to a process of continuous personal and professional development… Work-focused courses…have suffered from social and cultural prejudice against vocational education… We must break this cycle of low esteem, to offer attractive choices to students about the types of course they can undertake.

(DfES: 2003, p. 16-17)

The White Paper also stated that:

All those who have the potential to benefit from higher education should have the opportunity to do so. This is a fundamental principle which lies at the heart of building a more socially just society, because education is the best and most reliable route out of poverty and disadvantage.

(DfES: 2003, p. 68)

In 2004 HEFCE distributed a circular letter describing the disparity in rates of progression to higher education between A-level and vocational routes. Traditionally it has been the further education sector that has been a key provider of vocational courses and the letter indicated that it was seeking to promote partnership arrangements between universities and further education colleges and other agencies. HEFCE proposed that Lifelong Learning Networks be created to establish these partnerships and address the issue of low progression through vocational routes.[1] The letter pointed out that:

About 90 per cent of those on conventional A-level programmes enter higher education, but only 40-50 per cent of those qualifying at Level 3 in vocational subjects do so. Those who do enter HE from vocational learning programmes often find that progression within higher education is also problematic. There are fewer choices open to them, and greater uncertainty attaches to the choices that do exist.

(HEFCE: 12/2004)

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1   See also Connor, H and Little, B (2005), *Vocational ladders or crazy paving?*, Learning and Skills Development Agency

This indicated that learners progressing through vocational routes constituted an under-represented group in higher education and that the systems and approaches employed in managing progression through the A-level route did not necessarily constitute best practice. For example, if the system of predicted grades primarily related to A-level grades only results in 50% reliability then as the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group's final report, 'Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice' (September 2004), known as the Schwartz Report, concluded:

> An admissions system relying on predicted grades, only half of which are accurate, cannot be fair.
>
> <div align="right">(Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 44)</div>

The Schwartz Report also identified problems in higher education institutions' approach to recognising non-A-level qualifications such as Access and vocational qualifications, which it describes as the

> uneven awareness of and response to the increasing diversity of applicants, qualifications and pathways into higher education.
>
> <div align="right">(Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 5)</div>

Other problems identified include the explicit exclusion of non-A level qualifications by some institutions, as well as the lack of a national system of credit to enable the equivalent recognition of qualifications. The report also stated that a lack of awareness of non-A-level qualifications is 'not…a legitimate reason for not considering an applicant' (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p28). In other words, a lack of familiarity with vocational qualifications does not legitimise their non-recognition in terms of the assessment of the merit and potential of learners to progress to higher education.

The Schwartz Report recommended that higher education institutions adopt five principles in its guidance for a fair admissions system.

> The Steering Group recommends that universities and colleges adopt admissions principles that will support:
> – Transparency;
> – Selection for merit, potential and diversity;
> – Reliability, validity and relevance;
> – The minimising of barriers;
> – Professionalism.
>
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 32)

The Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group's remit from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) required that they recognise the autonomy of individual higher education institutions in determining the ways in which an applicant's merit and potential would be measured. In this context, the Schwartz Report could not recommend criteria that institutions might adopt to assess merit and potential as a 'common currency' for fair admissions while it is described differently by individual higher education institutions. However, the Schwartz Report does recommend that the basis and procedure used to assess the merit and potential of applicants is at least made transparent by publishing institutional admissions policies. The report recommends that institutions need to ensure that the means of assessing the merit and potential of learners, including those progressing through vocational routes, are reliable, valid and relevant and that systems for ensuring this are made explicit in admissions policies. The report also recommends that diversity of learner cohort needs to be more comprehensively and transparently recognised as a positive educational benefit for all higher education learners, even for those who gain access to selecting institutions. The Schwartz Report recommends that higher education institutions need to proactively identify barriers to admissions for those progressing through non-A-level and vocational routes and work to minimise such barriers. Lastly, the principle of professionalism in admissions is described as requiring both the construction of institutional systems to develop, maintain and enhance best practice in assessing the merit and potential of those wishing to access higher education including the professional development of all staff that are involved. More recently, this has been manifested as the Supporting Professionalism in Admis-

sions (SPA) programme,[2] which was established in 2006 and has recently been identified as the means by which institutions share good practice in admissions processes (DBIS: 2009). However, I will argue that the recommendations concerning professionalism in admissions in the Schwartz Report operate to elide the tensions between descriptions of institutional autonomy and fair access.

Modes of assessing merit and potential

I have argued previously (Bravenboer: 2009) that some of the descriptions of 'fair access' to higher education in the Schwartz Report are in dynamic tension with the idea that 'merit and potential' can and should operate as a kind of 'common currency' applicable to all potential applicants to higher education. This analysis included the construction of a discursive relational space that I called 'modes of assessing merit and potential'. I described this space as including *nepotistic*, *reproductive*, *impartial* and *endorsed* modes. Each of these four modes is constructed by relating the binary variables of *reliability/non-reliability* and *validity/non-validity* described within the Schwartz Report.

The *endorsed* mode of assessing merit and potential, which is described as valid but non-reliable, would constitute that which operated to predict what it is supposed to predict but is not reproducible when applied by another assessor. For example, references or personal statements are described within the Schwartz Report as being of value in assessing 'contextual factors' that may affect the judgment about an applicant's overall merit and potential. In other words, the Schwartz Report describes references and personal statements as a potentially valid means of assessing an applicant's merit. However, the report also describes a range of problems

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2   'The SPA programme was established in 2006 and works closely with higher education institutions, schools and colleges and other stakeholders on the continuing development of fair admissions and good practice in admissions, student recruitment and widening participation across the UK higher education sector.' The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme, «www.spa.ac.uk» Accessed 28 May 2010

with this method that may undermine its reliability such as a lack of consistency of approach or concerns about authenticity.

A mode of assessing merit and potential that is both non-reliable and non-valid would be diametrically opposed to fair admissions as described by the Schwartz Report, as it is to the *impartial mode* in the discursive space I have constructed (see figure 1 below). A method of assessing merit and potential that was described as not predicting what it was supposed to predict, would represent a means of selecting applicants on the basis of something other than merit (as described by the Schwartz Report) while purporting to do so. As a non-reliable method it would also constitute a singular instance of selection that could not be reproduced.

The Schwartz Report states that:

> Admissions criteria should not include factors irrelevant to the assessment of merit. For example, this means that institutions should not give preference to the relatives of graduates or benefactors.
>
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 38)

If an admissions tutor for a higher education programme selected an individual applicant on the basis that he or she knew the applicant's family and wished for one reason or another to treat this specific application with undue favour, then it would constitute a *nepotistic mode* of assessing merit. If however, such non-valid practice became systemic it would by definition be reproducible and as such reliable. The Schwartz Report states that:

> Applicants should be assessed as individuals: it is not appropriate to treat one applicant automatically more or less favourably by virtue of his or her background or school/college.
>
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 35)

In other words, the Schwartz Report describes the use of background or school/college as the means of assessing merit as non-valid, perhaps particularly when applied in isolation. This practice could, however, be a reliable

way of making decisions about who to admit, as the practice of privileging applicants from a particular type of background, or a particular school or type of school, is reproducible.

The mode of assessing merit I have described as *reproductive* describes a reliable means of assessing merit that is non-valid (as in the above example). Methods of assessment operating in the reproductive mode are those that reproduce that which they purport to measure in the process of misrecognising merit and potential. However, where individual higher education institutions entirely exclude 'wider contextual factors', contrary to the recommendation of the Schwartz Report, and focus on examination results alone, then it is possible that those applicants with the most merit and potential will not be selected. As the Report states:

> The type of school attended affects the predictive validity of examination grades… The evidence…suggests that equal examination grades do not necessarily represent equal potential.
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 22)

In such an instance, the applicants that would be selected would be those with the highest examination grades on the basis that this aspect alone is a valid indicator of merit and potential. If however, the school type was not taken into account then the validity of the assessment method would be in question and could constitute misrecognition of applicants' examination grades as merit and potential. Such a method would however, be reliable as another admissions tutor employing the same method would be likely to reproduce the same result.

Another kind of example of reliable yet non-valid assessment of merit and potential is where an institution does not recognise certain kinds of qualifications within the admissions process. The Schwartz Report identifies the non-recognition of some qualifying courses as a problem that needs to be addressed. While the Steering Group considers that 'curriculum development' is outside its remit, it does note that some institutions effectively exclude learners with vocational and Access qualifications from many of their courses. (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 27)

However, the issue of validity here is positioned as a matter for individual institutional autonomy although the Schwartz Report does provide recommended guidelines for the implementation of the identified principles of fair admissions. For example, the principle of 'the minimising of barriers' recommends that:

> Admissions processes should seek to minimise any barriers that are irrelevant to admissions requirements. This guideline applies to barriers potentially arising from:
> – Means of assessment;
> – The varying resources and support available to applicants;
> – Disability;
> – The type of an applicant's qualifications.
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 41)

As indicated above, the Schwartz Report also recommends that admissions staff are appropriately trained in accordance with the principle of 'professionalism' in admissions and in this regard,

> Training for those assessing applications is likely to include information about external issues, such as the full range of UK Level 3 qualifications, progression routes, equal opportunities, and relevant legislation.
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 42)

However, the positioning of the recognition, or otherwise, of non-A-level qualifications as a matter of the professionalism of admissions staff is a strategy that enables non-recognition of these equivalent qualifications to be described as valid. There is a clear tension in the Schwartz Report here, as it modulates between describing the non-recognition of some qualification as a problem for fair admissions and reinforcing the institutional autonomy to do just that. In this sense, institutional autonomy could be read, at least potentially, as operating as a barrier to fair admissions. The Schwartz Report does allude to the possibility that autonomous institutions can operate unfairly in their admissions practice but the report cannot resolve this issue as a consequence of the internal rules of discourse it operates under as determined by the terms of reference of its production.

The tension between descriptions of practice in the *impartial* and *reproductive* modes is mirrored in the relationship between validity of specific methods of assessing merit and potential that present barriers for some applicants and the 'trump card' of institutional autonomy.

We can then map the dynamic relations between some of the discursive elements constructed within the Schwartz Report text (Figure 1).

This provides an illustration of the dynamic tension between some of the Schwartz Report's recommendations with regards to the use of examinations, wider contextual factors, the exclusion of non-relevant factors and the exclusion of non-A-level qualifications in assessing the merit and potential of applicants to higher education. All of these factors are in effect matters of institutional autonomy and the decision of an institution to include or exclude such factors signify (in my constructed discursive space) either an *impartial* or a *reproductive* mode of assessing merit and potential.

The following sections consider what impact this might have on the recognition of vocational qualifications and what the implications might be for establishing fair access to higher education through vocational routes. I will argue that progression accords represent a mechanism that can minimise the extent to which institutional autonomy operates as a barrier to fair admissions.

The role of progression accords in addressing issues of fair access

Whilst the Schwartz Report does not explicitly refer to 'progression accords or agreements' it does refer to 'compact schemes' as a means of improving access to higher education for under-represented groups.

> The Steering Group encourages universities and colleges to collaborate in schemes such as compacts to provide parity of opportunity.
> (Schwartz Report: September 2004, p. 38)

	VALIDITY	
	VALID	**NON-VALID**
NON-RELIABLE	**Endorsed Mode** Valid and Non-reliable – Non-standardised references, personal statements and individual holistic information – Predictive A-level grades *(a matter of National admissions systems and institutional autonomy/ professionalism)*	**Nepotistic Mode** Non-valid and Non-reliable – Non-relevant admissions factors (e.g. preference to relatives of previous graduates or benefactors) *(a matter of institutional autonomy/professionalism)*
RELIABLE	**Impartial Mode** Valid and Reliable – Published institutional admissions policies – National credit systems – Post qualification admissions – Revised UCAS application forms (to include standardised prompts for the production of personal statements and references etc) – Inclusion of wider contextual factors to further validate examination results *(a matter of institutional autonomy/professionalism)* – Exclusion of non-relevant admissions factors *(a matter of institutional autonomy/professionalism)*	**Reproductive Mode** Non-valid and Reliable – Non-relevant admissions factors (e.g. treating applicants' automatically more or less favourably by virtue of background or school/college) *(a matter of institutional autonomy/professionalism)* – Examination results excluding wider contextual factors *(a matter of institutional autonomy/professionalism)* – Exclusion of non-A-level qualifications *(a matter of institutional autonomy/professionalism)*

The entire grid is labelled **RELIABILITY** *along the left vertical axis.*

Figure 1: A Discursive Map of 'Modes of Assessing Merit and Potential'

The HEFCE update document *Lifelong Learning Networks: progress report and next steps* (HEFCE: Spring 2005), describes the key role that progression accords are envisaged as playing in addressing the issues surrounding vocational progression and in establishing best practice.

> The aim of LLNs is to guarantee progression for learners on vocational programmes: to establish the same clarity, coherence and opportunity for these learners as is enjoyed by their counterparts following academic routes. Progression accords or agreements that put learners on vocational programmes on the same footing as students on academic programmes are the way these objectives will be met.
>
> (HEFCE: Spring 2005)

If the practices associated with progression to higher education are to include greater 'coherence' and greater 'certainty' they will need to address the issues relating to the recognition of the equivalence of vocational qualifications in providing evidence of learners' 'merit and potential' to benefit from higher education.

The Lifelong Learning Network for the East of England region (MOVE LLN) sought to address these issues by introducing progression accords as formal agreements between 'sending' and 'receiving' institutions in specific vocational sectors including creative and cultural industries. Progression accords are based upon a common understanding of the entry requirements for identified higher education programmes as well as a commitment to provide appropriate support for learners. The key features of MOVE LLN progression accords are as follows:

— Progression accords provide guaranteed places on specified higher education programmes of study for a given number of learners who meet higher education entry requirements.

— The places guaranteed are for categories of learners who constitute under represented groups in higher education, specifically those progressing though vocational, applied or work-based routes.

— They are formal, detailed agreements between 'senders' and 'receivers' of learners progressing into and through higher education.

— Senders could include further education colleges, private training providers, employers and professional bodies or other representative organisations.

— Receivers will normally be either higher education institutions or further education colleges offering higher education courses.

— They require 'sign up' at both programme to programme level (by programme tutors) and by senior institutional/organisational managers.

— By providing guaranteed progression places, progression accords constitute localised credit agreements between senders and receivers of learners.

— Progression accords importantly identify the specific activities that will be provided to support learners to both encourage higher-level learning progression and better prepare learners for the higher level learning experience.

— Progression accords are designed to provide a vehicle for the collaborative identification, development and embedding of best practice in progression.

<div style="text-align:right">(see Betts and Bravenboer: 2008, Bravenboer: 2008)</div>

The impact of progression accords for the creative industries sector in the East of England

Between January 2006 and December 2008 MOVE LLN secured 104 progression accords, which included providing 523 guaranteed places for learners progressing through vocational routes in the creative and cultural industries sector. This required broad ranging collaborative activity that

involved sending and receiving tutors working in creative industries sector faculties and departments as well as senior managers from 6 higher education institutions and 18 further education colleges across the East of England region. While progression accords signed by senior representatives constituted formal agreements between provider institutions this may not be the most significant outcome of the practice.

Many of the individuals involved had met for the first time in the context of discussions specifically organised to promote collaborative engagement concerning agreements about best practice focused on progression accords. These discussions were designed to develop and promote agreements concerning the formal recognition of specific vocational awards as entry qualifications for specific creative industries sector higher education programmes. In effect this practice opened the door of higher education institutional autonomy in academic decisions concerning what constituted a valid and reliable means of assessing merit and potential. The design of the MOVE LLN progression accord template positioned the 'senders' of learners from provider institutions as equal partners in the provision of higher education progression opportunities. This operated to open the discursive space traditionally closed by the prime authority of the autonomy of the receiving higher education institution.

This level of progression accord activity in the creative and cultural sector could be seen as surprising given the tradition of recognising vocational qualifications, such as Foundation courses or BTEC National Diplomas, as appropriate entry routes for arts based higher education programmes. However, it could also be construed as evidence that, even in the context of arts based higher education courses, traditional models of progression practice may not, in themselves, be sufficient as reliable and valid means of assessing the merit and potential of learners. As a final illustration of this I would like to briefly conclude with a brief description of how the implementation of progression accords in one specialist arts higher education institution has operated to reposition progression as a matter of quality enhancement that requires the collaborative agreement and engagement of partner institutions.

Norwich University College of the Arts worked with MOVE LLN to develop a coherent approach to embedding the use of progression accords within its institutional practices to construct a local and regional network of collaborating organisations promoting progression to creative and cultural industries sector higher education. The University College embraced the MOVE LLN progression accord template and saw that it could provide a key mechanism with which to demonstrate that the institution was supporting the provision of opportunities for under-represented groups to access higher education in the arts. As a consequence, the provision of progression accords was written into the institution's OFFA Access Agreement[3] and its teaching and learning strategy, which also operated to signify the institution's strategic intent in promoting a collaborative approach to progression. In addition, the University College organised a range of collaborative events and meetings that enabled staff from both sending and receiving institutions to constructively discuss the development of their respective provision to facilitate the enhancement of progression opportunities. This included local and regional further education colleges, 14-19 Diploma Consortia, schools and international partners resulting in the signing of 25 progression accords that guaranteed places for over 300 learners progressing through vocational, applied and work-based routes. To further embed the good practice that began to emerge from this initiative the University College also built in specific, ongoing, staff development and monitoring activities into its formal quality and planning cycles. In summarizing the positive impact of implementing progression accords the University College provided the following statement:

> Norwich University College of the Arts has worked closely with MOVE to establish and embed good practice that results from the implementation of progression accords at an institutional level. The University College feels confident that progression accords are now

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3   'Any university or college that wants to charge tuition fees for full-time home/EU undergraduates above the basic level must have an access agreement approved by the Director of Fair Access. An access agreement sets out a university or college's fee limits, its plans for bursaries and other financial support, and, in many cases, outreach work for under-represented groups.' Office for Fair Access, «www.offa. org.uk/access-agreements». Accessed 28 May 2010

an accepted and integrated part of the institutional 'culture'. The process of developing and maintaining progression accords has enabled the University College to establish and disseminate good practice and significantly enhance collaborative progression activity with regional partners.

(Norwich University College of the Arts in Bravenboer: 2008)

The collaboration required to effectively operate progression accords has acted to open the discursive space around what constitutes reliable and valid means of assessing merit and potential beyond the bounds of the academic autonomy of the receiving institution. This self-confident move in embracing cultural change in the institution recognises that providers of 'sender' courses can also be 'authorities' in determining what constitutes a reliable and valid means of assessing merit and potential to benefit from arts based higher education.

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Chapter 4

Transition to and Integration into Higher Education

Mantz Yorke and Bernard Longden's study for the HEA, on students' experience of their first year in Higher Education to query student attrition, concludes with strong recommendations to institutions and practitioners to review policy and practice to 'find ways of 'bending the odds' in favour of student success… the emphasis [is] on encouraging student success rather than on retention: if an institution succeeds with the former, then the latter should follow' (Yorke and Longden, 2008, p. 52). In the section of their study on 'Art and Design', Yorke and Longden point to the importance of managing smooth transition into Higher Education for *all* students:

> For Art and Design, the findings are fairly consistent over the decade. Students in this subject area tend not to have made a poor choice of field of study; are unlikely to express a lack of commitment to their studies; and are unlikely to cite the workload as an influence on their departure. On the other hand, they have been consistent in saying that the programme was not as they had expected it to be; in expressing dissatisfaction with the teaching they have received, and with the organisation of their programmes; and that insufficient academic progress had been influential in their departure.
>
> (Yorke and Longden, 2008, p. 42)

This points clearly to the need for institutions and individuals to work to support students' academic integration, especially in their first year, whichever route they have taken to reach Higher Education, as addressing all students will inevitably embrace so-called non-traditional students. *The Art of Smooth Transition,* research undertaken by Janey Hagger, Karen Scopa and Christabel Harley, follows Yorke and Longden's line of query with a small study that examined 'non-traditional' students' experience of social and academic integration during their first year in Art and Design following access from Further Education. Through interview of students and staff this work fleshes out in greater detail what Yorke and Longden suggest of Art and Design above and offers insight into students' experience of their social integration into the Higher Education environment. The report places 'emphasis… on the conditions in which we place students rather than on the attributes of students themselves' (Tinto, 2002, n.p.), for ultimately Higher Education intends to involve all students and to have all students involved in learning.

Chapter 4.1

The Art of Smooth Transition[1]
Janey Hagger, Karen Scopa and Christabel Harley

The transition from a Further Education (FE) to a Higher Education (HE) culture can be stark and intimidating for non-traditional students, particularly within the competitive Art and Design sector, where 'the benchmark for first degree participation by lower socio-economic groups…is only 29%' (HEFCE 2004).

University of the Arts London (UAL) comprises of six nationally and internationally renowned colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Art. Benefiting from strong traditions of excellence and graduate success and central London locations, UAL annually attracts high numbers of quality HE applications.

In the Arts, Design and Media sector, there are four recognised entrance pathways from level 3 to degree programmes: A-levels; Diploma in Foundation Studies in Art and Design; National Diploma Art and Design;

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and Access Courses.[2] In addition to formal qualifications (meeting the required UCAS entry points), a portfolio of practical work and performance at interview are crucial factors influencing the success of applicants.

In 2005, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (CSM) developed an innovative pilot 'Preparation for HE' programme to prepare non-traditional students for entry to HE. The pilot targeted BTEC National Diploma Art and Design students from inner-London FE colleges within widening participation postcode areas. It forms part of the National Arts Learning Network (NALN) project 'Curriculum Development for Receiving HE Courses',[3] which aims to widen participation in HE by supporting non-traditional learners' progression to, and achievement on, degree-level Art & Design courses.

This study tracks the *on-course experiences* of the first eight students to enter UAL degree programmes through this new progression route, during their first term of HE study. Student experiences and perceptions of progress and lecturers' perceptions of their progress and potential, enable the main issues, factors and concerns impacting upon students' experiences of HE to be identified. Particular challenges and potential barriers to retention and progression for non-traditional, first generation HE students in Art and Design are highlighted to inform subsequent curriculum developments and student support provision.

[…]

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2   Whilst A-Level students with the required UCAS points can apply directly to Art and Design degree courses, the Diploma in Foundation Studies in Art & Design has been the dominant pathway as the curriculum is specifically designed to promote independent learning and to prepare students for the HE applications process. Although this is also a Level 3 qualification on the National Qualifications Framework, it is viewed by many as a Level 3.5, as students enter once they have completed A-Levels. The two year BTEC National Diploma route is a vocational Level 3 pathway and is mainly offered in Further Education colleges as a vocational equivalent to the A-level route.

3   The project (2006-2009) is led by the University College for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester (UCCA). Other NALN partners include Camberwell, Chelsea, Wimbledon, Norwich, Leeds, and Herefordshire Colleges of Art and Design.

Cultures of Teaching and Learning

The transition from FE to HE presents a significant shift in approaches to teaching and learning. In particular, an increased emphasis on independent learning and responsibility for managing one's own learning is arguably felt by most students entering HE from schools, Sixth Forms, or FE colleges, as they become part of a larger student body and may receive less face-to-face staff contact. The students interviewed reflected varying levels of awareness of the shift from student-centred to student-led learning required in the HE environment.

Independent Learning

Independent learning may be understood in the HE context as a student's ability to take an active and responsible role in their own learning. This requires skills to undertake self-directed study, independent research and the ability to manage different aspects of their learning beyond the contact hours described in the course timetable. For some students, used to more regular teaching contact in FE, a more 'sparse' HE timetable may be perceived as 'leniency' with 'only one lecture a week'. The cultural shift in expectations of the type of engagement that tutors expected of HE students was perceived by some as lack of teaching. […] Time-management and self-motivation are also key issues for students who may be used to being more closely monitored by FE staff.

[…]

Student Support

The Prep for HE students' take-up of student support in their first year of HE was erratic. Some students had dyslexia tests scheduled but did not attend, while one student organised a dyslexia test independently. Although all students were aware of the student services available to them, some commented that they were reluctant to access these services. The

issues affecting student progress are complex. One student fell behind with coursework and eventually withdrew, deferring his place in order to re-start the course in 2008. His progress was affected by late enrolment due to delays with his student loan, as well as his perception of his lack of study skills, external pressures and feeling an outsider to the culture of student life. One student found the increased emphasis on self-directed work in the second term of her course was unnerving. She found that advice and guidance offered by a Student Ambassador was helpful. Many of the students interviewed also maintained informal links with the Prep for HE Course Leader; receiving phone and face to face support as required. Many found this very important as it influenced them to think about their options, rather than 'giving-up' if they were experiencing difficulties.

[…]

Staff are currently reviewing the success of the viva voce as an alternative assessment method in this case and exploring its potential for further development. Many of the students interviewed had specific concerns regarding financial issues. Four of the students commented that the advice about HE funding received on the Prep for HE course had been invaluable. Whilst most of the students lived at home (and may arguably have less financial problems than traditional students who move away from home to enter HE), they still experienced financial issues affecting their progress. For example, the lone parent with the costs of childcare and the student with attendance problems because he was tired from working evening shifts at a supermarket.

Key Issues Affecting the 1st Year HE Experience

Overall, the Prep for HE course was successful in supporting non-traditional students into HE, by providing information and support in:
– Financial advice
– Portfolio and interview preparation
– Student ambassador advice and support

– Idea generation, development and critical thinking
– Confidence-building and presentation skills

However, the transition into the culture of HE was challenging for many, in the crucial first stages of study. The challenges experienced by students could be identified as those related to adjusting to the HE culture and environment, and those related to the academic expectations and the culture of HE teaching and learning. Within the former, the following key issues were raised:
– Integration issues for mature students
– Introduction to diverse languages and cultures
– Awareness of different social and educational backgrounds

Some students clearly felt less advantaged than some of the other students on their course. As well as the challenge of social integration, was that of meeting the expectations of HE teaching and learning, in particular:
– Independent learning
– Time-management and organisation
– Critical thinking and essay-writing skills
– Accessing student support

Staff felt that the students' performance was more erratic than that of traditional students. The students were perceived by tutors to be less organised (and therefore less teachable) due to poor attendance and take up of scheduled tutorials. Some of the students were coping with external problems, which led to absences and deferrals.

Recommendations

The Higher Education culture of learning and teaching is based on independent learning and self-directed study. Students are encouraged (and expected) to demonstrate individual initiative in making use of the full range of learning, and support, available to them. This cultural shift in emphasis from tutor-led to student-led study and the responsibility

of managing one's own learning, often within a more complex and diverse learning environment, is particularly challenging for non-traditional students. Whilst the Prep for HE programme was successful in providing the information, guidance and support required to enable students to enter HE, the experience of HE was still challenging. The challenge of *experiencing* HE was articulated by the student who withdrew from her course after realising it 'was not right for her':

> [...] It was absolutely different to what I expected because when you see it, it is different to being in it. [...]

Another student who was confident that the course was right for him struggled with his attendance, fell behind and eventually deferred his place until 2008. The students interviewed were quite insightful in their evaluation of their progress. They recognised their strengths and weakness and were aware of areas where they needed to improve. In some cases (as in the case of the student who withdrew), they tended to be more critical of their academic progress and social integration than their tutors. However, in spite of recognising areas for improvement, they were very reluctant to access student support services.

While it is apparent that effective student support is crucial to ensure successful progression by students from FE and non-traditional students pathways it may be that the support offered by the academic curriculum could be strengthened. For instance it may be that time for essay writing workshops, seminar discussions and individual essay tutorials could be timetabled into the Art History and Theoretical Studies curriculum during Stage One *across* UAL to ensure parity. This could slot into the existing programme, delivered by the academic tutors who are setting and marking coursework ensuring that contact time could be tailored to, and focused on, each student's needs in relation to the curriculum. This valuable individual contact time might allow for staff to become familiar with the diverse needs of FE students and to address the particular problems facing them with appropriately nuanced pedagogic techniques.

A direct outcome resulting from the findings of this study led to a student support meeting being set up at UAL to address the particular support needs of non-traditional students entering HE through the Prep for HE progression route. The following areas were identified in which to pilot and develop new student support initiatives:
– A student mentoring proposal
– More active student support for dyslexia
– Closer tracking of student progress within courses
– Student union buddying programmes

Whilst it must be acknowledged that this was a small-scale study with a limited number of students, it has highlighted the importance of available and accessible student support for non-traditional students, particularly during the crucial first stages of their HE experience. For students with external problems, it is important that any issues are picked up early enough in order to provide support and guidance to minimise their impact upon progress.

Students may not be proactive in seeking support for a wide range of reasons, including perception, confidence, limited information about what support is available, lack of awareness of the extent of their issues and to what extent they are affecting their progress, etc. Our main recommendation from this study is to investigate ways in which student support can be strengthened by:
– Monitoring non-traditional students' on-course experience more closely.
– Address the disparities between students' experiences of FE teaching and learning and the expectations placed on them in Higher Education.
– Support the on-course development of independent learning skills, including time-management, organisation, etc.
– Exploring alternative modes of assessment.
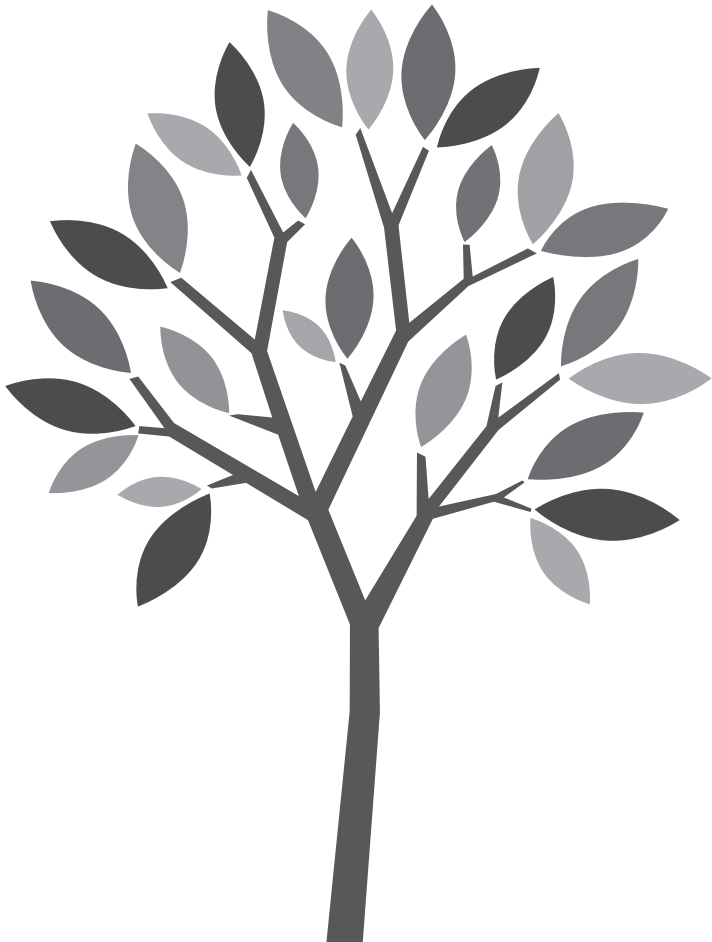
Part 3

Succeeding in Higher Education

Naturally, widening participation does not cease to be important once students have made it into Higher Education. The following section – the longest in the volume – considers the question of what makes a successful learning environment in HE. We offer the following essays and selections in the hope of demonstrating that for university staff widening participation should be much more than a matter of following university strategies or policies and that the passion and work of individual lecturers in this area can make real differences.

Much of the important work in the area of student success derives from North American studies which focus on student engagement and retention. Particularly influential is the work of Vincent Tinto. Tinto identifies student motivation and choice of study along with external and financial commitments as important variables in influencing retention (1975 and 1993). However, drawing on Durkheim's work on suicide – which he considered to be analogous – he argues that it is above all successful integration into the academic and social culture that brings about what he calls 'student persistence'. By contrast, failure of students to integrate academically and socially is the main predictor of withdrawal.

Tinto's student integration model is not without its critics (cf. Harvey, Drew and Smith, 2006 p. 31-34), and Yorke and Longden's work for

the HEA (2007 and 2008) is a useful introduction to retention issues in the often very different UK context. Yorke showed that motivation and choice of course along with unsatisfactory learning experiences and financial difficulties are the reasons cited for withdrawal by students who fail to complete the first year. However, it is interesting, according to Yorke (in an earlier study, 2002), that choice of course seems to be less of an issue in Art and Design than in other subject areas. Students for Art and Design have already jumped through hoops to get admitted and are likely to be motivated. Financial difficulties are something which we have limited ability to do much about, although clearly student services can provide support. But creating a positive academic and social learning environment and promoting academic and social integration is something we must all take responsibility for and we will examine good practice in this area in this part of the volume.

Creating such a culture would mean 'taking retention seriously', as Tinto puts it:

> What would it mean for institutions to take student retention seriously? Among other things, institutions would stop tinkering at the margins of institutional life and make enhancing student

retention the linchpin about which they organize their activities. They would move beyond the provision of add-on services and establish those educational conditions that promote the retention of all, not just some, students. To be serious about student retention, institutions would recognize that the roots of attrition lie not only in their students and the situations they face, but also in the very character of the educational settings, now assumed to be natural to higher education, in which they ask students to learn.

<div align="right">(Tinto, 2002, pp. 1-2)</div>

Building on USA research, Tinto identifies conditions which we know lead to retention and success. These include having high expectations for students ('no-one rises to low expectations', 1999, p. 3); offering clear information about requirements and good advice concerning choices; offering academic, social and personal support integrated within the student experience; valuing students as members of the institution which means offering them frequent and quality contact with staff; and, most importantly, fostering active learning. As Tinto says, speaking of the US experience, the latter is often lacking:

Unfortunately, the educational experiences of most first-year students are not involving. Learning is still very much a specta-

tor sport in which faculty talk dominates and where few students actively participate. Most first-year students experience learning as isolated learners whose learning is disconnected from that of others. Just as important, students typically take courses as detached, individual units, one course separated from another in both content and peer group, one set of understandings unrelated in any intentional fashion to the content learned in other courses. Though specific programs of study are designed for each major, courses have little academic or social coherence. It is small wonder that students seem so uninvolved in learning. Their learning experiences are not very involving.

<div align="right">(Tinto, 1999, pp. 3-4)</div>

Tinto sees the answer to student retention as formalised learning communities, groups of students who are enrolled in the same classes and work together collaboratively on a variety of projects. Of course, the first year in the USA is very different from that in the UK, since in the UK students are enrolled in a degree programme from the start and do not take the disparate general education classes that US students study. As a result, the UK will need to come to its own conclusions about what makes a more involving and effective academic and social culture and learning environment for students.

What this might look like is, at the time of writing, being investigated by the HEA and Access on Action supported by the Paul Hamlyn foundation through its ambitious 'What Works?' project. This project is looking at, for example, the role of peer mentoring in forming successful student environments. But there are also areas central to our own teaching and practice where we can learn from the research and reflective practice of colleagues whose work we are anthologising in this section. Here we focus on assessment, academic writing, learning differences, attention to space and thinking about the canon. Together this work helps us see how – or where – we might, as Yorke and Longden put it, 'bend the odds in favour of student success' (2008, p. 52).

David Watson in his HEFCE widening participation 'thought piece' draws attention to Gorard's remark that the widening participation agenda has had little effect in 'changing the product' within HE itself. As he says: 'There is no recent practical example that can match the undoubted emancipatory impact on earlier generations of either the London University external degree or the Open University' (Watson, 2006, p. 5). One could add to these great national examples that we have had nothing like the US 'open admissions' policies of

the 1960s and 1970s which drew so many non-traditional students into HE. Instead we have had much anguished debate about falling entry standards. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the kind of attention to pedagogical practices outlined in this section have the potential to make a real reform of student learning. An analogy seems to us to be the North American 'Writing Across the Curriculum' (WAC) movement, a largely grassroots movement in which professors interested in the potential of writing for student learning and critical thinking have made a commitment to improve the student writing experience in their classes and therefore to create more engaged learning. This is a movement which Susan Mcleod and Elaine Maimon have called 'one of the most important educational reform movements of the twentieth century' (2000, p. 582). Reform often begins with ourselves, and governmental and institutional changes and recognition may then follow. Certainly, this approach is more likely to inspire passionate teaching than top-down directives forced upon over-worked academics, and ultimately nothing is more likely than that to inspire student success (Freeman et al. 2007).

Chapter 5

Spaces of Learning

While it is a given that all learning takes place in space, consideration of how space can affect – even effect – learning is rare in the context of research in widening participation in Art and Design HE. Yet the implications of the mutually constitutive relationship between learning and the spaces of learning are crucial if we are to undertake a meaningful engagement with concepts such as 'access', 'participation' and 'inclusivity'. For, educational spaces are not neutral, empty containers in which learning merely takes place, to be manipulated by the learning that takes place. Rather spaces can work as powerful agents – or indeed agents of power – in 'othering' learners, through their affiliations to class, gender, race, 'able-bodied' values and normative sexuality. Indeed, as Olivia Sagan shows us, in illuminating detail in this section, Higher Education not only ignores the potential of spatiality in its policy and practice (driven rather by the instrumentality of time- and space-as-money), but its language rather is packed full with metaphors of space and notions of spatiality that replicate and reproduce hierarchies of exclusion. Learning spaces in Art and Design contexts can be complex to negotiate. Dedicated (even fetishised) personal studio spaces once par for the course for Art and Design students, and technical facilities essential to processes of making objects of art and design now come into conflict with reduced external funding and consequent institutional

fiscal policies. Students with limited economic capital and/ or those juggling various external commitments (family, job, health) may find what studio space there is inaccessible: on the one hand this draws institutional attention to the cost of under-utilised space; on the other hand, the inaccessibility of dedicated learning spaces in institutions should alert all concerned with inclusive and equitable student learning to the reality that many students increasingly make work at home, often without access to suitable space.

Sagan's concern here is with creating spaces in which diverse learners as psychologically and emotionally embodied, socially constructed individuals can belong, learn and grow. She alerts us to the dangers of institutional spaces of learning – such as the studio, the crit – tutor-led critique of students' work as part of work-in-progress discussions (as Bernadette Blair shows in the next section), and even institutions' curricula, evaluation and assessment procedures – which may suppress, diminish or threaten learners' identities.

Sagan rather advocates 'playgrounds' and 'hiding places' in Art and Design teaching and learning spaces to encourage not only more inclusive spaces, but to support learners' emotional inner spaces. Building on Donald Winnicott's *Playing and Reality* of 1971, Sagan draws our attention to the implications of psychoanalytical thinking for spaces of learning and in particular for more democratised learning spaces. Specifically, she explores Winnicott's concept of 'transitional' or 'potential space' which can include play space, the area of the transitional object and phenomena, the analytic space, the area of cultural experience, and the area of creativity. Transitional spaces are 'an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of an individual and a shared reality of the world that is external to individuals' (Winnicott, in Yates and Day Sclater, 2000, p. 138) and essential for the complex negotiations between the inner and the outer world, where the self can be created and transformed through relations with others and within the matrices of culture. It is the responsibility of higher education practitioners and institutions alike to provide

such transitional spaces – in the 'triangle' of tutor/ institution, student and student's work (as transitional objects) – where the conjoined development of a learner's ideas and the transformation of a learner's identity can occur authentically and ethically: for example, spaces where learners' autobiographical narratives, or subjective experiences of learning can be expressed. Rather than relegating such transitional spaces merely to student services, Sagan recommends transitional spaces, which are student-centred, and student owned, are made core to pedagogical practices. For widening access, participation and inclusion fruitfully, Sagan's transitional spaces can offer opportunities for learners' anxieties to be contained and for diverse learners to take the 'risk to learn and develop'.

Chapter 5.1

Playgrounds, studios and hiding places: emotional exchange in creative learning spaces[1]
Olivia Sagan

[…]

Spaces in learning and learning spaces

One of the first learning spaces I ever taught in was a designated space under a particular tree, highly sought after for the shade it offered from the blistering sun which would hit us within an hour of school starting. Clearly, we were not in Harringay, where my own primary school classroom, some fifteen years before that, was a quaint blend of tall arched windows and parquet flooring lightly carpeted with chalk-dust near the blackboard. Both spaces I recall acutely – and in both spaces, happy learning took place for me, whether as pupil or teacher; but this may of course be down to the recasting of thoughts through rose-tinted memory. What such memories enable, however, is a perception of emotional and affective dimensions of learning as (also) contributing to a positive educational experience. (Dirkx 2001, p. 67). In both instances, emotions positively infiltrated the learning and the learning space – and the latter would forever become a happy space which, in turn, 'magically' enabled learning. However, the opposite is also possible, as testaments to failed, thwarted, 'difficult learning' (Britzman 1998) teach us.

Since both of these instances of learning, I have taught and learned in spaces less sanguine though no less memorable. The white, bare-walled high security unit of a psychiatric hospital comes to mind, with its ingrained stench of piss and despair. There, learning was arduous and sometimes desperate, though spotted with short breaths of relief in the form of hope, humour or rest, the three elements Immanuel Kant so aptly claimed were given us to counterbalance the miseries of life. There, the best of intentions became quickly eroded and the lightest of lessons swiftly turned turgid in a space tragically difficult to imbue with positive emotion.

Literature on education, from government policy to pedagogical research, is replete with references to the learning environment and its potential to motivate learners and promote learning as an activity (HEFCE 2006, p. 3). Yet while we all have some idea of the constituent factors of a good learning space, there is in fact a dearth of studies exploring what this might actually be, and what, if any, is its impact. But there is more that I find puzzling. The three examples I give above (tree, Harringay, hospital) are, in my mind, saturated with emotion. And whilst there has been a surge in the levels of interest in the complexity of emotional factors of learning (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al. 1983; Todd 1997) and teaching (Carlyle & Woods 2002; Troman & Woods 2001; Woods & Carlyle 2002), emotions are still regarded somewhat as 'baggage' and split off from the rationalist, cognitive task of learning. There is also an absence of the study of space and emotion as being inextricably linked in learning; a tired, Cartesian insistence on splitting off the 'out there' of space with the 'in here' of affect. Ian Craib (1997) goes so far as to suggest that this proliferation of binaries (with which we are intensely preoccupied in the field of education), is not only Cartesian but psychotic, while for Michael Rustin the fracturing and atomizing of current educational policy and practice constitutes an attack on thinking (2001, p. 213). What is so threatening about an embodied, emotional subject – one who impacts emotionally on the space in which s/he learns, and is, in turn, impacted on by the space and emotions in it?

But there also remains something intrinsically 'malestream' (Tanesini 1999) about this preoccupation with binaries – with a discourse of

'emotional space' being associated with a clichéd notion of women, femininity and the emotional. Furthermore our reluctance to consider, holistically, the emotionality of space, or the spatial in emotionality, is redolent of a classicism and ethnocentricity in which one (the privileged, the male, the white) posits space as neutral, 'open' for all. Spaces, in fact, and the emotions they provoke, contain or deny, are not neutral at all, but branded with particular race, class and gender 'affiliations'. Spatial organization is also a mechanism through which 'othering' (De Beauvoir 1949/1972; Said 1978) takes place. As certain spaces come to be implicitly recognized as more powerful, less powerful subjects/activities/courses can be relegated elsewhere. We all, in addition, have a sense of space and territory which is a potent part of our identity; think of the wonderful saying 'you can take the girl out of the hood, but you can't take the hood out of the girl'. That identity is built in direct relation to what is sometimes 'devalued territory' (Taylor 2004) and a liminal space (Turner 1997), one which is either physically or psychologically experienced as a mid-way, borderline space which shares none of the recognition or security of orthodox, delineated spaces. Liminal space, however, may ironically also offer freedom and possibility. In playing truant from school (way after my halcyon days in Harringay), and having no set space to occupy as I was always 'elsewhere', I was given the freedom to roam the then sleazy streets of Soho and Chinatown. It was a space in which a troubled teenage identity could be bizarrely moulded through dank basement record shops and poetry readings in the dim backrooms of crammed bookshops. Liminal space can be isolating, but it can also offer the possibility of resistance and even rebellion with one's 'fellow liminars' (Sibbett 2003).

In the field of education, as Carrie Paechter states, Space is subordinated to time in both the theory and the practice (2004, p. 449). We are busy thinking about the duration of learning without paying so much heed to the location, other than to 'allocate' a studio/classroom. And yet we are all immersed in a discourse which is saturated with descriptors of space, albeit in metaphoric form. We know all too well the spatial notions of top and bottom grades; of 'under' graduate, 'foundation' level, and 'Higher' education. We know of the 'mapping' of criteria, and assessment in different 'fields'.

We have learned about the 'spiral' curriculum, 'scaffolded' learning and 'zones' of proximal development (Vygotsky 1962). We have 'open' learning and 'distance' learning, 'threshold' subjects, 'core' subjects, 'peripheral' learning (Lave & Wenger 1991). Students get 'stuck' and can't overcome obstacles on their learning 'journey' – despite engaging in both 'vertical' and 'horizontal' learning (Shulman 1987). We have academic 'ladders' and glass 'ceilings' – we strive for 'breadth' and 'depth' of knowledge and 'deep' learning to counteract 'surface' learning. Sometimes the language betrays the very social structures we are trying to eradicate: 'inclusive' learning suggests there is something such as 'exclusive' learning, an 'in' to be included into and an 'out' to which we exclude others. The hierarchical, height-privileged notions of 'upper' class, 'higher' degrees and 'foundation' degrees or 'bridging' courses are examples of how spatial language can capture us, almost unthinking, in particular, pernicious discourses (Paechter 2004, p. 458) and regulatory discourses in art education (Atkinson 2002; Brown et al. 2005) come to determine the pedagogized identities and art practices we bring to the learning and teaching space. Whilst these discourses refer to spatial notions rather than actual spaces, they nevertheless reproduce hierarchical structures and hint at the non-neutrality of space. These hierarchical structures of society are embedded in and through the very education which teaches us to analyse and deconstruct those structures (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977):

> Learning can provide a space for contesting and critiquing the dominant hegemony in society; it has the potential to be a liberating and empowering experience. Yet education is also contradictory, as it reproduces the dominant social order.
>
> (Merrill 2004, p. 75)

So despite the spatial rhetoric of 'student-centred' learning, and the fantasy of democratization through 'open-access' and e-learning with virtual tutors in cyberspace, educational discourse is riddled with embedded ideas of top, bottom, and… elsewhere, out there, perhaps in the 'community', spaces to where participation has to be 'widened'.

Metaphors, one might argue, are merely linguistic and do not accurately represent how we organize or use 'real' space in educational institutions. However, post-structuralists from Derrida and Foucault on have argued forcefully that the subject is constructed through language; subject positions being constituted through the larger discourses of society (Davies & Harre 1990). In being so constructed, we embody and reproduce the very discourses which have constructed us. Certain 'knowledge' is enscripted onto our bodies, and this is the mechanism for the self-regulation (Foucault 1977) which we undertake. This helps to explain the comfort or discomfort we feel in particular public spaces. Such public and social spaces are also the means by which different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1989) to which one has access, come to have currency:

> So when one enters a physical space such as a bar, school or home, one brings with one, embodied, certain quantities of different capitals. It is the physical embodiment of the different positions that the body has previously been able to inhabit. So one is always moving in and out of spaces carrying and sometimes increasing the value of different capitals. Although for some groups this may not be possible.
>
> (Skeggs 1999, p. 214)

So if language structures how we think and feel about the social, and if embodied experience of space helps constitute our identity, then the spatial metaphors through which we teach and learn may powerfully reproduce inequalities in society. The waters are further muddied, when emotions are thrown into the fray, as being inextricably linked to language and space. Being top of the class feels very different to being bottom of it. Within art education, we have a sublime muddying of the waters; for we form part of, and think through, an educational discourse stiff with highly emotive metaphorical notions of top and bottom achievement. In addition, we are working with an artefact, a product, which is created (and criticized) within a certain physical (studio) space which has a high potential of being emotionally saturated (Austerlitz & Aravot 2002, p. 87). And finally, the creation of that artefact (to be 'exhibited' in yet another stratified space) is historically regarded as a product of self-expression which is, if nothing else, an emotional process.

Learning: finding a space small enough to contain anxiety

[…]

Transitional space is one of the more useful, as well as poignant and textured, concepts of space nestled within psychoanalytic theories. It is to a small selection of these which I now turn. In order to get a grip on any psychoanalytic theory or application of it, it helps to hold in mind the concept of the 'defended subject' as best articulated by Wendy Holloway and Tony Jefferson (2000). This draws mainly on Kleinian models of the individual as driven by very rational, though unconscious, urges to keep levels of anxiety down. The defended subject can be interpreted as engaging in behaviours and thought processes that have, as their aim, the warding off of the unpleasant sensation of increased anxiety. Holloway and Jefferson have been able to offer stimulating analyses (Holloway & Jefferson 2001) of how and why individuals sometimes follow apparently illogical deductive reasoning, or engage in acts and behaviours which are not, at first glance, apparently in their favour. They offer a most persuasive argument for looking seriously at the impact and meanderings of the unconscious in the social, including, of course, learning and teaching. What's important to us at this point is that the notion of anxiety and defence, as being at the core of human experience, provides a context to look at notions of space within psychoanalysis. […]

But psychoanalysis has done more than offer us images of the porousness of the human condition. It has given us an unimaginably (because now taken for granted) important way of thinking about both our internal and our external space. It has helped examine how we negotiate movement from the internal, with its thoughts, imaginings, phantasies etc. to the external, with its enacting, projections, and so on. It is easy to see the importance of this internal, external and intermediate (transitional) space for both learning (in which we take from the outside, combine with internal subjectivity, and reproduce, in a given form, back into the external) and artistic endeavour, in which we draw deeply on the internal in order to express, externally, something which is a fusion of psycho/social elements.

Winnicott's transitional, or potential, space has been used and explored richly in contemporary work on learning (Richards 2002) and creativity (Gosso 2004). It is a space (which can be both physical and/or abstract) which is the: 'space between symbol and symbolized, mediated by an interpreting self, (the) space in which creativity becomes possible' (Ogden 1992, p. 213).

Transitional space offers potential, and is the prototype of a successful infant/primary care-giver dyad, in which the infant is 'held' physically and/or emotionally. Importantly, it is a space where one is allowed enough risk to learn, develop and create, a space where the natural anxiety provoked by learning and development is contained. It is a space in between inner and outer world, where inter-relationships and creativity occur (Winnicott 1971). Whether we are in a learner/tutor one-to-one, a peer interactive space, a desk crit or an exhibition space, a meeting of inner and outer worlds and inter-subjectivity is occurring.

The idea of containment (Bion 1984) is also useful in any discussion of learning, for it is the capacity, again based on pre-verbal interaction, for a care-giver to accept, hold and detoxify the infant's projections of fear, anger and anxiety. In showing/modelling a capacity for mentalization, for a tolerance of the difficult, the ambivalent, the ugly, the care-giver 'contains' and detoxifies the raw, sensory experience. This containment is essential in the management of anxiety necessary for learning: 'If well enough contained, anxiety can (therefore) act as a source of creative, task-related energy, as reflected in the phrase 'anxious to learn'. Unconscious anxiety, however, is an all too powerful inhibitor of learning' (French 1997, p. 484).

The model followed in much of today's educational practice, for the containment of anxiety and any 'emotional disturbance', is to relegate the emotion elsewhere, literally, to another space, often student support systems and/or counselling. While these are both important aspects of an effective learning framework (Coren 1997) a reliance on these enables us to 'clean' the immediate teacher/student space and maintain an illusion that it is emotion free, intellectual, cognitive. It also continues the fallacy

that students are the main drivers of emotional exchange, while we teach-
ers are often equally anxious or defensive, and similarly prone to casting
past experiences and their emotional residue into the teaching space (Britz-
man & Pitt 1996) creating an emotionally fraught learner/teacher terrain.
Arguably, our role is both more responsible and more creative:

> In clinical settings, it is the capacity of the therapist to contain anxiety
> and process ambivalent feelings as well as projections and feed these
> back in intelligible and digestible forms. Similar dynamics can apply
> in adult learning too (teachers and activists may contain and process a
> whole range of feelings, often unconsciously) yet relatively little atten-
> tion is paid to these dimensions of learning.
>
> (West 2007, p. 13)

But there is more to the job of containment, and of co-constructing
a transitional space along with the student, in which one feels safe,
stimulated, inspired and valued. It is not only part of good pedagogical
practice; it is also the role of the institution to contain anxiety (Obholzer &
Zagier-Roberts 1994): 'In secure organizations social influence is exercised
in a framework dominated by an awareness of mental states, concerns,
thoughts, and feelings of individuals within the system – that is, a capacity
for mentalization' (Fonagy 2003, p. 223).

For any initiative towards widening participation or greater democratiza-
tion of public/learning spaces to be fundamentally successful, the possible
fragmented mind-states, anxieties and emotional memories of thwarted
creativity need to be faced as part of the package of working with students
from disadvantaged, non-traditional or 'high-risk' backgrounds. We in art
institutions need to consider the spaces we are (re)creating – and question
to whom they 'belong' and which/whose purposes they serve. Reception
areas, for example, seldom 'receive'; studios are rarely studious; and class-
rooms invariably have more room for some classes than others.

Many of the students widening-participation initiatives are hoping to
attract have not just walked out of domestic and social situations in which

their emotional development, learning or creativity have been carefully nurtured. Their relationship with learning spaces may be dense with past confusion, anxiety, hostility or even humiliation. In research I carried out with very disadvantaged learners with mental health difficulties (Sagan 2002; Sagan 2007b) social disadvantage was the norm, and high levels of anxiety were repeatedly experienced as part and parcel of learning.

Learners referred to several characteristics of the provision which they felt enabled them to continue and persist, rather than drop out of one more learning situation. Amongst these there were few surprises; learners wanted a local, safe space in which they felt ownership over the course and its contents. They wanted to be treated like adults and accepted and understood for any shortcomings. They wanted to make friends and socialize with others who shared their worries about learning, about not 'measuring up'. They wanted less prescription and more time to talk about the business of learning. And they wanted consistency; of teacher, time, place and pedagogical approach. However, interestingly, one of the elements of the teaching provision which was to emerge as being instrumental in containing anxiety and developing a transitional space in which individuals felt more able to engage in symbolization and reflexivity, was the biographic narrative interviews being carried out as part of the research. It seemed that this space of autobiographical expression, in which memories could be accessed and subjective experiences spoken of, was functioning as a creative, transitional arena.

[…]

Psychoanalytic theory has long been preoccupied with both learning and creativity, linking both at different times to desire, repetition, compulsion and sublimated sexuality. While these each form provocative and rich theories which have spawned a whole industry of intense epistemological and ontological speculation, it is Melanie Klein's work (Klein 1988; Klein 1998) which has perhaps offered a way of thinking about the confluence of both learning and creativity. Her work on reparation and loneliness (Klein 1963) for example, presents a delicate process of unconscious rebuilding of

internal objects (people, real and imagined, part-memory figures, phantasised others) in our inner landscape through engaging with a literal 'building' in the external world (Sagan 2007a). The profound sense of relief/release at both learning and creation, as well as the deadening frustration of stuckness or failure are, by any account, deeply emotional and personal experiences. These, I argue strongly, indicate the depth of the process and the density of the psycho-social knit involved in these processes. Going back to my research with mentally ill learners, briefly, it appeared that long-term engagement with an autobiographic project (one which could be regarded as an 'identity text', exploratory of self and identity through its process and content) enabled a more reflexive learning experience which, in turn, gave rise to a process through which individuals could talk and think more intimately (and at times painfully) about their subjective past experiences. This is not to suggest all teaching should encourage autobiographical excavations; but that for many learners, a period of working through identity concerns may be necessary. […]

Marion Milner suggests that we create and try and express ourselves when: 'the conditions of our living are changing so rapidly (that) the old forms for describing our feeling experiences become no longer adequate', and that there is a gap between the inner reality of feeling and the available ways of communicating (Milner 1950, p. 132).

Both learning and creative engagement offer some form of rescue here, offering 'new forms for describing.' Both, through enriching one's internal symbolization, reflexive engagement and overcoming of psychical barriers to change, can become a reparative project:

> Art can provide space for reparation as people project painful, confused feelings, and work on them, imaginatively and symbolically, and can create more of a good object to be re-introjected, over time.
> (West 2007, p. 12).

This model of the educative/creative project, in which emotions and psychosocially constructed identities engage in a stream of negotiations

between inner and outer realities, past and present, self and other, may seem perilously vulnerable and demanding. And yet psychoanalysis has also indicated the sheer resilience of the epistemological and creative drives, a resilience which we, as educators, will also be familiar with.

[…]

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Chapter 6

Assessment

Mantz Yorke has pointed out that:

> …assessment is the most problematic aspect of higher education curricula. The implied challenges are heightened when they intersect with those facing students entering higher education, especially when the students lack a cultural background, which can provide support. This is particularly the case for those who lack social capital and self-belief in their capacity to succeed.
>
> (Yorke, 2007, n.p.)

Yorke argues for learning-focused formative assessment to be embedded in the first year if students are to come to terms with the expectations of Higher Education. As Albert Bandura says, in his work on self-efficacy:

> …the less individuals believe in themselves, the more they need explicit, proximal and frequent feedback of progress that provides repeated affirmations of their growing capabilities.
>
> (Bandura, 1997, p. 217, cited in Yorke, 2007, n.p.)

Yet, as Yorke reminds us, QAA reports have repeatedly indicated that formative assessment is the least strong element of UK Higher

Education pedagogy (Yorke, 2007; see Krause, 2001, on poor experience of assessment and student attrition; on the importance of assessment, see Biggs, 2003, Ramsden, 2003, Brown *et al.*, 1997, and Gibbs and Simpson, 2004-5).

Stephen Gorard's *Barriers* report also drew attention to the lack of progress made in adapting assessment practice to the requirements of students from different educational backgrounds (Gorard *et al.*, 2006, pp. 70-73; May and Bridger, 2010, p. 20). Recently, however, disability legislation has prompted considerable work on alternative assessments to test specified learning outcomes (Waterfield and West, 2006) as part of HEI's 'positive duty' to develop inclusive practice (Waterfield and West, 2006, p. 10). Given the importance of assessment to student learning and retention, it is crucial that we reflect on what this means for Art and Design, rethinking the assessment options we give students and asking hard questions about much-cherished disciplinary practices.

In this section, we draw attention to work assessing the form and effectiveness of 'the Crit' (critique), which, as Bernadette Blair says, is often affected by students' positive or negative perceptions of their selves. Blair's article, 'At the end of a huge crit in the summer, it was "crap"…', is not in itself about widening participation, but given the relationship between identity and social and cultural capital, her study clearly has broad implications for widening participation. Blair questions the efficacy of the large crit for learning-focused formative feedback, even though, or perhaps especially because the crit seems integral to Art and Design education (on assessment for learning, see Harrington, 2011, and Black and William, 1998). She suggests that such events are often instead occasions for students to receive hierarchical feedback, which is often interpreted negatively. Blair reveals that the formal crit often fails as an effective way for students to offer feedback on each other's work. Perhaps worse, the 'performance of the crit' can alienate students unable to participate in this activity and who therefore feel outside the 'fraternity', which

their more confident fellow students are able – sometimes effortlessly – to enter.

Along with Margo Blythman and Susan Orr, Blair has looked at the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the so-called, 'traditional' crit. They have worked in part on making the language of the crit available to students for whom it may be a mystery and they have provided materials for staff to raise awareness of how the crit may be a negative learning experience for many students (Blythman, Orr and Blair, 2007).

Chapter 6.1

'At the end of a huge crit in the summer, it was "crap" – I'd worked really hard but all she said was "fine" and I was gutted.'[1]
Bernadette Blair

[…]

Within art and design curricula, the studio critique (crit) allows an opportunity for a verbal exchange between the student, his/her peers and their teacher, and a critical analysis of the presented work with an explanation of the thinking process the design student has gone through. This analysis and understanding can be of benefit both to the 'designer' and to their student peers and teachers, as it can allow a clarification of thinking and understanding of the work for all parties and a sharing of process (Oak 1998).

The studio crit is, within design education, the main formal point for formative assessment. At the studio crit, students are asked to present their ideas and/or 'product' to the group, explain their thinking process and receive formative feedback, most commonly in a verbal form, from their tutors and sometimes also their student peers. The crit presents an important opportunity for an assessment dialogue (Orr 2005) and for teachers to bring together and share, in a group environment, points of clarification or discussion, which may arise as areas of concern, weakness or strength during the development of the studio project. The crit allows the student

an opportunity to practise and develop presentation skills and a verbal articulation of their thoughts to an audience.

Formative assessment in design cannot be prescriptive. There is no one right answer, known final destination or conclusion to a given problem or project. Teachers and students give opinions based on experience and tacit knowledge, but as there is no one definitive or right solution, these opinions are, in the main, subjective. This can often result in the student receiving conflicting and sometimes, what students regard as, non-related feedback, from a variety of individuals. Design students are expected to learn to self-monitor and self-navigate their own pathway through this 'sea of opinion'. This can result in 'the level of response shifting to a self/ego level in which the learners' energies go into reconciling the mark with their view of themselves as learners' (Stobart 2006).

Within the studio environment, how do we ensure that formative assessment feedback is being carried out and promoting effective student learning? Students are expected to be proactive in individual and group student-led studio activities such as presentations and seminars, but students' participation within the large crit can be more variable, either through the set-up of the crit environment or in the way the event is facilitated.

The study

How effective is the assessment feedback that students receive at the large crit and are there elements which can interfere or enhance student learning? A small focused study was undertaken to examine the learning value of the verbal formative assessment feedback given and received at the crit (Blair 2006). This paper shares some of the findings and observations made by students and their teachers. The study was undertaken at three universities in the South East of England. Two undergraduate design courses were selected at each institution, the subject areas and student profiles being similar in each institution. The data was collected through crit observations, interviews with the teachers holding the crits and a series of

individual semi-structured interviews with students in all years, together with a series of student focus groups. In all, four crits were observed, five teachers and sixteen individual students interviewed and three focus groups, one in each institution, were carried out. The dialogue at the crits and interviews was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Observations of student behaviour at the crits was also noted.

[…]

The crit environment

At one of the crits I observed, the work was displayed throughout the room, and the student group (25 students) moved around from section to section gathering in front of each work being discussed. Because of the size of the group, it was difficult for all students to get near enough all the time to hear the comments made by the tutors, resulting in some students just waiting at the back of the group for their turn to come. These students were not fully engaged with the crit process or listening to the assessment feedback. This was also the case in another crit where groups of students (five to six) were presenting their concepts to the rest of the group (60). Students at the back could not hear and so became disengaged with the experience. Where the work was displayed on the walls, tutor comments to the individual student, were often directed at the wall with their back to the student group in the room, resulting in the majority of the group being excluded from the feedback. The benefit of displaying all the work together was that it allowed the students to see the range of work from the same project brief, but I would question its value as group learning through verbal feedback experience. Some of the students in the above crit group made up the student focus group from this institution. They confirmed that 'the worst crits are the large ones, the only thing is that they allow you to see everyone's work' (Blair 2006).

Students commented, based on prior crit experience, they were fortunate in being the morning crit (this group of 50 students had been divided in half and had either an a.m. or a p.m. crit).

So glad we were in the first group. I reckon as the afternoon goes on, it will get worse and they [tutors] will get tired. I feel really sorry for them. At the end of a long day, they [students] don't get value.

(Blair 2006)

A student from another course compared his expectation of a crit experience to what he received at a crit.

If I turned up to a crit, it wouldn't really matter if I wasn't 100% happy with the work. If I wasn't feeling the work then it probably didn't matter because I'd probably just be sitting there with everyone else. The tutor would explain there was no kind of goal in sight where you say you're here and you've really got to push to here or you have to try and be more out spoken or you have to try and push your work in that direction.

(Blair 2006)

It would seem from the above comments that on this course, a more surface learning experience had taken place, as the learning was all tutor-led (Askew and Lodge 2000). This student clearly defines what he thinks the function of a crit should be and comments that the group crit should challenge and 'push your work'.

The perception of self

The study analysis revealed that the desired benefits and understanding gained from the verbal assessment feedback received at the crit could also be affected by factors such as the power position of teacher/student (Devas 2004; Sara and Parnell 2004) or the stress factor (Pope 2005) impacting on student performance. Without exception, every student interviewed commented on how difficult they found the experience of standing up in front of a large group and presenting their work (Blair 2006).

Kluger and De Nisi's (1996) research defines a self or meta-factor related to feedback interventions and poses that a student's persona of themselves

(what I have called the 'perception of self') or prior experience or interpretation/understanding – in this case of verbal assessment feedback – can substantially affect the cognitive resources a student applies to an activity. The student's view of their role and of this perception of self can block any learning feedback and distract the student from their main focal point. Anxious participants whose self-related goals were activated are more likely to experience cognitive interference, that is, shifts of attention away from the tasks and towards the unmet goals of self (Kluger and De Nisi 1996: 266).

Students were asked if they looked forward to crits. They replied that if their previous experience of the crit was perceived as positive, where feedback, even if critical, had been constructively delivered, they then viewed forthcoming crits positively.

> I think I probably will [look forward to crits] after this one. Obviously you don't want to hear bad things. You never know what is going to come but at the same time it's nice to hear stuff. I think it depends on who does them as well.
>
> (Blair 2006)

The role of the tutor

As the last quote infers, the approach and attitude of the teacher giving the feedback can play a significant role in how student's confidence and perception of self as a designer is perceived. 'It's always nice to hear one good thing. It gives you the reason to carry on, but if everything is bad then it just drags you down, you think well what's the point' (Blair 2006).

All students agreed they wanted straightforward, honest, constructive feedback given in a clear objective way. Students wanted to receive both positive and negative feedback in order to be able to move forward but the manner in which this feedback is given is critically important. As Eisher (2002) states: 'the way in which something is spoken shapes its meaning' (p. 197).

One mature final year student indicated that the attitude of the teacher could change the student's self-perception of their learning. In a large crit experienced in year two he stated that the following got in the way of his learning experience.

> I think that sometimes the lecturer's insecurities and approach could be detrimental. You know, and could affect your whole person and your ability to design or what you feel about yourself, what you feel about your design and how your tutors feel and how they deal with it and it wasn't just me personally, it was probably 50/50, where people came away crying, where people were sworn at, personal things were said that weren't objective.
>
> (Blair 2006)

This affected his cognitive resources and both his motivation and learning experience. Currently, he described how a different teacher to the one mentioned above was carrying out his small group studio crits.

> It's very objective and you also learn from other peoples' designs because the atmosphere is created in such a way that you don't feel intimidated, you don't feel spoken down to even if there's 30% good and 70% bad, you're still told but they will tell you to go in a certain direction and why. It's an atmosphere where you learn. It doesn't matter whether you are put down or your design isn't really good, you learn the reasons for it and you just move on and learn.
>
> (Blair 2006)

He talked of teachers 'holding students' futures in their hands'.

The teachers' perception of their role in this learning process has a critical impact on the students' learning experience. Stobart (2006: 136) states that teachers' views on learning and teaching can undermine or support formative assessment. The quality of the reflection on their practice related to the students' practice also impacts on the learning experience (Davies 2000).

Perception of the crit

Students stated that they found large crits 'scary' experiences, not just the standing in front of the group and giving a presentation, but also being expected to stand there and to take criticism from the teacher in front of everyone. 'They're really scary. I don't know, it's really nerve racking, not just giving the presentation but if someone criticises your work, to be able to take it as well' (Blair 2006).

> Making you talk in the front of the class can be intimidating to say the least. You nervously stand up there but it gets the better of you and you try and express yourself and nothing comes out or you say the wrong thing. You've got these ideas waiting to be communicated but you can't grasp them and that's because it's purely one against everybody. It's a lot easier to express yourself in a smaller group of people.
>
> (Blair 2006)

This student voiced difficulty in articulating his ideas and being understood by the teacher and the group. He talked of 'not being able to express yourself at the right time and, yeah, having the courage as well'. This student appeared comfortable expressing his opinions, one to one, in the interview, but his cognitive resources could be affected by his anxiety and nervousness in the crit. This would very likely have an impact on and impair his current learning experience and what he may take forward to future learning.

Danvers (2003) tells us that creativity, a critical aspect in all learning but especially in design, thrives in an environment where the individual feels psychologically and physically comfortable, in an atmosphere of trust, security and openness (p. 45).

When questioned about their own memories of crits when they were students, all tutors stated that, as students, they too had found crits to be difficult and emotive experiences. 'I remember it being maybe not as critically supportive as it could have been and it being more of an unpicking and not necessarily putting back together again' (Blair 2006).

As a student, it was like going to the dentist. I just refused to open my mouth. Here's the work and if you don't understand the work don't expect me to tell you about it. I was terrified of talking.

(Blair 2006)

I thought crits were quite scary, which is all right having an element of that…it was very much the tutor stating the rights and wrongs and that led to a lot of non-objective comment.

(Blair 2006)

When asked how they thought students perceived the crits that they ran, and whether their own experience had affected or informed their own pedagogy (Black and Wiliam 1998, p. 20), two teachers stated:

It depends on the students, some students relish them, they just like standing up and talking to people, but they are few and far between. There are an awful lot of people who are terrified by them and find them terribly difficult and terribly nerve racking. I think most people find them unpleasant, especially if they turn into confrontational situations where I think they can really damage people.

(Blair 2006)

I would think they regard them with a mixture of fear, to be honest.

(Blair 2006)

Only one tutor said: 'I would like to think that they see it as a supportive environment' (Blair 2006).

Teacher 3 questioned the name of this activity.

It just strikes me immediately that it is a really bad name for what we do. Criticism is a sort of negative thing, so immediately you have this complete regime before you even start, that is criticism – it reeks of crime and punishment, that you've done something wrong. You've got to defend yourself.

(Blair 2006)

Students talked of a crit language or vocabulary, which once learnt, could assist the student in making a successful presentation.

> I think there is a certain vocabulary that you need to use as long as you've got that and don't really say 'I don't really know why I did this'. I was always told that if you like it, then you have to explain and be strong in your reasoning why you did it. It may not necessarily be the right reason but if you are confident, then it gives off to everyone else – what this person has put up is 'crap' but they're speaking as if they are an authority on it and they understand and they can explain the reasons they've done certain things.
>
> (Blair 2006)

It would seem from this student's comments, that from a student perception, it is not always the quality of the reflection and critical analysis of the learning that is important, but the quality of 'the performance of the crit.' (Percy 2003). This 'performance' relying on implicit rather than explicit learning can have detrimental consequences for students unable to participate in this activity. 'Students who successfully engage with the performance of the crit become a member of the fraternity, but those who cannot find a way of participating become isolated and alienated from the discourse' (p. 151).

Taking into account the teachers' own crit experiences as students, together with the research on crits in the literature, it could be expected that current students' experience of crits would be a very different experience to that of their tutors. Even though teachers talked of having adapted the crit scenario and of providing a supportive environment, the students interviewed voiced exactly the same fears and anxieties about crits that their teachers had experienced as students (Blair 2006). These anxieties can impact on the quality of the student learning.

> Students can become anxious, fearing that their approach is not valid or that it diverges too far from the requirements of the brief and the ever-looming assessment.
>
> (Dineen and Collins 2005, p. 47)

Receiving and hearing assessment feedback

Every student interviewed, without exception, commented on how difficult they found the experience of standing up in front of a large group and presenting their work.

> It's that feeling that you might not be able to express yourself at the right time and yeah, having the courage as well. Some people who are more shy can't take it, standing in front of so many people and expressing it.
>
> (Blair 2006)

The study found that students, for the major part of their presentation, are literally frozen with fear. They do not hear or remember what they have said or what has been said about their work, or even the comments made about other students' work. Students become very inward-focused just before, during and straight after their presentation and are oblivious to what else is happening and being discussed around them.

> There is a pre-presentation period where you are so worried about your own presentation you are not even thinking about anybody else's work or about things, which might be raised there.
>
> (Blair 2006)

> It's one of those stupid things that once they say 'that's it' I thought 'oh, that's better' and suddenly my head came back again. I can actually talk. I can't remember what I said at my presentation at all; it's all a blur.
>
> (Blair 2006)

There also seemed some reluctance by students, to enter into a dialogue with their teachers, during the large crit. Sara and Parnell (2004) in their research into the crit/review in architectural education, illustrate what a traumatic experience the crit can be for students.

> The relationship between presenter and listener is made more problem-

atic due to the unequal relationship of power between the two. This is due to the unequal spatial arrangements, the number of listeners in relation to presenters and, also of course, the positions of authority that tutors and visiting critics have in relation to the students (not least because they tend to hold the power of assessment). This asymmetrical power relationship inhibits dialogue, meaning that limited numbers of students (both presenting and listening) truly contribute, 'and if there's no dialogue, there's no learning'.

<div align="right">(p. 59)</div>

Because of this emotional roller coaster and the dual role that teachers often play, not just in formative assessment but also in students' summative assessment, students can sometimes have difficulty in associating the crit experience as a supportive learning environment where they can demonstrate weakness or doubts and feel comfortable in voicing their own opinions (Black and Wiliam 1998).

Whilst acknowledging that there were benefits in presenting and reflecting on his work through the crit, the student below confirmed that the anxiety aspect interfered with the quality of the learning experience.

> It's one of those love/hate relationships. I do enjoy doing it afterwards when the crit is out of the way and I'm one step forward towards the end of my project but the two days before and the two days after, I feel completely different emotions on the scale. Relief and then it starts building up again. You've gone from the green to the red and then back. It's always like that.
>
> <div align="right">(Blair 2006)</div>

[…]

Ownership of crits

There is also the question of ownership of large crits. The teachers I interviewed still run and in most cases control these crits and students

were, to varying degrees, encouraged to 'actively' participate. I observed crits, where there was minimal dialogue between the teachers and the student whose work was being critiqued, to crits where teachers actively encouraged presenting students and their peer group to voice a viewpoint. The observed crits and the crits which were referenced in interviews were, in the main, teacher-led. Peer feedback when given, was usually through:

— Teachers asking students if they had any comments, usually after they had given their opinions, rather than asking students directly what they thought about a particular aspect of the work, or
— By students giving written comments to the student rather than verbal feedback, after the presentation.

One student stated that in large crits, with a teacher who was not interviewed, they were never allowed to talk, except during their own presentation, but had to sit and listen to just the teacher's comments on each presentation.

> In many cases the teachers hold conceptions of themselves as a resource of knowledge and/or skills to be drawn on. They perceive their role as being the experts who have the knowledge and the skill, which at some appropriate point needs to be transferred to the student.
>
> (Davies 2000, p. 113)

> There was evidence in the study that many teachers continue to teach and run crits mirroring the same practice and tradition used when they themselves were taught.
>
> (Reid 2000)

Conclusion

I would argue that the findings in this study show that the student/teacher relationship and student's perception of self within the large crit environment can and does impact on the quality of learning and the validity of the formative assessment. All students, even though they were supportive

that the crit or something similar should continue to be part of the studio curriculum, used the crit event for two main functions:

— To see each others' work and ideas

— To get feedback about their own work from mainly the teacher and occasionally their peers – though most students stated that they received more peer feedback through informal discussions, either in the studio environment or in more social environments such as discussions about work in the student bar

The study indicates that:

— The large crit inhibits the majority of students from giving feedback to their peers
— The large crit can affect the quality of the learning experience, which takes place

The [architectural] crit places into a pressure cooker a combination of potentially explosive ingredients; students catatonic with tiredness and fear, tutors [mainly male] charged on power, and an adversarial arena in which actions are as much about showing off as they are about education.

(Till 2004, p. 15)

— Large crits are often confrontational experiences where students are focused on 'defending' their actions, rather than on discussion or reflection on the process of learning. For the student, the value of formative assessment feedback and dialogue is currently not being received and heard as effectively as it could be

The scenario, most favoured by the students interviewed, as the most effective in assisting in learning, was the small seminar group. Students thought that because these were a more intimate, non-threatening environment, they were places where more learning took place and where especially shy or quiet students felt they could voice their opinion

to the group, or explain their work in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Seminar groups were also regarded as a more professionally relevant event for students and teachers to discuss and reflect on the learning process.

Davies and Reid (2000) question the relevance of the large studio crit event to the professional environment and the teacher's ability to act as an effective client in the real world/professional scenario played out through the crit.

> The public critique, often characterised by the teacher addressing each student's work in front of the group, seems in this context a dubious method of developing a student's conception of both learning and design. Notwithstanding the possibility of the limited conceptions of both learning and the design entity possessed by the teacher, the construction of the scenario clearly centres the teacher. Is this a method mirrored in the design profession? How does this crucial aspect of a student's learning experience map onto their understanding of the professional world? What construction of the design entity is being promoted in this context?
>
> (p. 183)

An interviewed teacher also questioned the relevance of the large crit to the professional environment. He could not see what relationship this activity had to professional design practice. (This teacher no longer uses the large crit.)

> In practice as a designer I don't know when you talk to a large group – occasionally, but I've never done this in practice. All my presentations were to 2, 3 or 4 people, max. 6 people. I have never been involved as a designer where you talk at large groups. It's always been a dialogue.
>
> (Blair 2006)

The relevance of the large crit to professional practice is also questioned by Brown (2004) who states: 'Surviving this ordeal [the crit] is seen as a rite of passage, something to aspire to, even though no systematic evidence demonstrates that this atmosphere is necessary for the training of professionals' (p. 220).

The teachers interviewed also agreed that the smaller group seminar is a preferable environment for learning. Yet, despite research highlighting problems with the large crit, the practice regularly continues more or less unchanged today. Increase in student numbers and limited contact hours, means that teachers often still maintain a preference for the large crit to the smaller seminar/crit groups, where they may have to be repetitive.

I would suggest, as an academic community, we need to once again re-evaluate the process and role of the crit and ensure that whatever model is adopted, effective learning is taking place and that all students are involved in their learning.

> Teaching styles most conductive to the fulfilment of creative potential are those which encourage student responsibility through ownership, trust and low levels of authoritarianism, providing individual attention and opportunities for independent learning.
>
> (Dineen and Collins 2005, p. 46)

[…]

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Chapter 7

Academic Writing
in Art and Design

Caroline Hudson's research for CHEAD, discussed earlier (p. 37), has shown that the majority of students in Art and Design express anxiety about the writing involved for their degrees (2006), an anxiety which perhaps reflects much broader tensions concerning the historical role of academic writing in Art and Design practice-based courses of study (Bhagat and O'Neill, 2011). Attention to academic writing is an important area to consider in terms of student success in Art and Design. If students cannot successfully complete their written requirements, they run a high risk of dropping out.

However, writing is not only a potential barrier after admissions. It may also play a 'policing' role in admissions, helping to keep out so-called non-traditional students. In one of the most interesting aspects of their report for NALN on the admissions process, *Art for a Few*, Penny Jane Burke and Jackie McManus point out that interviewers often see good writing and presentation skills as core criteria for selection. These are, of course, likely to be attributes of those applicants with the social and cultural capital that comes from a middle-class background and education (Burke and McManus, 2009, pp. 26-27). Objecting to this emphasis on writing skills in admissions, Burke and McManus draw attention to Academic Literacies thinkers who point out that adequate academic writing

is less about taught skills than tacit understandings about how disciplines operate and express themselves (e.g. Lea and Street, 1998; cf. Russell *et al,* 2009). For Academic Literacies thinkers, it is the responsibility of lecturers to communicate such understandings to all students as part of their education. They should not form grounds for exclusion.

In our own work at London Metropolitan University, we have worked to unpack some of the understandings and conventions of academic writing for first-year students in their first few weeks of university (Bhagat and O'Neill, 2011). Our aim has been to enable students to see academic writing as achievable and worthwhile and a powerful place to articulate their voices. Naturally, this benefits all students, not just so-called 'non-traditional' students. Our approach stems from the view that 'acculturation' approaches into disciplinary academic writing are no longer tenable; and teaching generic – and de-contextualised – 'study skills' en masse is inappropriate and insufficient (Ivanic and Lea, 2006). Rather, we insist, along with Academic Literacies theorists (e.g. Lea and Street, 1998), 'Writing in the Disciplines' (WiD) initiatives (e.g. Monroe, 2002 and 2003; Bean, 2007) and widening participation researchers (e.g. David et al., 2009), that it is the disciplinary/subject specialist who is responsible for enabling students to understand and deploy disciplinary knowledge through a praxis that takes responsibility for and embraces writing as much as it does designing, making and producing (see also Harvey, Drew and Smith, 2006, pp. 84-85, on the need for integrating teaching of 'skills' within the curriculum rather than in stand-alone courses).

We have tried to enable students to meet the demands of rigorous academic writing, as we think that this will enhance students' own thinking and therefore practice and also prepare them for entry into the creative industries, or post-graduate study should they so plan. However, the place of academic writing in Art and Design has also been challenged more directly and radically. We excerpt here John Wood's article 'The Culture of Academic Rigour' (2000). Wood shows

that the notion of rigour is drawn from the monastic tradition which gave rise to university research. Nevertheless, he insists academic rigour is only one part of design education, which also derives from the craft guild tradition and which finds its way into the design studio. Moreover, he argues that the idea of rigour as a guarantee or even supporter of truth is at odds with the practical demands made of designers and the negotiations and compromises they entail. Instead, he calls for less rigorous writing and more empathetic writing, a more embodied writing which is aligned with creative tasks – and which will take into account the audiences designers will one day work for and the situations they will find themselves in.

We also excerpt here Keith Russell's response to Wood. For Russell, Wood's views of scholastic rigour are symptomatic of the 'uneasy liaison' of the different knowledges of history/theory and the studio or workshop, which characterises the history of design education. He also draws attention to Wood's own use of devices of scholastic rigour to elevate and support the devices he sets up in opposition to rigour, and goes on to argue for 'the uses of the culture of academic rigour, as a practice, in current and future design [education].' For Russell (below):

> the Monastery and Guild are alike in their determinations of rigour. However, just as the Monastery has elevated itself as a world of knowing with special features, so the Design Studio has elevated itself as a world of knowing with special features.

John Wood's essay is now part of the Writing PAD project (Writing Purposefully in Art and Design, «www.writing-pad.ac.uk»). Through this emphasis on purposive writing, Writing PAD has generated a body of often innovative and creative work which shows the possibilities of writing for learning and practice. As Jane Graves puts it (in Chapter 8.1), Writing PAD 'explores strategies to achieve integration in art and design education – principally when it comes to writing' (excerpted in next section), so that writing is not seen as

a realm detached from the student's practice but as an essential and authentic element of students' creativity. From our perspective, one of the most exciting aspects of Writing PAD is that it shows how many lecturers have switched on to the possibilities offered by writing and have taken ownership of this aspect of our students' education and learning. This seems much more productive than lamenting inadequate writing skills in our students and leaving it to study-skills specialists or learning developers to deal with students who are stigmatised as remedial; and, as Writing PAD shows, this approach will lead to innovative, more creative and better teaching for all students, not just students from widening participation backgrounds.

Chapter 7.1

The culture of academic rigour: does design research really need it?[1]
John Wood

Introduction

Clearly, as world citizens, designers are strategically important in terms of the global ecosystem's well-being. Ideally speaking, they should therefore be equipped to discharge this responsibility by being conversant with political, ethical, ecological, technological, economic, and other issues. This is easily said but difficult to achieve. Competitive professional practices do not facilitate long periods in the library, and many designers succeed commercially without much contextual reading and writing. This is a cultural, as well as a practical problem. Schön[2] (1985) has shown that the methodologies of design practice and scholastic research evolved from two historically distinct traditions of thought. Loosely speaking, whereas the university 'research' tradition stemmed from the cloistered scriptoria of the monasteries, studio traditions evolved from the mediaeval craft guilds. This means that whereas we associate scholastic knowledge mainly with 'truth' claims, design knowledge is oriented to making practical, appropriate, and elegant interventions within actual situations (see Figure 1).

Monastic truth-oriented knowledge i.e. text-based knowledge that serves to validate and to fortify belief	Crafts-guilds result-oriented knowledge i.e. task-based knowledge that facilitates situated actions and judgement

Figure 1: Differences in monastic and crafts-guilds modes of knowledge

Today's culture of design education straddles this ideological fault-line of the 'old' and 'new' universities. Although each half is vital to it, this paper reminds us that without the monastic culture of writing, designers would be less well informed. Specifically, they may be disabled by a lack of critical and strategic thinking. If they cannot reflect deeply they will be unable to see the consequences of their actions and if they do not understand what they are doing we cannot expect them to take responsibility for it. Whilst my paper stresses the educational importance of writing and reading it also identifies serious limitations to the scholastic mindset that informs it. For example, in traditional doctoral research projects there has been too much emphasis on the form and the importance of the thesis itself. This approach has given us assessment criteria in which written and 'source-remote' information eventually assumes the status of a body of knowledge in its own right. Here, writing, rather than the candidate's wisdom, remains the principal site of appraisal, albeit supplemented by a relatively brief viva voce examination.

Although traditional PhD approaches sometimes lead to profound and novel design outcomes they sometimes proceed from hypothesis to theory, rather than from practice to theory to practice. As such, even though the knowledge gained may be vitally important it may nevertheless tend to get archived and forgotten. Today, new alliances between industry and academia continue to foster a more entrepreneurial, outcome-centred idea of aptitude. Arguably, if we are to make design practice more ethically and ecologically responsible, we should ask designers to demonstrate both practical and theoretical aptitude in a creative combination. This would evaluate the terms within which their embodied knowledge is likely to be effective within a realistic context.

Why is 'school essay writing' relatively unhelpful to designers?

School education still appears to emphasise the self-justifying and rhetorical aspects of writing, rather than their auto-didactic and reflective capabilities in the context of other practices.

The underlying ideologies of the UK school system still reflect the values of what used to be taught exclusively to a ruling elite in which power was exchanged discursively through rhetorical claims and repudiation. For example, we still encourage young school students to emphasise linear, dialectical modes of argumentation in which they 'narrate' the salient features of a topic and develop it into a well-rounded and unassailable conclusion (see Figure 2). Indeed, scholastic rigour has itself become a central, yet largely unchallenged paradigm of academic rhetoric. The 'thesis → antithesis → synthesis' model has come to seem so 'natural' that it is sometimes difficult to persuade students to adopt alternative structures.

**Rhetorical modes
of representation**

Academically-
oriented e.g. 'school
essay' mode

Communication-
oriented e.g.
handbook mode

**Truth-oriented
knowledge**

**Task-guiding
knowledge**

Reader-oriented
modes e.g. role-play
or scenario notation

Experience-oriented
e.g. heuristic diary or
workshop notation
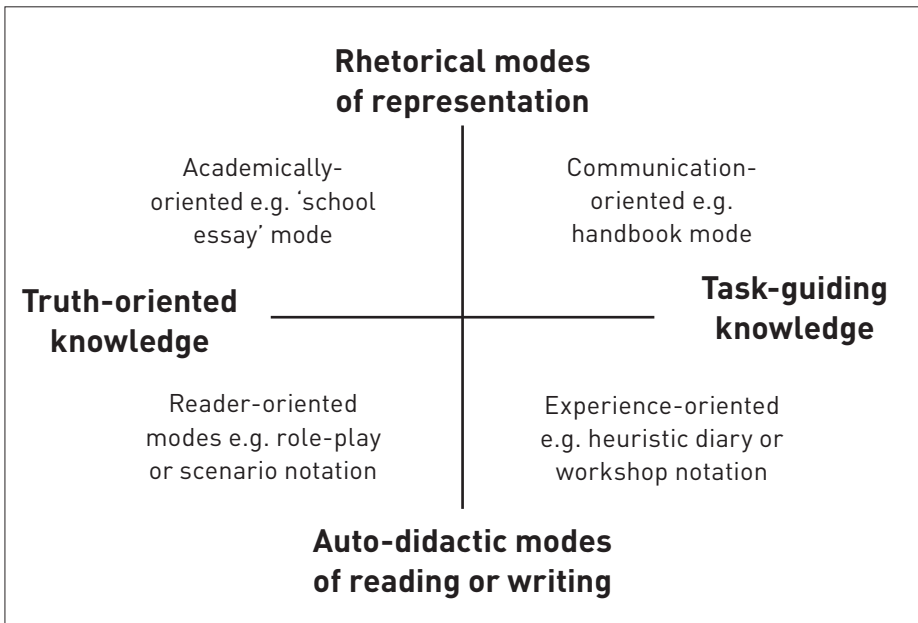
**Auto-didactic modes
of reading or writing**

Figure 2: Academic writing techniques evolved from the monastic tradition

Admittedly, the adversarial, discursive model can be versatile and engaging but we should acknowledge that we also intend it to help students:

1. to recognise their own insights
2. to identify with other facts, arguments and views
3. to clarify their own position
4. to evaluate their own knowledge

We should also admit that it has provided a well-established structure, and therefore formal criteria, by which the academy can apply rigorous academic evaluation. The idea of rigour is a helpful benchmark for discussing consensus within the bureaucracy of assessment but we tend to use it carelessly to discuss symptomatic gestures rather than embodied attitudes. Although rigorous and rhetorical models of writing can encourage designers to reflect upon the context of their studio-based work it is important to remember that the system was not explicitly designed to do so. For this reason it is debatable whether it offers the best way to help creative practitioners to think more effectively.

The ancient idea of 'rigour'

The metaphor of rigour is very old and combines metaphysical and discursive beliefs that endure to this day. Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Melissus and Parmenides were highly influential, not only for emphasising the importance of clear argumentation but also for their astonishing metaphysical claim that we live in a single, 'rigid' universe. The quality of rigour they describe combines monogeneity and immobility, as shown here in this seemingly inconsistent description:[3]

'And you must ascertain everything –
both the unmoving heart of a well-rounded truth
and the opinions of mortals in which there is no true trust'

3   see Jonathan Barnes, 'The Pre-Socratic Philosophers' vol. 1 Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1979, p. 156

These arguments influenced Plato and reverberated throughout Western thought for several years. Although Heraclitus, a contemporary of Parmenides, had offered a plausible alternative the metaphor of rigour has enjoyed the status of an axiom until the arrival of twentieth century science. It is for this reason that we tend to confuse 'sloppiness' with a refusal to ignore the dynamic and situated context of a given case.

The metaphysics of 'rigour'

Aristotle's belief that moving bodies naturally tend to slow down and stop expresses the profound denial of movement implicit in the metaphor of 'rigour'. Newton's First Law of Motion was an important step in undermining this idea because it proved the non-existence of absolute rest. Einstein (1915) took the idea further and showed that space and time are interdependent and dynamic. Bohm[4] elucidates: 'From the fact that in Einstein's point of view no signal faster than light is possible, it follows that the concept of a rigid body breaks down.' It is interesting that the idea of a non-rigid universe troubled Einstein because, as a Western thinker, he found it hard to accept. Hawking (1988) suggests that Alexander Friedmann (1922) was possibly the first modern person fully to embrace the idea of a non-static universe when he anticipated Hubble's (1929) discovery that the universe is expanding away from us in all directions. He muses that Friedmann's idea 'could have been predicted at any time in the 19th, eighteenth, or even seventeenth centuries. Yet so strong was the belief in a static universe that it persisted into the early 20th century.' [5]

Around the time that Friedmann and Hubble were coming to terms with an expanding universe, Bohr, Dirac, Heisenberg, Planck, and Schrödinger were formulating the strange laws of the Quantum world that confounded Western models of linear causality and observation. These developments have also taken their toll on epistemology and seem to coincide with

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4   Bohm, D., *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Boston and Henley, 1980, p. 9
5   Hawking, S., *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam Press, 1988, p. 40

Freud's emphasis on the analyst's active role of 'listening' in psychoanalysis, and with the reader theories of Ricoeur, Barthes, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, which acknowledged the co-creative role of the reader in formulating meaning. In different ways, Kuhn (1962), Feyerabend (1975) and Gadamer (1975) all argued that belief systems are unstable, therefore transient, and will perish without the support of insight and innovation.

Surprisingly, then, although hardly anyone really believes that the universe is solid, our desire to believe in 'rigour' coincides with a popular idea of rigidity as a paradigm of the so-called 'real' world. Even when Quantum Physics and Chaos Theory have become topics of popular interest, we continue to speak of 'firm foundations' and use metaphors such as 'concrete', and 'material' to elevate the status of thoughts and opinions.

The popularity of 'rigour'

If rigour is such a dubious metaphor, how has it survived into today's culture of design education? This paper argues that there are two main reasons. First, at the formal level, it derives from the innate characteristics of the printed word and the organisational structures it produces. Second, the idea of rigour is compatible with the mediaeval corporate power structure which spawned the modern academies. Traditional universities needed self-evident rules of fairness by which to ordain and to promote their members. Similarly, they sought enduring truth claims that are assessed by how well they can withstand written denunciation. Here, the underlying sense is often militaristic (e.g. defending one's claims of truth against attack) or geological (e.g. Tectonic plates as rival schools of thought). This paper argues that an emphasis on rigour as a cardinal metaphor of education is neither fitting nor helpful to the emergence of a new design culture that must accommodate rapid change, and which must encourage practitioners to become more entrepreneurial, self-reflexive, and socially responsible.

The rigour of printed writing

Objections to the invention of writing are legendary, and in a litigious world riddled with libel and copyright laws we may sympathise with Clement of Alexandria who complained (in 200 AD): 'To write all things in a book is to leave a sword in the hands of a child'.[6]

Poster [7] comments that writing promotes forms of spoken grammar such as lists, formulas and recipes, and that these forms are rare and less conducive to reason, freedom, and equality than speech. He quotes anthropologist Jack Goody's description of alphabetical writing that 'tends to arrange terms in (linear) rows and (hierarchical) columns in such a way that each item is allocated a single position, where it stands in a definite, permanent, and unambiguous relationship to the others'.[8] From a similar perspective, Baudrillard observes that the culture of writing has an alienating effect upon the writers and readers themselves: 'Speech constitutes subjects as members of a community by solidifying the ties between individuals. Print constitutes subjects as rational, autonomous egos as stable interpreters of culture who, in isolation; make logical connections from linear symbols'.[9] From this perspective we might see bureaucracy as an example of a rational culture ossified by text.

Rigour and the freelance designer

In the academic context the idea of 'rigour' stands for 'logical accuracy and exactitude' and derives from the Latin word 'rigere' – to be stiff. As such it has come to signify not only the strict enforcement of rules but also great harshness or austerity, thereby emphasising its significance within Judeo-Christian Puritanism. Importantly, such associations reflect

6   Borges, Jorge, Luis, 'On the Cult of Books', in *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952*, trans. Ruth L. Simms, University of Texas Press, 1964, p. 117
7   Poster, M., *The Mode of Information*, Polity Press, 1990, Cambridge, pp. 84
8   Goody, J., 'The Domestication of the Savage Mind', (New York: Cambridge, 1977) quoted in Poster, M., *The Mode of Information*, Polity Press, 1990, Cambridge, pp. 84
9   quoted in Poster, M., *The Mode of Information*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990

a Christian mistrust of the sensual body, and it is no accident that we use the term 'rigour' to describe the stiffness of dead bodies. We should not underestimate this association because scepticism exemplifies a denial of immediate sensory experience. When we remember that St. Ignatius Loyola taught his followers to accept the maxim 'henceforth as a corpse' on entering the Jesuit order we can see that Christianity's recoil from the flesh is not confined to Protestant manifestations. In Loyola's prayer, self-denial is expressed as a total bodily submission to the assigned task: 'to give, and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wound, to labour without rest'. Such sentiments are also implicit in the modern concept of the 'freelance' designer or consultant who is expected to deny his/her own views, ideologies and immediate well-being in the quest for his/her client's cause or satisfaction. Arguably, this is no longer a sensible attitude in an age of mounting ecological damage in which we often see ourselves as powerless individuals in the thrall of faceless corporations.

The anachronism of 'rigour'

Even after we accepted the work of Gödel and Heisenberg, Western thought continues to marginalise the profound insights of Heraclitus and Cratylus which hint that epistemology is inseparable from ontology. Ironically, this is because of consistencies that are paradoxical, rather than for inconsistencies that are transferable. By emphasising flux they tried to reflect the profoundly laminar relationship between what we can show to others, and the role of our presence when doing so. In Western dualistic terms we could say that this view entails a refusal to separate language from the (so-called 'external') world. If we describe something as part of our 'living presence' we cannot also logically describe it from a standpoint of 'rigour'. This misunderstanding also reflects a mediaeval conflation between our belief in a rigid universe and the idea of the Book. When Galileo described Nature as 'a book written in mathematical language' he combined an assumption of consistency in the practical world with a corresponding assumption that the Book was an ideal form that corresponded with the form of the universe. Underlying this logic is the aesthetic prin-

ciple that unless we can show all parts of a representation, argument or proposition to share the same style – i.e. that it is monolithic – the whole work may be spurious. This may generate an understandable discrepancy between the culture of the academic library and that of the design studio.

[…]

Algorithmic thinking

In the Western tradition of scholastic writing, deductive and inductive logic became the dominant modes of thinking within which situations, pre-dicaments, and approaches are challenged and defined. Such an approach probably derives from the earliest masonic monocultures of the Middle East. Inspired by these ancient bureaucracies we came to invent short-term accounting, Taylorism, and the digital computer. A high point of this mindset was the concept of the 'algorithm' which is a kind of mathematical recipe designed to respond to certain conditions without adapting to their becoming. It was once hoped that we could build automata which could respond 'intelligently' to any situation if programmed with smart enough algorithms. This overestimation of the principle of rigorous logic led to the demise of the Artificial Intelligence project.[10] If, as we have suggested, the algorithm highlights certain limitations of academic 'rigour', the heuristic approach offers a more suitable educational model for design practitioners.

Heuristic thinking

In an education culture increasingly concerned with developing 'bona fide' research methodologies, situated models of writing such as notative, fic-tive, aphoristic or diaristic approaches are unlikely to resemble what we would expect to see. Normal modes of essay logic are, however, of lim-ited use except to focus the writer's attention upon issues and topics, or to represent existing design thinking in a more self-justifying and persua-

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10   see Penrose, R., *The Emperor's New Mind*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989

sive way. In short, these modes of writing are better for putting previous 'thought-actions' into words than they are at responding with new ones. This is unfortunate for design students, given that the designer's task is usually a tangle of 'wicked problems'[11] rather than a series of linear, finite questions. Where algorithms conform to most of the qualities of 'rigour' detailed above, heuristics is concerned with discovery, rather than with proof. As Einstein intimated, the rigour of logic is not enough: 'To these elementary laws there leads no logical path, but only intuition, supported by being sympathetically in touch with experience'.[12]

Abductive logic

Rowe[13] relates abduction to heuristics and suggests that the abductive mode of inquiry:

> …is very common in design. We often employ heuristics that allow us to import autonomous constraints into our problem spaces in order to facilitate further activity. In fact, in the case of ill-defined and wicked problems abduction is the rule rather than the exception.

Wicked problems usually call for an 'abductive' approach because you don't have enough given variables to indicate a clear (deductively logical) choice. Abduction[14] is a kind of inference that is neither deduction nor induction. It is a process whereby a surprising fact is made explicable by the application to it of a suitable proposition. The formulation of abduc-

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11 Attributed to Horst Rittel in an article by Churchman, C. W., 'Wicked Problems', *Management Science*, vol. 4, no. 14 (December 1967) B-141-42, quoted in Richard Buchanan's chapter 'Wicked Problems in Design Thinking', Margolin, V., and Buchanan, R., (eds.) *The Idea of Design*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts & London

12 Einstein, A., quoted in Gerald Holton, *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Eistein* (Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 357

13 Rowe, P. G. *Design Thinking*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1987 p. 102

14 Wood, J., and Taylor, P., 'Mapping the Mapper', a chapter in *Computers, Communications, and Mental Models*, eds. Donald Day & Diane Kovacs, Taylor & Francis, London, ISBN 0-7484-0543-7, pp. 37-44, January, 1997

tion is attributed to C. S. Peirce:[15] 'A surprising fact, C, is observed. But if a proposition, A, were true, C would be a matter of course. Hence, there is a reason to suspect that A is true.'

The adversarial nature of rhetoric

Because much of the orthodox grammar of academic discourse is generalised, both reader and writer tend to give up their identity to be part of an 'objective' claim to truth that is deemed acceptable to the academy. The seldom acknowledged rhetorical tradition also tends to emphasise aspects of the document's structure and style, rather than its usefulness as a process and its ultimate outcome. As Edward de Bono once said: 'academic writing… is a triumph of form over content'. Its underlying purpose was to enable the writer to celebrate his/her non-tacit knowledge of the topic and to win approval from senior academicians. If we could visualise academic relations in terms of body-language – i.e. with a relationship between student and examiner that is somewhere between 90° and 180° – we would appreciate the strongly adversarial tensions that still exist between writer (student) and reader (lecturer). We still commonly speak of research students 'defending' their thesis, and we seldom question the efficacy of a system which uses writing as much a justification of belief (Brufee 1988) [16] as a part of the learning process.

Significantly, in orthodox modes of academic rhetoric the modern (design) essay is not designed to address an actual reader. Today students assume it will be judged by a faceless manager of academic standards. In my experience, even when students know the actual individuals to whom they will submit their papers they seldom make any explicit concession to their particular interests, understanding or demeanour. This would be improper. Likewise, those tutors who have been assigned the task of reading will usually try to repress their personal position and adopt the assumed academic

15   Peirce, C. S., *Collected Papers of Charles Peirce*, (ed. by C. Hartshorne & P. Weiss), Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, (p. 374)
16   Bruffee, K. A. 'Liberal Education and the Social Justification in Belief.' *Liberal Education*. 68, 1988 pp. 95-114

values and standards of the academy. More disturbingly, many design students are assigned essays by specialist theoreticians who are not given time to relate their teaching to studio practice. In the changing world of interactive multi-media systems we might do well to remember Plato's complaint that books are like the 'painted figures that seem to be alive, but do not answer a word to the questions they are asked.' …'the teacher selects its pupils but the book does not select its readers, who may be wicked or stupid.' In the much vaunted global village we still assume the 'normal' position of readers who are always already 'outside' the circle of friends for whom dead authors once wrote their texts. Hence it seems natural to adopt anachronistic modes of writing in which we our readers are unknown to us as actual people. (This paper exemplifies the tendency.)

'Rigour' and human knowledge

The idea of rigour reflects an early Greek anxiety that if the world were not rigid then we could never understand it in a factual, generalised way. As Aristotle said: 'There is no knowledge of things which are in a state of flux'.[17] Since then we have tended to compensate for this fear by trying to fix knowledge within autonomous truths which can be 'disembodied' from the opportunistic apprehension of their living, breathing authors. This represents a misunderstanding of Aristotle's argument. By solidifying 'information' in great books we simply attributed importance to the 'library' culture. Later, we extended the great libraries into government-sponsored academies of learning that stood as keepers of wisdom. Very recently, we revived Diderot's eighteenth century vision of the Encyclopaedia as a receptacle for all human knowledge. However, as Perry Barlow said: 'Information in a digital medium is like wine without bottles'.[18]

It is easy to see how a series of de-contextualised 'facts' – e.g. those we may find in a heavy dictionary – were valued for their apparent durability

17 Barnes, J., *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* vol. 1 Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1979 1078 p. 13-35
18 Barlow, J. P., 'The Economy of Ideas: A Framework for Rethinking Patents and Copyrights in the Digital Age.' *Wired*, 2.03, p. 85-90, 1994

and hence exalted within the learning process. However, factual knowledge is of very limited use without 'tacit knowledge' (Pascal, 1670; [19] Polanyi, 1969;[20] Dreyfus, 1986 [21]). This truth has always been obvious to designers, but it does not guarantee that they will become better informed in future. In theory the encyclopaedic rigidity of 'facts' will soften in the era of digital pictures and sounds because we can make their taxonomies more adaptable to the situated context of reader and question. This challenge remains, but we should remember that few books have ever managed to achieve this.[22]

A more empathetic approach to (design) writing

In developing alternative approaches to the above problems within our MA Design Futures programme at Goldsmiths we have developed writing guidelines intended to help the students to manage the level of rhetoric in their structure. Where appropriate we encourage them to approach writing as a type of design task in which there is both a tangible future outcome and an immediate effect. In advocating a task-centred – rather than, say, a 'topic-centred' style of writing – we ask our students to identify the context, depth, and breadth of their approach. One way to do this is ask them to clarify – or to invent – who they are writing 'as', and who they are writing 'to'. We encourage students to think of design is an empathetic and actative[23] task because professional design practice almost invariably involves a client or sponsor who becomes, de facto, a co-creative partner of the designer – however unwelcome this may sometimes seem. In claiming writing as a formative aspect of socially responsible designing, we choose to believe that it stands for co-operative communication and work, say on an axis of between 0° and 90°. This simple assumption can help participants to elucidate and rehearse their objectives within a very flexible client-centred

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19 Pascal, B., *Pensées* (1670)

20 Polanyi, M., 'Tacit Knowing', in *Knowing and Being*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1969

21 Dreyfus, H. L. & Dreyfus, S. E., *Mind over Machine*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986

22 The Chinese *Book of Changes* ['I Ching'] comes to mind, here.

23 Wood, J., and Taiwo, O., 'Optimising feelings of uncertainty to enhance public performance', paper to be given at the 'Simplicity in Complexity' conference', 14th World Congress of Sociology, Montreal, 1998

model. It is reasonably simple to outline the process and to adapt it to one's own purposes. For example, designers can write as themselves, or as someone else. If they write as themselves they may act in a professional or a personal capacity. Similarly, their reader may be an actual client or an invented problem holder. This is simplified explanation offers at least four basic configurations that can be extended and modified to suit particular conditions and participants.

Opportunism is more useful than rigour

Another alternative to 'rigour' is the rather Macchiavellian idea of 'opportunism'. Whereas the idea of opportunism is usually associated with politics or entrepreneurship, most design students recognise opportunism as a kind of 'creativity'. Professional situations call for individual skills of recognition before opportunities can be identified, and this has a strongly psychoanalytical component. Hence, choosing a reader is a creative task for which it is difficult to give generalised advice. Loosely speaking, however, a suitable reader is quite likely to satisfy some, or all, of the following conditions:

– someone who has an acknowledged design-related problem or question
  that you also want to solve, address, or inform
– someone who doesn't know what you already know
– someone who would benefit by knowing it
– someone who would understand how you are able to present your conclusions
– someone who may test, evaluate, or act upon what you suggest
– someone who may disapprove of some aspects of what you suggest but
  who – in your opinion – may wish to act upon it out of self-interest
– someone who may disapprove of some aspects of what you suggest but
  who – in your opinion – may choose to act upon it for the common good

You and your invented client

If the 'self' is a private human being, world citizen, or existing professional persona it may tend to focus on personal development, more than upon career issues. An invented client sometimes prompts a more open-ended, but less focused outcome than an actual client (see Figure 3).

	You	Your reader
Actual	as yourself	an actual client
Invented	adopting an unfamiliar role	a fictitious problem holder

Figure 3: A more open-ended research approach

You and an actual client

By choosing an actual client, the writing task may become even more like a design task. It may also have the effect of 'licensing' students to challenge normal expectations more than they might dare to do as a fully paid professional (Figure 4).

	You	Your reader
Actual	as yourself	an actual client
Invented	adopting an unfamiliar role	a fictitious problem holder

Figure 4: A placement-based approach

An evolving self and an actual client

By experimenting with a partially unfamiliar role a new professional personae may be refined, hence there may be a gradual transition between the approaches of Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 5: Trying out new approaches

An experimental self and an invented client

The adoption of an empathetic (designer-client) model may help students to reconcile theory and practice. One version of the model below is to emphasise theory by means of scenarios. Here the possible danger is that conclusions may become increasingly distant from relevant practical skills (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Hypothetical approaches

Empathetic versus rhetorical working titles

A useful rule-of-thumb in empathetic approaches to writing is to frame a (working) title which avoids rhetorical or passive approaches. A good model for this is to use an interrogative format, although this should preferably be in 'result-seeking' mode. A result-seeking question is one which requires the feasible solving of an explicit problem and will probably begin with words like 'How can…?' rather than 'Why does…?', or 'Is there…?' question, as opposed to a rhetorical, 'answer-seeking' or other, non-interrogative form. This naturally ensures a more design-oriented outcome.

From 'observing that' to 'attending to'

Finally, another way to theorise the designer's 'stance' in dealing with pragmatic issues in an ad hoc way is to acknowledge the inescapable simultaneity of changes in, for example, seeing something and speaking about it. Arguably, the mechanism of writing cannot be as immediately helpful to emergent problems as an extemporised commentary from within the relevant context itself. This issue calls into doubt the helpfulness of some scholastic (written) criticism – this paper is a case in point – whenever it becomes too generalised and unsituated. In thinking about the relationship between actions and commentaries I have outlined some terms of reference by which the designers might be encouraged to integrate theories more closely with practices. A term I have used in this context is 'saying-at-the-site-of-showing'[24]. An implication of this approach is to applaud the design school's modes of teaching that are 'situated' within the relevant design task in hand. This is intended to encourage a more 'embodied'[25] form of learning that nevertheless remains critically reflective and broadly relational.

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24 Wood, J., 'Situated criticism and the experiential present', *Journal of Design History*, editor Prof. Nigel Whitely, April 1997
25 Wood, J., 'Re-designing the Present', chapter in *The Virtual Embodied*, by John Wood (editor), Routledge (London and New York), 1998

Methodologies of 'rigour'	Methodologies of 'empathy'
emphasise permanence and ideals	emphasise situated context and change
emphasise the plan over adaptability	emphasise adaptability more than strategy
emphasise consistency of / and method	emphasise integrity of client-relations
emphasise the presentational content	emphasise the client and/or problem
emphasise notions of 'truth' / 'facts'	emphasise notions of 'discovery'
encourage radical innovation	encourage incremental improvements
encourage 'best method' approaches	encourages collaborative compromise
enhance professional pride in outcome	lead to shared experiences of designing
inclined to narrow-focus clarity	inclined to be more holistic
tend to fortify existing corporate values	tend to accommodate more global issues
tend to call for quantified measurement	tend to value human judgement

Chapter 7.2

Why the culture of academic rigour matters to design research: or, putting your foot in the same mouth twice[1]
Keith Russell

[…]

In his paper, 'The culture of academic rigour: does design research really need it?', Wood draws key distinctions between two knowledge worlds: one, the world of Crafts-guilds where knowledge is seen as 'result-oriented' and 'task-based' facilitating 'situated actions and judgements'; the other, the Monastic world where knowledge is seen as 'text-based' and 'truth-oriented' serving 'to validate and to fortify belief' (Wood, 2000a, p. 45, Figure 1). While it is always possible to define two worlds as if they were two fundamentally different worlds with different ontologies, such a definition would seem to be in the service of only one of the two worlds so defined. In the case of Wood's two worlds, the devices he uses to describe his two worlds are the devices of the Monastic world. That is, Wood seeks to use the rigour of the Monastic world to elevate and support the world that he has defined in opposition to the Monastic world. His arguments are aimed at the validation of the Crafts-guilds through the establishment of a particular truth value determined through the rigour of the Monastic world but located outside of the book world.

Historically, the culture of design education reflects an uneasy liaison between the medieval monastic ('Book') and the crafts guilds ('design studio') traditions. For this reason it has been difficult to integrate both modes of knowledge in design education. Common misunderstandings about 'scholastic rigour' are symptomatic of this confusion. 'Rigorous' writing is fundamentally rule-based and organisational, and can therefore be at odds with the situated, opportunistic judgements involved with much design practice. We should therefore re-design academic writing protocols for design education. (Wood, 2000a, p. 44)

[…]

The Bauhaus, mythological in its importance, sounds much less auspicious when renamed 'the making house'. The same is true when we exchange the semi-magic term 'studio' for its companion term 'study'. A study is a place where intellectual contemplation takes place; a studio is a place where artistic making takes place. One room is for theory and abstract matters, the other is for practice and sensory matters. We enter each space already disposed to construct things or contemplate ideas and yet in each room we are making. By attending to how we name our working spaces we are able to shift attention from expected purposes towards the possibility of new ways and understandings of practising. By colliding studio with study we can arrive at a composite making place: Studio Theoria. Here we may see ourselves work as we work. (Russell, 2000, n.p.)

Studio Theoria

Wood seems to be calling for something like a Studio Theoria in his elaborations on the kinds of knowledge he sees arising from a shift away from academic rigour towards studio rigour. In a reply by Wood to a posting by Ken Friedman on the DRS e-mail group, Wood proposes 'that a radically revised process of "viva" be used at the centre of [PhD] assessment. I am calling for the recognition and nourishment of a kind of shamanic/managerial wisdom that exists within the practice of design.' Wood further proposes:

we recognise non-alphanumerically represented knowledge + performative judgements + outcomes as a more central aspect of the PhD. … I was also thinking of a more embodied notion of philosophy itself. This is not to refute western thinking in any absolute way, but is a faltering attempt to call for the development of a kind of dynamic logic that has been difficult, arguably, since Plato.

(Wood, 2000b)

Plato is the exemplar of a 'more embodied notion of philosophy' because of his general Socratic dislike of writing things down. Burnet, a Plato scholar, offers this instructive account:

As we know, Plato did not believe in books for serious purposes. In the Seventh Epistle he complains that, even in his lifetime, some of his hearers had published accounts of his doctrine of the Good, which, however, he repudiates. The passage is worth quoting. He says:

There is no writing of mine on this subject, nor ever shall be. It is not capable of expression like other branches of study; but, as the result of long intercourse and a common life spent upon the thing, a light is suddenly kindled as from a leaping spark, and when it has reached the soul, it thence-forward finds nutriment for itself. I know this, at any rate, that if these things were to be written down or stated at all, they would be better stated by myself than by others, and I know too that I should be the person to suffer most from their being badly set down in writing. If I thought they could be adequately written down and stated to the world, what finer occupation could I have had in life than to write what would be of great service to mankind, and to reveal Nature in the light of day to all men? But I do not even think the effort to attain this a good thing for men, except for the very few who can be enabled to discover these things themselves by means of a brief indication. The rest it would either fill with contempt in a manner by no means pleasing or with a lofty and vain presumption as though they had learnt something grand (241 c-e).

This is not mystery-mongering, as has been said; it is simply a statement of the true theory of all higher education. To be of any use, philosophy must be a man's very own; it ceases to be philosophy if it is merely an echo of another's thought. The passage is also salutary warning to the interpreter of Plato. He may, in a measure, recover the dry bones of his deepest thought; the spirit of it is less easy to reproduce.

<div align="right">(Burnet, 1950, pp. 221-22)</div>

Plato offers one possibility that books may serve: 'But I do not even think the effort to attain this a good thing for men, except for the very few who can be enabled to discover these things themselves by means of a brief indication.' This brief indication is the real road to knowledge inasmuch as we expect understanding to be the companion of knowledge. We can go over and over the same ground in our studio teaching and still fail to realise understanding, through indication, in most of our students. This failure has nothing to do with books nor academic rigour. Rather it has to do with the absence of the moment of indication for the student. Such moments of indication are no more present or possible in any form of knowledge discourse. Zen may seek to focus just on the indication even to the point of trying to do away with the mediating indicator, but in doing so, Zen is benevolently indifferent to all forms of knowing as content. This means that Zen embraces all ways of knowing as ways of knowing even while privileging absurdity. In Zen, the spark is not so much transmitted as re-found, or found in its origin anew. The rigour required for this kind of knowledge is at a corrective extreme. The brief indications, for Zen, point everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Neither Western Monasteries nor Western Studios embrace this extreme as an operational model.

[…]

Limits and Little Rigour

Being expected to bring such understandings of formal rhetoric to the book world of the academy may seem beyond the scope of the Design world. Indeed, Wood allows that the uses for such a book world fall in the

pragmatic or rather practical and corrective margins of academic concern. Rather than apprehending a mindset that includes a subtle and sophisticated rhetoric that can bridge both presence and absence, Wood sees the academic world as an enabling programme at best, and a usurping mode of knowing at worst:

> …this paper reminds us that without the monastic culture of writing, designers would be less well informed. Specifically, they may be disabled by a lack of critical and strategic thinking. If they cannot reflect deeply they will be unable to see the consequences of their actions and if they do not understand what they are doing we cannot expect them to take responsibility for it. Whilst my paper stresses the educational importance of writing and reading it also identifies serious limitations to the scholastic mindset that informs it. For example, in traditional doctoral research projects there has been too much emphasis on the form and the importance of the thesis itself. This approach has given us assessment criteria in which written and 'source-remote' information eventually assumes the status of a body of knowledge in its own right. Here, writing, rather than the candidate's wisdom, remains the principal site of appraisal, albeit supplemented by a relatively brief viva voce examination.
>
> (Wood, 2000a, p. 45)

The reader by now has potentially become aware of the unusual usage of quotations or long extracts in this paper. More common to current Design research papers is the social science method of mere citation. Instead of the open approach of contextualised information common to the traditional humanities, this paper might have employed the social science system of mere mention. This form of 'little rigour' (Judo is the 'little way') leads to skilful displays of dubious merit. Such 'little rigour' is the proper target of an inclusive account of the ways of knowing open to Design and opened-up by Design. That is, Design has fallen into the pit of its own digging in its presumption that any knowledge, from a book or not, can be had as a tool of 'critical and strategic thinking' without understanding of the grounds of such thinking being a requirement: no indication,

no spark, no knowledge. This pit of profound ignorance has taken many un-thought-hours to dig. Just as the learning of law is insufficient for the practice of Law, so it needs to be understood that the learning of design is radically insufficient to the practice of Design. The wisdom of candidates is a strange and marvellous thing not to be looked at for too long for fear that the glaring pit of ignorance will open and swallow candidate and supervisor alike. Much more writing by the candidate would reveal the inadequacy of the existing method, not less.

Here we might ask for an example of rigour, in 'monastic' terms, that does something other than confuse the gentle reader long practiced in the subtle art of thinking short of the target. That is, what use is there in all this talk? Wood, in his over-determination of the concept of rigour, offers the following eight names. For the sake of brevity we will follow one. Which is not to deny the errors in each are similarly illuminating.

Errors of detail must have had an immense significance in the closeted medieval monasteries where scribes painstakingly copied books by hand, and it is hard for universities to be aloof from such ideas when they have to administer 'scrupulously fair' systems of assessment and to steep themselves in today's rule-based culture of the law and 'quality assurance'. One possible reason for the idea of 'rigour as perfection' is the Christian belief system that incorporated the practice of writing into medieval monastic life. Panofsky (1968, p. 35) argues that the idealised form of the Book was assumed to be homologous with the architectural form of cathedrals. Behind this morphology is the idea of the body of Christ as the prototype for truth. Hence the 'perfect' – i. e. completed book had qualities that can still be found in the classical structure of the modern scholastic thesis, with its emphasis on such familiar features as: (1) perfection (2) consistency, (3) comprehensiveness, (4) unsituatedness (authorial remoteness), (5) linearity, (6) objectivity, (7) explicitness. Many of these qualities have also emerged within a Western framework of (8) philosophical scepticism.

[…]

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Chapter 8

From Disability to Learning Differences

Focussed attention to supporting disabled students in accessing and participating in Higher Education has been motivated in part by Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995, and 2005, and the single Equality Act of 2010,[1] with universities now required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure fair access. However, the looseness of the term 'reasonable adjustments' has allowed many institutions (public and private) to justify insufficient or varied and variable interpretations of this requirement (for case law around this aspect of the DDA, see Healey, 2010). Rather the term 'reasonable adjustments' can be seen to allow or even enhance exclusion/ exception through encouraging 'equal-but-separate' access to learning (Reeve, 2007). In practice, many institutions offer 'reasonable adjustments' that are merely 'add-on or compensatory' (Reeve, 2007) in design, and focus on physical access while neglecting socio-psychological (Imrie, 1998, p. 141) dimensions of access. As Davies and Lifchez point out:

> …how one feels about a place, how one interprets it, or even whether one can adequately interpret it – these are all less quantifiable, but crucial aspects of accessibility. A place that supports

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[1] From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, at the time of writing, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply.

people's activities and desires, permits them to be and do what they want, and causes them a minimum of pain, frustration and embarrassment is more accessible than a place that confuses, harasses, or intimidates people. Many ostensibly accessible sites differ substantially in the quality of experience they offer.

<div align="right">(Davies and Lifchez, cited in Imrie, 1998, p. 141)</div>

Addressing the socio-psychological goes some way to move beyond the oppositions between the bio-medical and social conceptions of disability. Bio-medical considerations focus on physical impairment as the underlying conditions of disability, essentialise and 'isolate the disabled person' (Edwards and Imrie, 2003, p. 241) within a discourse of the capabilities and limitations of the body (which must be corrected or compensated for) and fail to consider how social values of disability impact on a disabled person in terms of identity and status. Social understandings define disability as socially constructed, where society's values of normalcy disable a person with an impairment, and hold disabled people in inequality. And yet, the social model also fails, in recognising the everyday, individual, lived experience (Meekosha, 1998), which includes corporeal and socio-cultural dimensions.[2] Edwards and Imrie (2003), drawing on Bourdieu, call for a consideration of the embodied nature of disability, to recognise the importance of the individual, corporeal body in a constant dialectical relationship with the society he/she inhabits, and so to appreciate 'the habitus, as society written into the body, into the biological individual' (Bourdieu, cited in Edwards and Imrie, 2003, p. 253).

This resonates with Mick Healey et al's notice to Higher Education practitioners to pay attention to the embodied, lived experience of disabled students for 'there is a vital need to continue to seek out, listen to, and act upon the views of disabled students in our attempts

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2   There are important parallels here for a consideration of the embodied nature of gendered and racialised experiences of women and Black people, see Meekosha, 1998.

to make higher education thoroughly inclusive' (Healey et al., 2006, p. 41). Their research on disabled students' learning experience shows considerable overlap with that of non-disabled. They draw on Shakespeare and Watson's discussion of the radical claim that 'everyone is impaired' as 'an empirical fact and not a relativist claim' as 'no-one's body functions perfectly, or consistently, or eternally' (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002, p. 24). Healey et al. go on to recommend moving past 'disability' – an 'invidious' category – and a culture of 'adjustments', to a consideration of all students as being on a 'continuum of learner differences', where barriers to access and participation are experienced by all in varying degrees or severity (Healey et al. 2006: 41; see also Healey, 2010), dependent on individual embodied experiences or habitus. This is not to trivialise 'impairment' and 'disability', it is rather to 'attack the whole concept of physical normality' (Sutherland, cited in Shakespeare and Watson, 2002, p. 24). This rethinking can productively lead to real inclusivity, and a progressive shaping of learning – 'bending the odds in favour of success' (Yorke and Longden, 2008, p. 52) – to address all students' learning differences.

Elsewhere, Olivia Sagan's research has drawn out from a focus group of art students the 'resilience and motivation' with which they 'learn' and 'create' through their mental ill health. This narrative is itself unusual, as Sagan points out, being one of 'happiness, life and survival' rather than one emphasising the 'dark' aspects of mental ill health. Listening to and drawing on students' auto/biographical narratives, Sagan foregrounds the highly complex, embodied nature of their experiences of mental health in the demanding social context of Higher Education. In line with Healey *et al.,* Sagan's query regarding how her students persist through mental illness seeks to illuminate, not only how all students may be aided in persisting in the face of the 'educative process that damages dream-life, emotional life, affects and fantasy' (Morris, 2005, p. 141), but also how we as educators might seek to make 'reparations' for this destructive process (influenced by Melanie Klein, 1998 and Deborah Britzman, 2003).

Jane Graves's discussion paper, excerpted here, is also a call to learn from the embodied experiences of students whose learning differences are 'categorised' as dyslexia, the largest 'category' of declared 'disability' in Higher Education in 2003-4, (Healey, 2010), though perceived to be particularly prevalent in Art and Design. In her view – drawn from years of experience before Disabilities Acts mandated changes – dyslexia is a 'fulcrum for change' in our pedagogical processes and strategies. Graves argues for dyslexia as a learning difference, which can be de-categorised, through understanding 'that adapting [our] strategies to suit dyslexic students would help all students'. This resonates with comparative research between disabled and non-disabled learning experience in the wider HE sector that recommends improving inclusive policy and practice for all students (Madriaga et.al. 2010). Graves also appeals for 'reverie', a condition of deeply relaxed play through which learning is enriched and deepened, perhaps to be found through the transitional spaces that Sagan recommends (Chapter 5.1), and more embodied writing, after John Woods (Chapter 7.2). Of course Graves speaks of the possibilities of a different Higher Education, for to work with, and respond to, students' embodied experiences, ultimately calls for a rethink of pedagogic practice across HE.

Chapter 8.1

Reverie: creative conflict in art, design and dyslexia[1]
Jane Graves

Writing PAD explores strategies to achieve integration in art and design education – principally when it comes to writing. Thinking of the multiplicity of disciplines in any art and design colleges, it is clear there will need to be as many strategies as courses to integrate the personal and impersonal voices. What will suit sculpture will not suit theatre design, nor fashion. But underlying all these differences there is a basic question that needs to be asked. Are we providing an education in art and design, or are we training artists and designers? Much will depend on how that question is answered.

The thread that will lead us through this maze is, I believe, creative conflict. Creative conflict allows us to have double vision, to experience not just the rich ambiguities of feeling, but also of thought. Certain feelings are only possible at certain levels of thought and certain thoughts at certain levels of feeling. I would claim that this understanding is implicit in all higher education, and not just art and design. Without this disjunction, this shiver, there is a risk that integration will result in a homogeneous mess, a cow-pat, rather than compost. And this disjunction will stimulate risk taking, and learning to think differently. As E.M. Foster says in his novel *'Howard's End'* 'Only connect…' And we should never forget the

importance of Oscar Wilde's phase 'the sweet play of ideas, rather than mere violence of opinion.'

So why dyslexia? Although dyslexia is not the sole concern of writing PAD, it is in itself a fulcrum for change. It is confusing, opaque and elusive. This is a gift. As Wittensgein writes in his *Philosphical investigations* 'The aspect of things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity'. Dyslexia certainly falls into this disturbing space.

And I too find myself in this disturbing space. Firstly, because I believe education should be for joy, for expanding and refining our capacity for pleasure. Joy can enhance understanding and engagement with skills and disciplines, whereas I feel that often the formal 'academic' exercise shuts us in a coffin of angry isolation and sublime ignorance. Secondly, I distrust the notion of intelligence – an attitude which is reinforced by my contempt for I.Q. tests. Nature is bountiful with her gifts. And I want to understand the particular quality of the individual – both intellectually and emotionally.

So I invented slogans which reinforced this approach.

'Make dyslexia your friend and not your enemy'
'Play to your strengths and not your weaknesses'
'Learn to relax into work'.

To formally present this kind of understanding, Ian Padgett, Dr. Beverly Steffert and myself initiated and implemented the *Art, Design and Dyslexia* conference in 1996. At a superficial level the conference was designed to convince management that there were many dyslexic students in art and design colleges. But by including such a wide range of speakers, including studio tutors, cultural studies lecturers, and distinguished practitioners, the thinking was widely expanded. We were beginning to think differently.

But to some extent we were still on the outside. The door was fully opened by *Pencil* – an exhibition organised by Matt Woods and Fabian Hercules

in 1997 at the RCA. As you entered a large sheet of paper invited you to make comments. But you had to use a huge pencil covered with thorns. So now we knew – or probably better knew we don't know. So as one of my dyslexic students wrote 'We need to no we no nuthink'. Wise words.

To follow the path that this door opened I had to turn from remedial to reverie. There is a French proverb 'Reculer pour mieux sauter' (To draw back in order to jump better). Reverie is at the heart of learning. In 1933 Walter Benjamin wrote 'The process of assimilation takes place in depth, requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer.' If it were rare in 1933 I suspect that by now it has disappeared almost completely.

In my struggle to relax into reverie, I realised that the four years I'd spent in remedial (I couldn't learn to read) were probably the most important educational experience that I ever had. Occasionally, somebody said to me 'Concentrate' (I didn't know what they meant) but mostly they left me alone. That was wonderful.

Reflecting on myself as a specialist dyslexia tutor, I realised I was engaged with a creative conflict between psychoanalytical psychotherapy and dyslexia. The host discipline for dyslexia is psychology which thinks in terms of brain functioning which I enjoyed – although I know my understanding was relatively superficial. Psychoanalysis works with the mind. Psychologists not only doubt the existence of a mind separate from the brain, but are keen to 'know'.

Much of therapeutic understanding is about refusing to know – what Freud called 'artificial blinding'. In my view the three major aims of psychotherapy are to allow patients to experience mixed feelings simultaneously (ambivalence), to learn to enjoy difference, and, hardest of all, to accept uncertainty.

Psychotherapy teaches you how to listen. I must admit this was of most use to me – and also to the students. Don't try to help, just try to understand. At first, I was struggling to understand – and overworking without relaxing! (One could say this was yet another creative conflict!)

Over the ten years I worked with students assumed to be dyslexic I could say I started with an attempt to distinguish between the dyslexic and the non-dyslexic; moved on to see dyslexia as a continuum; began to think in terms of a dyslexic learning style and ended up looking at the visual-spatial ability which seems to be the positive aspect of dyslexia; from diagnosis to empathy. (I also learnt from working with art/design colleagues in other institutions in fifty dyslexia workshops undertaken between 1984-2001.)

I had taken myself off in 1986 to the London Language and Literacy Unit to undergo a year's free training – two hours a week. Here I was initiated into the mysteries of visual discrimination, auditory skills, and motor integration; also a rather simplistic battery of support strategies. (Although I must admit that the advice to use multi-sensory strategies proved to be the key to much else.) I doubt whether I would have made it there, or stayed the course, but for the energetic and angry protests from some of my students about my lack of understanding. I was certainly getting something badly wrong.

With my meagre collection of skills I returned to CSM, and set up an hour's surgery a week, (unpaid of course) including a checklist of questions which might indicate whether you were, or weren't dyslexic. At first a thin trickle came, then a flood. Just listening, without calling them stupid or lazy, seemed to work miracles. As together we worked out strategies they started to grow into their own potential.

In my years as a B.A. tutor I had taught students from many different courses. Subsequently, as a Cultural Studies Tutor for three MA's. I worked in close co-operation with Textiles, Graphics and Industrial Design. But as a dyslexia tutor I continued to see a multiplicity of students from Fine Art, including Painting, Sculpture and Printmaking, Textiles, Fashion, Ceramics, Industrial Design, Film and Video, Theatre Design and Graphics. So it is not surprising that my understanding of dyslexia was increasing and I no longer thought it could be seen simply as a difficulty with reading and writing.

Some of my students could read but not write. Some could write but not read. And other difficulties were coming to light. To summarise the range

of difficulties I wrote as follows:

— Disparity between spoken and written ability (either reading or writing)
— Poor short term memory
— Evidence of multilateral confusions e.g. left/right
— Poor motor, especially fine motor skills

So far, so good but almost at once the picture becomes muddy:

— Poor word recall can affect the spoken word – asking questions,
   presentations
— Students with auditory processing problems may also have trouble
   with the pronunciation of long words, elimination of irrelevant
   sounds, such as clocks, banging doors
— Also concentration (think of noisy studios, shared flats)
— Poor auditory discrimination may affect listening as well as reading and
   writing skills (lectures, seminars, tutorials, briefs, technical information)

Students may also have to struggle with

— Poor co-ordination
— Poor sense of direction
— Problems with time-keeping and organisation

Although none of these may be present.

Most significant are:

— Awkward word order – especially in the written form
— Capacity to understand sophisticated ideas despite simplistic and naïve
   expression of them
— Difficulty in expressing simple ideas simply
— Certain kinds of spelling mistake, often of simple words, often spelt
   differently from page to page
— Difficulty in organising ideas sequentially

But turning from the dry as dust bones to the living voice, I hear most of the agonised voices complaining about their *poor short term memory*. As one student said to me 'Jane, it's made me old before my time'. And now I am old myself, I feel what she says more deeply. The student whose short term memory was so appalling that when struggling with a diagnostic dictation she could only remember the first part of the word, understandable perhaps with baby but really confusing with bath. Sometimes I would not have been able to understand the dictations if I had not access to the text. I think I might have got 'hirrow' for 'hero' but 'pissholes' for 'plimsoles' – I very much doubt it.

Nonetheless, one must never forget those with dyslexia are often late developers. Poor short-term memory can often be compatible with excellent long memory and astonishing visual memory. And I was becoming more aware of their intuitive strengths. They tended to get to the end first, understand ideas without words. And this stimulated me to think about rethinking the structure and teaching of the cultural studies course I taught. I would make it easier for them to deal with that which they found difficult, so they would have the opportunity to discover their own thinking space. Lectures were videoed and copies of notes and OHPs were distributed to each and every student. Students were encouraged to record lectures and tutorials on individual tape recorders, which could then be used instead of, or in addition to note taking. And my dyslexic students were helping me devise a series of strategies for supporting students with essays and dissertations.

I soon discovered that adopting these strategies made my life easier rather then harder. Even if not all the students were dyslexic, they did not seem to suffer from my course being organised along these lines. It was at this point I embarked upon my dyslexia workshops to share the good news with my academic colleagues. And I called my dyslexia pack *Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment* (Jalah-Uddin Rumi). I was hoping to convince my peers that dyslexia was fascinating, exciting and stimulating, to persuade them to challenge their assumptions in the same way as I was challenging my own. Above all else, I wanted them to understand that adapting

their strategies to suit dyslexic students would help all students – and most important of all would make life easier for them.

But the times they were a-changing. By the time I left the London Institute (as it then was) the administrative business of dyslexia had been handed over to the Institute; and it was essential to have an educational psychologist's test. Increasingly, if colleges recognised dyslexia as worthy of consideration, they employed specialist dyslexia tutors who were completely separate from the academic staff, who often seemed to feel that dyslexia was no business of theirs.

I am occasionally called in to give a lecture at CSM. But it is now a formal occasion. I no longer lecture, meaning that I don't dance all over the stage and use my OHPs just to bring me back on course. A written paper is the best I can manage and it can be emailed to the students or put onto Blackboard. And I usually know little or nothing of the overall structure of the lecture programme or the course.

There are more and more students and fewer and fewer tutors. When I left there were a hundred students on my course – now there will be a hundred and sixty in any lecture I give. There is an increased formality. In the lectures I've given I have not heard the click of the tape recorder. Sometimes students are given copies of my notes, but there are not always enough copies to go around. Although there are students eagerly asking me questions at the end of the lecture, I must wonder what it means to the others who are silently thinking 'What is this woman for?'

In this context you will not be surprised to hear that despite SENDA (Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001) I suspect the general understanding of dyslexia is slipping back. (Not that anybody has mentioned it to me recently!) And apart from the increased number of students I wonder why. There are, of course, the official Big Brothers of the Government, such as Ofsted and the Quality Assurance Agency. They should reflect on the Islamic saying 'The devil runs on straight lines'.

There is also the growth of the research industry. The PhD and RAE dominate. And for some staff their research activities are preferable to their teaching. The PhD requires a transparent academic process. There are many definitions from which I will select only two. The University of Hertfordshire says 'A research degree is characterised by sustained, rigorous, critical and systematic investigation of a defined subject, by an openness of the methods and results to evaluation by others, and by the contribution to knowledge and interpretation of its outcome.' Here is the other selected from the University of the Arts London definition. 'A PhD is awarded in recognition of the creation and interpretation of new knowledge…' And the AHRC requires evidence of such thinking before they will fund research.

Knowledge… I never thought I taught knowledge. My lecture courses were theoretical. The aim was to give students the means to travel where they wanted to go. So after long discussion with the three MA course directors, it was agreed that if students found it very difficult to find ways of thinking about their external world (social structure) and their internal worlds (psychoanalysis) it was important that they should do so. These were lecture one and lecture three. Lecture two was called 'What is an object?' I saw this as a material bridge between their inner and outer worlds (culture). Some studio projects made use of concepts from the lectures, and the three studio tutors attended some lectures and seminars and all student presentations. Although I did not teach design as such, I ran a joint project at the end of the first term of ten lectures – before the presentations started. Subsequently, I was actively present at many tutorials. But we must always bear in mind that we cannot teach. We can only allow students to learn from us – and we would no doubt be very surprised if we found out what that was.

As a performer (and my lectures were always performances) I worked on the principle of 'Make 'em laugh, make 'em laugh'. Humour frees us, and allows us to use play, the primary creative skill which informs all subsequent creative activity. But this was difficult with foreign students, who felt my humour was very English (no doubt true). Those who saw them-

selves as dyslexic, were very afraid of being laughed at, and they often had been because of their tendency towards spoonerisms. They had a difficulty in distinguishing between different symbolic systems, which can help towards creative writing, but can lead to anxiety and confusion. Rhythm and rhyme often helped students to stay focussed. I frequently tripped over examples of synaesthesia, which can both liberate and restrict – a difficult number. The main difficulty was to generate the creative absence – how to let go, when to let go.

This obviously has an application when it comes to writing, but also to tutorials and seminars. What is best for students – lectures or seminars? I think both, although I now think that seminars should precede lectures – as one might say booting the students up. And I am a great believer in the use of the journal, note book, sketch book – whatever goes in it. At Bath Spa they give students a time table which was what I did myself – along with notes, seminar sheets, etc. I had very few students who didn't meet the deadline – some ahead of time. And this capacity for efficiency would stand them in good stead for the future. The students also had to give individual presentations. Standing up to give a talk was often a great strain for dyslexic students, who could easily lose track of what they were trying to say. But it was a skill they would need and the presentations were highly valued by studio staff.

Although at one point my lecture courses were known as 'Freud, Marx and Musical Comedy', I should point out that over my thirty years at CSM I taught many other courses. Two I remember were particularly successful, 'The outsider' and 'Dreams of childhood'; I never knew why. But as my thinking developed I became more interested in cross studio projects – Industrial Design with Sculpture or Theatre Design with Fashion.

And the word 'rigour' has entered into the academic vocabulary. John Wood's formidable protest in his paper 'The culture of academic rigour' energetically contrasts 'methodologies of rigour' with 'methodologies of empathy'. We must hope that PhDs in practice based research and practice led research will move more in this direction; more empathy, less rigour.

I am now thinking of Milton's wonderful lines 'Rigour now has gone to bed, and advice with scrupulous head'. Let's hope so. And even better Keats' 'resting in uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.'

Such thoughts might rescue students who believed there was some mystique in the academic process, from which they are forever excluded. Claire Lofting in her paper 'Thinking through ellipses' writes of a student who believed if you read a book you had to remember every word of it. And a dyslexic student wrote in his major written work, 'Being told I was dyslexic was one of the most shameful, but also joyful experiences in my life. It confirmed that I'm different, that I'm no dunce. It lifted the phantom "D" cap off my head. I just needed special treatment to absorb written information. As I had previously believed I was going mad because I was unable to digest the reading material while researching the areas of graphic design, I felt relieved.'

There were times (in the 70's) when students were encouraged to engage with creative writing. Rebecca Kyle speaks of a thinking which allows 'the risk of surprise, the unexpected and the spontaneous' which she seems to feel is seldom allowed now. For some students it was creative writing which allowed them this opportunity. And I wonder how such students are coping now. I tried to devise a structure which suited each individual student. For example, one young woman was determined to write a Jungian interpretation of her own dreams. Sensing a potential disaster, I came up with a split text, half a page of Jung and the other half her dream with the odd sentence that cut across the page. But increasingly the current demands of the PhD are filtered down through the system through what the Government calls Level Descriptors. (How very apt!) As a result the BA, the MA and the PhD are often seen as a continuum, and each is treated as a stage for preparing for the next – a crude evolutionary model. I myself see them as totally distinct. In my view the BA teaches basic skills, the MA challenges them, and the PhD as I understood it, was a completely different ball game. These distinctions were reflected in my student's written work. When I left, the BA's Major Written Work allowed the student to explore a private area; the MA Dissertation was studio based but with theoretical input. And research hardly existed.

And now there is the creeping footnote. Students are required to provide footnotes for their essays and Major Written Work. It is argued that this will root out plagiarism. I doubt whether this is the case. The student may, of course, have copied the text (with footnotes included). The use of page references allows students to believe that there is only one page that needs to be read – not the whole text. The only way to sniff out plagiarism is to use a self-evaluation sheet for every essay, and if in doubt, a viva. (Students may of course be very confused about what plagiarism means.) Footnotes distract the student from the main point of writing – which I would see as thinking something through. As Oliver Sacks writes in *Seeing Voices:* 'The many and sometimes lengthy footnotes should be regarded as mental or imaginative excursions, to be taken or avoided. As the reader traveller chooses.'

The world of academia is increasingly fragmented. Part-time staff are underpaid and overworked, and have little opportunity for interaction with dyslexia tutors. There are, in the midst of this barren sea, creative islands. Julia Lockheart writes 'I often explain traditional academic structures in a visual way, and then get students to subvert it; once they have a clear structure they can usually play and become creative with it. This also supports the many students who do not understand the basics and are too afraid to ask. In my experience, converting words into visual structures and getting students to create their own categorisations for structures, rather then getting them to work within the taxonomies and classifications created by others, seems to encourage a better understanding of how writing communicates ideas.' Julia uses more than one sense. And I myself pursued similar strategies but included the olfactory (glue), and by inviting students to cut up the first version of their essay and stick it together on the floor, they were able to use their kinaesthetic memory.

I also like Julia's statement because it addresses the question 'How do we integrate the personal and the impersonal voice?' Is the reflective practitioner, as described by Donald Schon, the impersonal voice? 'When creative practitioners work, they utilise an important skill that he calls 'reflection-in-action'. This means that there are crucial aspects of the work that require contingent, provisional, backwardly-referred, and anticipatory modes of thought.'

I don't doubt the significance of Schon's perception. But is this the impersonal voice? I myself see the impersonal voice as the grit in the oyster, the itch which stimulates the creative capacity. The role of the cultural studies tutor is to interpret these gritty, itchy voices from academia into a language which students understand, be it psychoanalytical, sociological or whatever. The difficulty is that there is such a multiplicity of changing languages. Are we thinking of modernism, or more likely post-modernism, or semiotics, or performativity, skulking somewhere between classical Greek 'pity and terror' and carnival. The languages change and no doubt will continue to do so. The cultural studies tutor must assimilate all in order to make these useful to students. And many of these can be best taught, I believe, by the kinaesthetic methods that I myself employed.

[…]

So what is to be done? I myself would institute Sign (ASL) as an essential second language. Ideally, it should be taught before the age of five. Alas! I don't see this happening. Spelling is still seen as paramount, even though neither a standard spelling nor grammar became the norm until the eighteenth century. The obsession with spelling persists – even though research has shown that as long as the first and last letters in a word are correct the order of the intervening letters is unimportant. And Teacher Training colleges give scant attention to dyslexia, even though many individuals are beginning to recognise that dyslexia is an alternative learning style that has much to give.

Deafness, a terrible affliction, is easily measured – even though as the years go by some of us are a little bit deaf. But dyslexia is elusive, even though it may cause terrible suffering. Recently, a taxi driver described to me the stained glass windows he had made from the memories of the garden which he had created, but the local council had destroyed. I expressed my envy and admiration whereupon he said 'I was born in the wrong class. I love art, ballet opera. But I'm stupid. I can't spell.' I had the magic opportunity to tell him he wasn't stupid but dyslexic. He had a powerful visual memory but a poor memory for the symbolic system of language.

His experience is not unusual and it is clear that the words 'stupid and lazy' have not yet disappeared from our vocabulary, nor do I think they will as long as we continue to live in a competitive and elitist society. But we must also remember that 'Those who get to the top lack the qualities that keep others at the bottom.'

Jane Graves (1937-2011) taught cultural studies at Central Saint Martins. She trained as a specialist dyslexia tutor and, finding this work amongst the richest and most exciting in her life, ran a series of day schools on working with dyslexic students at colleges and universities around the country. This was, she felt, her most important contribution to art and design education. Her book The Secret Lives of Objects *comprises psychoanalytical perspectives on aspects of art and design which grew out of her work with MA students, particularly textiles, product and communication design. It is available from Trafford Publishing.*

Chapter 9

Thinking about the Canon

In order to bring about real academic participation in higher education which Vincent Tinto (1997) and Mantz Yorke and Bernard Longden (2008) both recommend as vital for student success (and thus for student retention, which is best when it follows student success (Yorke and Longden, 2008, p. 52)), considered attention to what students learn is necessary. In particular, the question of how our pedagogical processes enable that what is of vital importance. For Art and Design curricula (constituted in: Art and Design criticism, academic Art and Design histories, visual culture, Art and Design markets and administration, museology and curation) is Western in its bias and focus on 'canonical' 'great' works.

In his keynote address at the closing conference of the GLAADH (Globalisisng Art, Architecture and Design Histories[1]) project,

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1   The Globalising Art, Architecture and Design History project, funded by HEFCE for three years, 2000-2003, was aimed at encouraging and embedding cultural diversity in art, architecture and design history curricula, through the integration into the 'curriculum the arts of less traditionally studied cultures and communities'. While the project was not specifically concerned with Widening Participation, its implications for diversifying / diverse students' learning was implicit in its call for and funding of small HE projects to develop and report on 'teaching and learning strategies in the subject, appropriate to a multicultural society within a global context'. See «www.glaadh.ac.uk/index.htm». The closing conference of this project brought together outcomes of the smaller, funded projects, to present and discuss work done to embed diversity in their pedagogical

Donald Preziosi recommended a close examination of our disciplinary praxis, for:

> The point in understanding how and why all this came to be the case is, of course, to change it. Anything less would be an abrogation of our ethical responsibilities in the current epoch of contemporary neo-feudalism or transnational corporate gangsterism called globalization. We are of course perfectly free to go on pretending that art history is an innocent historical science; a 'method' of historical inquiry, about whose 'framings' we can dispassionately 'reflect' and fine-tune ad infinitum, our eyes set and mesmerized by the desire for a horizon of resolution that never does stop receding… for a magisterial voice just beyond our reach, like the gold ring on the endlessly rotating carousel of disciplinary fashion. It is no small act of will to step off the carousel, for one does get hurt.
>
> (Preziosi, 2003, p. 15)

Following Preziosi, we must examine what constitutes the 'canon' of our subjects and how we can ensure relevant and meaningful curricula, which students might address from the valid perspective of their own experiences. Might we respond to this by merely expanding the canon, to ensure that the Art and Design we study and teach represents the diversity of our student intake? We say 'merely', because 'canon expansion' is insufficient at best: what to add, on what basis or by whose criteria, and how to determine 'representative content'? This is especially insufficient as HE staff profiles remain undiverse, in terms of their subject knowledge (having been educated in the canon) (Burke and McManus, 2009, pp. 40-43), and unrepresentative of their student body, in terms of their social identities and personal experience (Avari et al, 1997). More problematically, Preziosi warns that canon expansion can promise to

> procure for the faithful their official entry into a disciplinary field,

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processes. Preziosi's keynote paper, and his implicit warnings, arguably came too late for many of the participants of this project, perhaps even for the very aims of the project itself.

where they may be pigeonholed within a hierarchy of domains of knowledge and of positions ('"Pre-columbian" art history;' 'Jewish art;' 'Bangladeshi postmodernism' etc.), and thus finally be 'established.'

(Preziosi, 2003, p. 2)

That is, 'canon expansion' may result in further assimilation and/or misrecognition, for, Preziosi suggests, mere diversification of our curricula content inevitably leads to greater invisibility.

Expanding any 'canon' by widening participation in it also implies that our students may be made to participate in the acquisition of powerful canonical cultures – a process described by Fernando Ortiz as 'acculturation' that may involve the diminishing of students' own cultures as an inevitable effect of this kind of 'gain', or indeed 'deculturation', a process of the radical loss of students' own cultures (Ortiz, in Millington, 2007, p. 261). If we merely pursue our students' acculturation into canonical cultures, we run the risk of alienation. And we run the risk of submitting to HE-as-market place, against Paolo Freire's assertion that '[t]o study is not to consume ideas, but to create and re-create them' (Freire 1985, in Tynan, below). Rather we might seek to follow Fernando Ortiz who termed 'transculturation' to characterise more effectively – perhaps accurately – the diverse processes or responses when two cultures meet: for our purposes, when the two cultures of HE and student meet and interact. Ortiz uses, even coins, this term as it

> …does not contain the implication of one certain culture towards which the other must tend, but an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, both contributing their share, and both co-operating to bring about a new reality of civilisation.
>
> (Ortiz, 1995)

Understanding 'transculturation' in this way recommends that designing inclusive curricula is perhaps more about how we facilitate students' learning of their curricula subjects. This follows John

Guillory's argument that canonical works must be seen as the vector of ideological notions which do not inhere in the works themselves, but in the context of their institutional presentation, or more simply, in the way in which they are taught. (Guillory, 1993, p. ix).

Thus, our challenge is to enable our students to participate productively in an exchange about their subjects, appropriating, challenging, or resisting as they go. How might we enable our students to articulate and contribute their experiential knowledge in their encounter with art, design and visual and material culture, canonical or otherwise?

This section brings together work which address pedagogical processes that enable students to learn about their subjects, canonical and/ or otherwise, as a productive process of transculturation. Jane Tynan recommends a 'cultural studies' approach not only in teaching the so-called 'theory' components of practice-led Art and Design programmes, but also to resolve the apparent dichotomy between theory and practice. A cultural studies approach can offer a way which allows students to relate their own work and practices within the world of ideas rather than seeing their own experiential knowledge as excluded or apart from so-called great works. Tynan reminds us that cultural studies developed in the context of crisis in the humanities prompted by the break-up of traditional class structures in post-war Britain and early experiments in widening access to education. She refers to Stuart Hall's assertion that it is a 'complex of personal, social, economic and political practices that produce cultural meaning' (see Chapter 9.1). If so, then the ownership of cultural production is not easily pinned down. Or rather, a cultural studies approach to studying art and design is less about acculturation, or the acquisition of knowledge, than it is about facilitating diverse students participating in a discussion about how culture works.[2]

2　Nestor Garcia Canclini, developing from Fernando Ortiz's argument, has, however, suggested that Anglo-European development of cultural studies emerged through a study of cultural subversiveness, and thus it may go someway in holding on to

Eileen Reid and Ken Neil call for a philosophical and critical approach to discussing canonical works with students and potential students, through which students can be encouraged to find their own critical voice rather than be intimidated by ideas of genius or inspiration, which they may feel they do not possess. Reid discusses the Glasgow School of Art's Prato project which aims to allow students from under-represented groups to immerse themselves in canonical works while at the same time providing the sense of community and possibility for discourse which enables them to relate to these works from their own points of view.

a 'separateness' of the cultural production and expression of oppressed/under-represented communities and groups. Latin American conception of cultural studies rather argues for a cultural pluralism and diversity as part of any culture, national or dominant. (Bailey, 2005, p. 231; Canclini, 2001)

Chapter 9.1

Access and participation: Rethinking work-based learning on the foundation degree in art and design[1]
Jane Tynan

[…]

Cultural studies in art and design education

Emerging from a crisis in the humanities prompted by the break-up of traditional class structures in post-war Britain (Hall 1990, p. 10-23), cultural studies was advanced as an interdisciplinary project to invigorate intellectual debate on the future of the disciplines. Suspicious of the divisive effects of disciplinary divisions to learning and communication, its main advocates sought to promote dialogue to counteract the more conservative tendencies within university education. Indeed, Stuart Hall's concept of cultural work as a circuit of key practices, namely representation, production, consumption, regulation and identity (Hall 1997, p. 1) potentially disturbs the very basis of the professional apprenticeship model surviving in art and design education.

It exposes how the traditional investment in the moment of creativity generates false categories of knowledge and power. While art and design

education may appear to describe its disciplines in terms of skills and professional practices, it has been just as guilty as the humanities of maintaining traditional power relationships through disciplinary separatism. If, as Hall suggests, personal, social, economic and political practices produce cultural meaning, then the ownership of cultural production is not easily pinned down. Categories used to describe the disciplines, often in material terms in art and design, are false and divisive to real understanding of transformations in culture.

While art and design education may have traditionally incorporated forms of work-based learning, its structures do not currently accommodate non-traditional learners in the way they will be expected to in the future. The foundation degree, as key vehicle for the government agenda to improve access and widen adult participation in higher education in the UK (DfES 2003) may signal an official concern with issues of access, but not for the first time. Emerging from early experiments in widening access to education like the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), cultural studies already offered a student-centred model of learning which sought to reconcile traditional divisions between disciplines. If limited adult participation in higher education was viewed as a key symptom of the crisis in the humanities, then interventions that shaped adult education and formed cultural studies as an interdisciplinary project posed a challenge to the educational establishment. Indeed, in a lecture in 1983, Raymond Williams argued that the birth of cultural studies began with adult education because it forced academics to link cultural formations with social change in response to the needs of non-traditional learners: 'That shift of perspective about the teaching of arts and literature and their relation to history and to contemporary society began in Adult Education, it didn't happen anywhere else' (Williams 1989, p. 162).

If cultural studies values and practices have been shaped historically by questions of how educational institutions serve, or fail to serve, society, then it could offer a model for the development of contemporary programmes designed to attract new kinds of learners into higher education. Questions about access to education were subversive in the class-bound society of the 1950s, but the

WEA forged new forms of learning and communication through the introduction of new kinds of learners to education. Dialogue emerged as a necessary strategy and, in turn, generated interdisciplinary thinking.

By questioning all aspects of culture including the structure of education, Raymond Williams not only interrogated what was taught, but also how methods of teaching were implicated in relations, structures and strategies of power (Williams 1958, 1965). His enlarged view of culture as 'a whole way of life' informed his work, leading him to link literary forms with historical change to demonstrate how these changes were implicated in systems of learning and communication (1965). In his terms, learning environments are symptomatic of ideological battles and transformations in culture and society.

In contrast to the current official demand for widening participation, the WEA's early experiments in adult education were unofficial and clearly subversive of the educational establishment. They also led the way for the emergence of a sector of liberal adult higher education. In contrast, the new foundation degree emerges as part of a reforming agenda, clearly lacking the more subversive qualities of the work of the WEA, especially as so much current-government rhetoric emphasizes the role of the foundation degree in closing a perceived productivity gap. Targeting new student markets while addressing social disadvantage is another unlikely convergence of agendas so characteristic of current contradictory pressures on higher education professionals. However, there are questions about how a vocational qualification that seeks to recruit non-traditional students to higher education develops its own characteristic learning strategies. Addressing issues of access through an emphasis on new admissions procedures, is clearly policy-driven and neglects the quality of the whole student experience (Boud 2004). Indeed, some troubling cultural questions about social participation are neatly avoided by a focus on recruitment.

While cultural studies may offer pedagogical models that emphasize participation through dialogue and critique, the opportunity to develop characteristic learning strategies for art and design foundation degrees has not

been taken. By emphasizing the transformative potential of student experience, cultural studies is less about knowledge acquisition and more about an active engagement in questions about how culture works. Inevitably, it starts with a questioning of the institutional contexts of learning and communication. As Henry Giroux argues, the issue of pedagogy is central to cultural studies:

> Pedagogy in this sense is not reduced to the mastering of skills or techniques. Rather, it is defined as a cultural practice that must be accountable ethically and politically for the stories it produces, the claims it makes on social memories, and the images of the future it deems legitimate.
>
> (Giroux 1997, p. 242)

A focus on skills and techniques in art and design education reflects a limited view of work-based learning but does not preclude reflection and analysis of creative practices. Cultural studies programmes could usefully engage students in a rigorous process of critique and evaluation to generate dialogue about their professional practice.

Non-traditional students on non-traditional courses

A small action research project was the focus for an exploration into how foundation degree students negotiate the complexities of a learning environment structured by traditional disciplinary separatism. Within this environment the foundation degree students found that, unlike BA students, their status was unresolved. Responses from a series of focus groups were used to explore issues of student perception of the role of cultural studies in the curriculum on a fashion marketing course at London College of Fashion. As with many foundation degree courses emerging in the art and design sector, the marketing focus of this course represents a departure from the more traditional focus on design. Therefore, not only are the students in question non-traditional in higher education but their course is characteristically non-traditional to the sector. In the context of their status, the project explored student perception and experience of cultural studies.

Method

Responses from a series of focus groups with undergraduate second year students at London College of Fashion, formed the basis for a study of student perception of learning experiences on the foundation degree at an early stage of its development. Focus groups were conducted in 2004 with two separate groups, one group of eight BA students and the other group of eight FDA students from Fashion Promotion and Marketing at London College of Fashion, a constituent college of University of the Arts London. Both groups were taking a media studies unit, 'Fashion, Popular Pleasures and the Media' which involved meeting once a week for a lecture followed by a seminar. Each session's content was clearly signalled in a unit outline distributed at the beginning of the unit, as were learning outcomes and indicative reading. Questions put to both groups were identical concerning issues around their experience of this cultural studies unit, how it fitted with main study, forms of assessment and their needs and expectations as a course group. While the foundation degree in this discipline is new, the BA degree is well established. By putting the same questions to a BA and an FDA group, qualitative differences could be identified in student perception of relationships between theory and practice. The students consulted viewed the quality of their course to be underpinned by the appropriateness and relevance of teaching methods, the relevance of their prior learning experiences and the credibility of their degree qualification in the higher education institution concerned.

Questionnaires to cultural studies tutors were also used; these contained seven questions and were distributed to a group of four cultural studies tutors. Questions asked tutors the defining characteristics of the foundation degree, about their experience of student perception of the role of cultural studies on the degree and their level of achievement. It also asked about learning strategies emerging from cultural studies sessions with foundation degree students.

Discussion

Some responses from foundation degree students suggested they perceived their learning to be undermined by lack of prior experience and unrealistic expectations of them in higher education as one response showed: 'We didn't know what cultural studies was. We were treated as if we should know about it' (FDA student). This is not just the result of the lack of appropriate induction, but viewed along with other similar responses demonstrates the lack of integration between theory and practice on the course, revealing assumptions held by academic staff that students come to courses with uniform prior learning experiences. Moreover, the lack of integration of these two learning experiences also shows how students experience the separateness of these parts of the course and the silence that surrounds the uneasy relationship between theory and practice. The signal to the student is that the relationship between theory and practice is unresolved. Another pattern that emerged from responses was that lack of clarity about relationships between different aspects of the course generated anxiety and confusion among students. One student thought it would be simpler if academic staff had given 'an explanation of why we need to do this, and how we will do it' (FDA student), but in the context of disciplinary separatism and resulting internal tensions this programmes into art and design courses, such an explanation may be far from simple.

Despite the academic focus of the cultural studies programme, its apparent lack of professional relevance and its marginal status on the course, responses suggested that students' confidence in the whole course hinged on a belief in what they were doing in the cultural studies units. One student said that 'When people thought cultural studies was a waste of time, some people began to think the whole course was a waste of time' (FDA student) raising questions about how the art and design learning environment fulfilled their expectations of higher education. It was not clear why cultural studies was at once widely disliked by all foundation degree students consulted but viewed by many as having high symbolic value in the context of higher education. Both BA and FDA both groups clearly linked the academic qualities of the cultural studies component with university

status. As one student said: 'It is the most University proper [sic] thing on the course' (BA student) which suggests that perceived problems were off-set by a sense of the appropriateness of this kind of learning environment and the confidence that engendered in the context of a work-based course. Struggles were consistently rationalized and internal conflicts resolved by student perception that cultural studies learning was a traditional university experience, as explained by one student: 'I'm struggling in a good way because I'm using my brain … this feels like I'm actually at university' (FDA student).

However, if academic tasks have credibility for the non-traditional learner, vocational courses designed to recruit them are not necessarily sending clear signals to foundation degree students but instead use the allure of traditional aspects of university education to attract new student markets. Indeed, there is little evidence of a commitment to create learning situations that develop a distinct sense of identity for non-traditional learners, especially within a culture of higher education that rewards traditional indicators of academic achievement. This is further frustrated by the practice-theory split. In this context it is not surprising that both groups of students linked cultural studies learning with university status, suggesting their perception of higher education was based on a liberal model, despite the foundation degree groups' experience of a distinctly vocational model. This indicated a divergence in student understanding of the context of the course and a lack of consciousness of their own emerging identities as non-traditional learners. At one and the same time, they rated the symbolic value of a liberal model while engaging more directly with the concrete benefits of a vocational model. Indeed, it suggests that these students expect and value traditional models of education and few opportunities are available to them to address their non-traditional status within higher education.

What is most striking from the responses was the BA students' apparent readiness for learning on the unit in contrast to the lack of confidence displayed by the foundation degree students. Whatever the reality, BA students perceived themselves to be prepared for the tasks. Despite the fact that both groups received equivalent information, the BA student

group felt equipped at the start of the unit while the FDA group evidently reported feeling ill-equipped. As one student pointed out 'You know what will be taught, you know what the learning outcomes are' (BA student), suggesting that discourses of learning in higher education, rather than being a transparent medium, are learnt. Access is a question of how successfully students negotiate discourses in higher education. There was much evidence to suggest that the same outlines were read by each group differently; the BA group displaying a familiarity with the conventions of learning in higher education while the foundation degree group finding them difficult to interpret and use. Further, despite the foundation degree students' belief in the symbolic importance of cultural studies as a programme, responses suggested that they were not convinced by the relevance of the set tasks and teaching methods employed. Tasks that used visual rather than textual exercises were valued highly by these students, but in particular those that involved activities: 'When we use examples I can see why we are doing it' (FDA student). Where students were involved they felt more reassured. Foundation degree students consistently needed to be reassured that the cultural studies units were relevant, appropriate to their course needs, of sufficiently high quality, and had clear outcomes. While it is clear that a further and more convincing integration of theory and practice would benefit the learning experience for these students, it is also clear that tasks should demonstrate professional relevance.

Responses suggested that foundation degree students required a more integrated curriculum and one that demonstrated relevance to their career goals. Many of these students were also ambivalent about being in formal education at all: 'I hate being in education, I'd rather be out there working now' (FDA student). If tasks were not clearly relevant to the professional context, students quickly lost interest in the programme. While each group followed the same programme, BA students consistently understood the context for learning while foundation degree students were less sure. Student perception of the quality and context of their learning was clearly linked with their capacity for success on the course. Not only was their view of specific tasks, units and programmes key to good performance, but to their perception of the foundation degree in the context of higher education.

It is clear that if the foundation degree invites new students into an unfamiliar environment, then there needs to be a better infrastructure for the development of new models of learning to meet their needs. Characteristic forms should emerge in terms of environment and orientation of tasks in direct response to the work-based quality of the degree and the participation of non-traditional learners. It is also clear that programmes of historical or cultural studies have limited relevance in their current form. The emergence of cultural studies may have been a response to a crisis in the humanities and its adoption in art and design education to initiate dialogue between divided disciplines. In this sense its roots are non-traditional, but it needs to rediscover them to develop characteristic forms of learning in response to current changes in higher education, where students are increasingly non- traditional and courses are increasingly flexible.

Analysis of questionnaires distributed to cultural studies tutors at London College of Fashion teaching on foundation degree courses also revealed that there was a lack of awareness of the context for the emergence of the degree. However, their responses revealed that despite their lack of awareness of the issues, they did have a sense their programmes required alteration to meet the needs of new kinds of students. All tutors agreed that the challenge of cultural studies thinking should not be taken out of the foundation degree experience. Both tutors and students agreed that while there was considerable room for improvement, great potential for learning was identified in the cultural studies sessions with foundation degree students. Their level of discussion was recognized as a strength, as was their enthusiasm about being in a university environment, even if it was fraught at times with anxiety. It is notable that one of the problems for developing suitable foundation degree programmes is the official expectation that it is 'equivalent in level and intellectual challenge to level 1 and level 2 of an undergraduate programme but differ in the way the learning is achieved' (QAA 2004). Little research has been done in the area of art and design education to develop strategies to meet that expectation or to identify models of practice that already respond to the complex demands of the foundation degree in art and design.

These responses from tutors show that the foundation degrees are still in their infancy and many working in higher education have yet to come to terms with their significance. It is also clear that characteristic learning strategies have not yet developed to respond to the complex demands of the new degree. However, its emergence has potentially much to offer art and design education in forcing an analysis of traditional work-based practices, an integration of divided disciplines and the development of a meaningful social agenda. The historical dependence upon an essentialist view of the disciplines in the form of the professional apprenticeship needs to be re-appraised in relation to work-based learning and changing professional practices. It is clear that while professional relevance is on the agenda for students entering higher education through the foundation degree, the flexibility of that model of work-based learning demands a new kind of vocationalism than is traditionally on offer in art and design courses. Further, evidently many students coming through these routes will find themselves on a course not traditionally associated with the sector. This means that these new degrees will be decisive in shaping new directions in art and design higher education. The growth of foundation degree courses in art and design may be a symptom of the official recognition that arts and culture is good for business, but it is clear that this needs to be met with a social agenda capable of negotiating change. If a lot of courses developing in the sector do not fit with its self-understanding, then a new sense of direction can only be found through the conditions that prompted change. It appears to make sense to focus on questions of professional practice. Otherwise, foundation degrees will develop a marginal status in higher education and non-traditional learners will have little impact on the sector.

If foundation degrees are intended to widen participation in higher education, then active links could be made between theory and practice, education and work through models of participative learning. Currently, there is a danger that perceptions of non-traditional students focus on their bad fit with the university structure, rather than viewing their increasing presence as a symptom of change and welcome disturbance to traditional problems. With widening participation on the agenda, many institutions focus on

adjusting admissions procedures rather than tackling problems with the management and delivery of the curriculum which is where the real barriers to participation lie. Often, the undue emphasis placed on entry and admissions rather than student learning betrays a lack of interest in what happens to students once they 'get in', and a lack of meaningful engagement with concepts like access and participation. It is precisely these concepts that are found in the origins of cultural studies experiments in adult education and the characteristic forms of dialogue it promoted. In turn, cultural studies programmes need to be shaped by their contexts, making space for questioning the very conditions for the emergence of new forms of learning and communication. Instead of despairing about the invasion of marketing courses into art and design institutions, more could be done to engage students in a questioning process about their own position. A direct engagement with the preoccupations of the course could be used to develop cultural studies programmes for foundation degrees that are relevant, engaging and critical. By adopting a critical attitude to the concept of 'work', a course designed to be work-based takes on the challenge by being creative about how work is constructed and understood. The concept of 'critical vocationalism' (Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997, p. 46-47) offers a structure for understanding conflicts and differences between workplace and university in this context, and engenders a critical attitude to establishment thinking. This could be key to ensuring that the vocationalism offered by the foundation degree is not purely instrumental and proposes the work- place as a site of learning and the university as a workplace (Boud and Solomon 2001, p. 18-33). Indeed, by demonstrating a willingness to question the very institutional forms of learning and communication, questions about work offer a relevant framework for reflection on links between cultural production and social participation.

[…]

Accessing and Decoding Communities of Cultural Capital[1]
Ken Neil and Eileen Reid

[…]

Distinction, taste, aspiration

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) is renowned for his work in sociology on a number of themes, from Franco-Algerian politics to fashion. We are interested here in the ideas and arguments which stem from his 1979, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. To boil them all down: the insurmountable conclusion of this book is, simply, that because the meanings and values of culture are contingent on the context and on the social conditioning of producers and consumers, *taste is not pure*. (Bourdieu, P. 2005*)*

By this Bourdieu means that, despite practices and appearances, taste must not be seen as the sole purview of select initiates, dependent on the deep knowledge of the inherent properties of items of cultural production. Taste is not, to extend Bourdieu's logic, attainable by only a few who have been

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fortunate enough to live amongst the objects and debates of high culture. That fact is, we think, something that educators in HE Art, Design and Architecture, should continually recall.

Expressions of judgements of taste are, rather, vocabularies to be learned (for progressive as well as conservative reasons) then applied to whichever manifestation of culture seems most relevant. The conservative adoption and practice of vocabularies of taste can serve the wider workings of what Bourdieu termed *cultural capital*. The stranglehold which the affluent classes had in France on the outputs and events of high culture was strengthened by a sharing of learned vocabularies in respect of expressions of taste.

Such expression can be understood as a *capability* (not a skill endowed at birth). If HE Art, Design and Architecture can persuade the potential applicant that this capability is not a prerequisite to access but a credible critical achievement to be won following access, then a healthy scepticism might develop with regard to some of the more conservative value systems in operation within admissions teams.

Bourdieu's investigation made clear that the educated middle classes are socialised in the circuit of cultural capital and that that social fact perpetuates class distinctions and the advantages of privilege.

Bourdieu's analysis explains that we must understand cultural practices (taken to mean both active engagement in the making of culture, and passive enjoyment of the fruits of that activity) as being socially formed predispositions, predilections and forms of knowledge that equip individuals, in turn, with competence in deciphering cultural practices. He suggests that 'a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded'. The ownership of this code is secured through a long process of acquisition or inculcation through education, the family or group.

In *Culture, Class, Distinction*, Tony Bennett *et al* summarise that in this way, and confirm the analysis of Calvert and Sennett:

> The salience of class in contemporary Britain is not sufficiently understood as a set of increasingly polarised economic positions. A positive consequence of approaching class through the optic of Bourdieu's work is to suggest that culture – understood as a form of capital, as an asset – is central the constitution of class relationships. Culture is not simply an add-on to class positions whose logic is provided by economic relations represented in the form of an occupational class structure.
>
> <div align="right">(Bennett, T. et al 2009, p. 56)</div>

The consequences of this perspective on culture are considerable, and welcome. To be able to register and explain to potential participants that the prescribed attributes and attainments of successful Art, Design and Architecture candidature are something other than indisputable, is a crucial part of the decoding of the structures of HE Art, Design and Architecture.

Following Bourdieu's groundbreaking work, to be confident as Art, Design and Architecture educators in stressing the contingent nature of cultural value is vital, for the effects of the status quo, often dangerously inconspicuous, can be pernicious and discriminatory. The subtle exercising and affirmation of established value judgements based on aesthetic taste (applied to all forms of cultural production from easel painting to neo-conceptual installation) can be easily overlooked and can serve to mask the true contingency of matters.

The attribute of aesthetic sensibility is a favoured example in the elucidation of the meanings of Bourdieu's research. Taking the aesthetic sense to mean that sensibility or disposition which would allow an individual to express value judgements about the 'pure' properties of, say, a work of art, Bourdieu made clear:

> The aesthetic disposition is one dimension of a distant, self-assured relation to the world and to others which presupposes objective assur-

ance and distance. It is one manifestation of the system of dispositions produced by the social conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence.

<div align="right">(Bourdieu, P. 2005, p. 56<i>)</i></div>

This states what many know to be true but struggle to articulate: namely, that the expression of self-assured judgements about artworks, for example, is frequently done with overt self-assurance because the expresser can predict that fellows within his class stratum are more than likely to corroborate the *manner* in which such an expression is made (tone, language, platform and so forth) as they are the actual details of the judgement itself. Given the importance of class identification for self-identity as forewarned by Sennett, this corroboration is compelled by necessity as much as authentic agreement with the content of the expression.

Tacit machinations of class affirmation can serve to relegate the detail and potential significance of actual judgement – corroboration supersedes critique: perhaps best exemplified in a visual art context by the inevitable uncritical bonhomie of the typical opening night.

GSA's Prato Project: demystifying and profiting from cultural capital

The theoretical underpinning of the Prato project is not based on an absolute denial of, or wistful hope for, objective standards of taste; and widening participation in HE Art, Design and Architecture should not be preoccupied by settling that particular debate. Just as importantly, the Prato project is not premised upon a deficit model if that is taken to mean the assumption that widening participation students need to abandon their working class cultural identities in order to cope with art school. Rather, the success of the project is partly constituted by encouraging a healthy scepticism of dominant cultural value systems which can easily intimidate a young person from a working class background. Scottish students from such backgrounds often feel out of place and inferior to students whose

backgrounds have allowed them to accumulate cultural capital. This 'deficit' of cultural capital affects how students see themselves, how they are seen by others, including peers and academic staff. They can easily come to feel isolated, out of place, as not really belonging. These students do not lack talent or ambition. That is, they lack no objective feature required for success. What they lack is confidence in themselves and in their usage of operative vocabularies.

As Bourdieu's work relays, cultural capital takes a lifetime to accumulate, and we don't have time on our side. High impact interventions are needed, and this is what the Prato project has shown. If we want to improve the participation and retention rates of our target groups in years rather than decades, we need to find imaginative short-cuts. The Prato experience, a brief but intense two-week interlude in 4 years of undergraduate study, has demonstrated that there are effective ways to build confidence in working class students in art schools.

GSA was invited to bring a group of students from underrepresented groups characterised by very low participation rates in higher education to Monash University's Prato Centre in Tuscany to join their course 'Concept and Creativity: the development of Italian Art and Design'. The project is possibly one of the first international widening access programmes of its kind in higher education.

For two weeks our students study, alongside Monash University students, the development of Italian Renaissance art, architecture and design. The Monash teaching programme was developed specifically for on-site teaching and an innovative approach to teaching in that its curriculum is comprised of site visits and on-site lectures at galleries, museums, architectural sites and urban spaces in Italy. The lectures and class discussions are aimed at providing an awareness and appreciation of Italian art and design and its social and cultural contexts. The programme includes a large number of site visits within close proximity to Prato, including Florence, Siena, Arezzo, Lucca and Pisa.

The key features of the project:

— Intensity of the experience (high impact in a short period of time)

— Induction into different cultures (both Italian renaissance and Australian university culture)

— Development of healthy scepticism in terms of understanding and appreciating difference and specific cultural perspectives

— Development of a peer support group that can be relied upon on return to the GSA (a support group)

The value and relevance of the first three features is clear enough, and require little further comment here. Further elaboration of the last, however, is instructive. It is not simply a two week course in Tuscany to give working class students exposure to high culture they hitherto have not experienced. Exposure to historical cultural practices also illustrates vividly to students that *current* standards of taste are contingent thereby rendering them less 'mandatory' and less intimidating. This is important where the preservation of working class cultural identity is an issue: there is no need to adopt the dominant cultural value system in order to feel included. Recognising this allows the student to develop the confidence required to take control of the experience of great works of art (historical and contemporary), and by extension those individuals who, by dint of their conditioning and more privileged upbringing, unhelpfully see these treasures as somehow more their entitlement than working class students. Thus the Prato Project is not patronising, for, following Sennett, the ambition is not to intimidate the students into hurdling their class position to adopt another cultural identity; rather it is a concerted effort on the part of GSA to improve the individual's capacities to understand and move within different perspectives on cultural capital, to their own advantage, and ours.

In this context the project is having some success as we hope the following selection of quotations from participating students show:

I feel that the visit and experience of travelling within a small group gave me time to get comfortable with the other students and be able to project a comfortable self.

It made me feel valuable, first time at art school a 'superior' actually bothered to ask my thoughts and opinions without motive, which gave me a sense of pride and made me feel more confident.

I feel more confident, both socially and in my art school work. I feel more comfortable about doing a 3rd year exchange and going somewhere where I don't know anyone.

Overall, I believe the Prato trip developed me as a person... and came back a more confident person. Seeing another side of the world motivated me to learn more about other countries and cultures.

I thought I was prepared for what was going to happen on the trip. I don't think I knew exactly how much it would have contributed to the person I am today. It changed many things about me such as my confidence, independence and my hunger for learning.

Meeting all the different people really gave me the confidence to chat to anyone now, it really opened me up.

I have always wanted to see the world and see different cultures, however, now I actually have the confidence to do so. I really did come home from the trip a more together and focussed person.

Coming from a high school like mine, I was fairly uneducated as far as art and history were concerned. This gift from the GSA was very thoughtful. I think it is great that people like me were given this

chance, as I often can feel inadequate in my class. It made me more confidence in giving my opinion to some of my peers.

It was a very Glasgow experience. All of us came from similar backgrounds and were experiencing the same kind of things with the School, so the trip provided a lift – like part of a team.

We believe experiences like the Prato Project are very likely to increase and improve participation and retention – our primary concerns. But the difference this project has made to the lives of our participants goes beyond mere quantifiable outcomes. As said, class identity is not coextensive with economic status but describes also an individual's deep sense of self and cultural identity, a sense that is not easily transformed. A working class student may reasonably want to be mobile in terms of economic status, but might be ambivalent if not hostile to change of the 'cultural self'. The Prato project demonstrates that this need not occur and that widening participation in Art, Design and Architecture does not require such a transformation.

[…]

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Part 4

Beyond the B. A.

The lifecycle approach reminds us that widening participation in Higher Education needs to be addressed and assessed not only in terms of access to Higher Education and retention and success through undergraduate study, but also on how and whether students continue and progress during their educational life-course on to postgraduate education and/ or enter creative industries [1] once they have graduated (see Harbour, Chapter 11.1). Attention to a graduate's continuation into postgraduate study or into employment also needs to consider ways in which either postgraduate study or employment – or both – may present, or act as a barrier to progress. This progress beyond the BA degree is particularly important to consider given that HEFCE's impetus for widening participation has been, for all Higher Education and for lifelong learning, informed by notions of a knowledge economy. Furthermore, HEFCE's ambitions projected

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1   The 'creative industries' are defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as: '…those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent which have a potential for job and wealth creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (*Creative Industries Mapping Document*, DCMS, 2001). This definition of the DCMS encompasses 13 industries: advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, TV and radio. The DCMS definition is not without challenge, particularly pertaining to the conflation of 'cultural' and 'creative' industries, where the latter is criticised for valuing the former merely for its economic potential rather than its contribution to knowledge.

widening participation as a way to achieve a learning society, one in which ideas of 'individual learning, national economic prosperity and social integration' are interdependent and interlinked to create a 'genuinely participative democracy [where] equal opportunities in learning are a precursor to equality of opportunity in employment and citizenship' (Gorard *et al.* 2006, p. 9).

However, undergraduate education, postgraduate study and the labour market are interdependent in ways rather more inclined to reflect students' own learning and work experience than the lofty ideals of a 'learning society'. Firstly, increased participation in undergraduate programmes across the sector has undeniably led to greater participation in postgraduate study, particularly at Masters level (Hoad, cited in Gorard *et al*, 2006: 110) and, most popularly, on taught Masters programmes in Art and Design (Pollard, Connor and Hunt, 2008, Chapter 10.3). Secondly, in Art and Design, postgraduate study is strongly motivated by individuals' desires to continue developing personal practice (at Masters level) acquired at undergraduate level or during work, or to change career, which suggests that many postgraduates have returned to study after a period in work (Taylor and Littleton, 2008a, Chapter 10.1; Pollard, Connor and Hunt, 2008, Chapter 10.2). Thirdly, postgraduate students are also motivated to

engage in their study by perceptions of the benefits postgraduate qualifications might confer in the labour market through: networks to be made through the course of postgraduate study; differentiation by further qualification in a market known to be highly competitive because of a recent, rapid increase in the number of graduates and the ubiquity of the bachelor's degree (Stuart, *et al.,* 2008, pp. 12-13), and generally improving their employability through post-graduate qualification 'top up' (Pollard, Connor and Hunt, 2008, Chapter 10.2). This suggests that post-graduate study ranges from a personal pursuit to providing opportunity to increase an individual's cultural capital, or to maintain social advantage for higher socio-economic groups through further enhanced qualifications (Keep and Mayhew, cited in Stuart *et al.,* 2008, pp. 11-12).

While widening participation is viewed as less of an imperative in postgraduate education than in undergraduate education in Art and Design, two research projects commissioned by NALN (excerpted in Chapters 10.1 and 10.2) have shown that many of the barriers to accessing and succeeding through postgraduate study mirror those of undergraduate study, and in particular, postgraduate students mark out cost and financial barriers as key limitations to access and sometimes progress. This research has, however, been limited

to NALN-networked institutions, and further research is needed to diversify the picture of widening participation in postgraduate study in Art and Design beyond these institutions and taught Masters programmes. For, postgraduates are, of course, those who have the potential to become the lecturers and researchers of the future and their composition now could determine the future make up of the field of Higher Education practitioners. Indeed, working to widen participation of postgraduate study has the potential to refresh and enrich our institutions and diversify our faculties' staffing profile. Thus widening the participation of Higher Education students would lead to a virtuous circle and equally widen the participation of Higher Education teachers and researchers, perhaps then achieving some aspects of a participative democratic learning society.

Interdependent with the educative principle in the idea of a learning society or knowledge economy, is, of course, the labour market. How Art and Design students fare in employment is well documented by HERA (Humanities Education and Research Association), though what the return to the economy is of widening participation in HE Art and Design is yet only partially researched. The Institute of Employment's recent report on *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* for University of the Arts London and CHEAD (Ball, Pollard, Stanley,

2010) offers impressive data sets of 3500 graduates and their working lives in the creative industries since 2008. While this report suggests that graduates perceive their only barriers to progression to be financial – that is to improving their skills and qualifications – it does not question whether – or how – the nature of the labour market itself works as a barrier to progression and widening participation. The *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* report elides this question in its presentation of creative graduates as experiencing, in 2010, vs 1999:

— overall, less unemployment: 32% vs 40%;
— but less full-time employment: 75% vs 81%;
— and therefore greater part-time working: 79% worked part-time in at least one of their jobs;
— and increased freelancing/ project linked, self-employment, with a notable drift to micro enterprises.

<div align="right">(Ball, Pollard, Stanley, 2010)</div>

Graduates' shift to freelancing and micro enterprises – also described as a shift to 'portfolio careers' (Flew and Cunningham, 2010) – is marked by self-employment, indeed it is the sign of self-employment and of a neo-liberal shift toward individualised working as befits/ benefits a 'new economy'. Individualised working is seen most

explicitly in the creative industries, where workers are 'autonomous, reflexive and creative individuals' linked across (apparently non-hierarchical) collaborative and peer networks, and serve as exemplars of how 'autonomous, resourceful and creative individuals' can be 'made' in other work sectors (Nixon and Crewe, 2004, p. 130).

However, Angela McRobbie warns us of the social consequences of individualised working in the new knowledge economy:

> The new talent-led meritocracy appears to be egalitarian by virtue of its seeming openness, and its commitment to social inclusion through work. In practice it is an unambivalently neo-liberal strategy… It is a wholly individualized image of work with no place for loyalty, association, never mind trade unionisation. Instead it is about personal brilliance and the value of perseverance. 'You can make it if you really want' is the by-line. This human capital account of the new world of work has no time for anything other than resilience, self-help and motivation.
>
> (McRobbie, 2002b, p. 107)

In this new individual, casualised, labour market, it is hard to see a return on widening participation in Higher Education in terms of

participative democracy, equality of opportunity and social integration. McRobbie reveals the implication of this shift in the creative industries for 'ensuring the absence of social critique':

> A further defining feature of new cultural work is that its 'time and space' dynamics contribute to a marked absence of workplace politics in terms of democratic procedures, equal opportunities, anti-discrimination policies and so on. Maybe there can be no workplace politics when there is no workplace, i.e. where work is multi-sited.
>
> (McRobbie, 2002a, pp. 521-522)

The 'Creative Graduates' surveyed by Ball, Pollard, Stanley (2010) are presented as satisfied in their working lives – because their work is relevant to Art and Design, they can be creative, are autonomous, and do not feel underemployed in their work; this is even though 42% had undertaken unpaid work since graduation, and 23% continued to undertake unpaid work at the time of the survey in 'one of their jobs/ work roles', described in the analysis as work that nevertheless 'contributes to career progression'. In other words, to follow McRobbie (2002a, p. 521), creative graduates are 'loving' their work but 'self-exploiting' themselves (see also Taylor and Littleton, 2008b). Certainly,

the consequences of this shift to multi-sited (or indeterminate 'non-places'), casualised, individualised, youth-driven (at least under-35), 'portfolio-working' for working class, gendered, ethnic, disabled, and middle-late age individuals would be difficult to assess, as these ways of understanding social identities (which underpin social justice) have been superseded by unfixed, personal identities of 'bio-entrepreneurs' (September 2000 meeting of the Cultural Entrepreneurs Club, cited in McRobbie, 2002a, p. 516). Instead this new, 'de-spacialised and de-socialised' and thus 'inevitably de-politicised' world of work threatens to erode the gains made by widening participation in Higher Education in terms of social equity, such that McRobbie finds it 'almost impossible to imagine how the inequities which arise from this wholly neo-liberalised cultural labour market might be redressed' (McRobbie, 2002b, p. 112).

McRobbie's fears – and the threat to widening participation – may well be intensified by the impetus to enhance entrepreneurship education in Higher Education Art, Design and Media. In 2007, the HEA in conjunction with the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship and other HE Art and Design agencies[2] published

2   The Higher Education Academy Art, Design and Media Subject Centre (ADM-HEA);

a wide-ranging project to map existing provision of entrepreneurship education in UK HE Art, Design and Media and more importantly, find ways in which the Higher Education sector generally and Art, Design and Media in particular can shape the learning environment and the curriculum to deliver more effective entrepreneurship education (HEA/NESTA, 2007). The report recommended expanded definitions of entrepreneurship, explicit presence of entrepreneurship education in the curriculum and a change of culture in the academic environment, which 'favours performance indicators aligned with cultural achievements' to ensure rather that the 'commercial success and sustainability' focus of entrepreneurship education can become more integrated in the curriculum (HEA/NESTA, 2007, p. 112). Might this threat to widening participation be mitigated by a return to, a re-emphasis of, the principles of social justice and participative democracy *within* entrepreneurship education? Future work in widening participation may be directed to embedding the principles of equity and participative democracy within entrepreneurship

the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA); the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD); the Design Council; the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE); Manchester Metropolitan University; the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (NCGE); GuildHE (formerly the Standing Conference of Principals, SCOP); and Universities UK (UUK).

curricula to ensure that graduates, as creative entrepreneurs, remain cognisant of their social identities and thus wider social belonging and responsibility.

In the final event, the *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* Report (2010) shows the sheer success of the idea of the creative industries since its launch as part of Britain's (international) rebranding in 1997: since 1999, graduates working in the creative industries have almost doubled. Indeed, according to research conducted by NESTA, published in 2009, it is expected that the creative industries will employ more people than the financial sector in 2013 (cited in Collard, 2010, p. 68).

Chapter 10

Entry into Postgraduate Education and the Cultural/Creative Industries

Widening participation initiatives have tended to focus research and activity on pre-Higher Education entry and on retention in, and progress through, undergraduate study. What impact can/do widening participation initiatives have on diverse graduates achieving their employment potential, or indeed on their potential for accessing, applying to and progressing through postgraduate Art and Design? For, if widening participation to Higher Education is to enhance social equity – to be genuinely, socially 'transformative' (Watson, 2006, p. 3; May and Bridger, 2010, pp. 88-86) – and if its impetus is to diversify the HE population, then HE activity must recognise that its diverse graduates, with myriad experiences and skills, need to be transformed into a diverse workforce. The undergraduate strata of Higher Education also leads to employment via postgraduate routes, and this strata of HE must also be considered in terms of inclusive pedagogies and practices.

The three chapters in this section illuminate the potential for widening our diverse graduates' understanding of employment and access to postgraduate study particularly at Masters level. Sophie Harbour examines the challenges of providing employability options appropriate to a diverse body of fine art graduates. Her focus on fine art graduates illuminates how narrowly fine art employment

destinations have been viewed: '[f]irstly, … an artist is the end product of a fine art education and, secondly, … students, once they have chosen fine art as their specialisation, are *ipso facto* artists' (Haste, 1994, cited in Harbour, 2005, below). Harbour points out that this limited view of fine art employability has had to widen for three reasons. Firstly, modularisation of Higher Education has meant that fine art is not exclusively studio-based, but 'embraces academic practices and 'ideologies of discourse' in relation to culture and society as a whole', thus enabling students with wider skills relevant to more destinations than that of a self-supporting, practicing artist. Harbour's (and Corner, 1999, cited in Harbour) recognition of academic practices as enhancing employability stands rather in contrast to the HEA/NESTA report on *Creating Entrepreneurship* (2007) which expressed concern that academic cultures (in pedagogy and research) militates *against* entrepreneurship. Secondly, the classification and dramatic expansion of the creative industries – which Harbour, in contrast to Angela McRobbie (discussed earlier), optimistically sees as offering Art and Design graduates 'huge social and political significance' – affords fine art graduates myriad opportunities. Thirdly, widening participation in HE means that fine art graduates are more numerous, come from more diverse backgrounds and have a wider range of skills, offering greater potential for a more diverse work than that of the 'self-supporting artist'. Harbour recommends two ways to enhance fine art employability: first, and again in contrast to the *Creating Entrepreneurship* report (2007), she does not see the need for curriculum change but rather for better contextualisation of what is offered in terms of employability potential. Second, in line with Burke and McManus's recommendation that university information systems inform all learners at applicant stage how to access HE Art and Design (Chapter 3.2), Harbour suggests that HE prospectuses describe the full diversity of employment destinations: transparency here may lead to a fairer description of fine art graduate employment possibilities for all applicants.

The complementary reports, *Creative Careers and Non-traditional Trajectories* (Stephanie Taylor and Karen Littleton, 2008) and *Mapping Provision and Participation in Postgraduate Creative Arts and Design* (Emma Pollard, Helen Connor, Wil Hunt, 2008), were both commissioned by the National Arts Learning Network to examine the impact and potential for widening participation in postgraduate Art and Design provision. *Creative Careers* presented qualitative analysis of interviews conducted to 'investigate the experience, backgrounds and aspirations of former, current and prospective postgraduates' (Taylor and Littleton, 2008, p. 17) – who had followed non-traditional trajectories (e.g. without A levels or a first degree in Art and Design; or career changers). *Mapping Provision* (Pollard *et al.*, 2008) presents a statistical analysis of postgraduate provision in Art and Design across the UK (using Higher Education Statistics Agency data on students and graduate destinations), maps diverse learners' participation in postgraduate study and assesses progress from undergraduate to postgraduate and students' perception of postgraduate study (using NALN member institution surveys of final year undergraduate students and MA applicants). Taylor and Littleton's report shows that while students perceive postgraduate study to enhance employability, many postgraduate students are indeed aware of what McRobbie has warned (previous section), and look to

> ...self-employment or some variant of a 'double-life' in which they would support their creative work through earnings from other work. They were concerned about prospective low earnings and lack of job security.
>
> (Taylor and Littleton, 2008, p. 12)

Pollard and colleagues also point to Art and Design postgraduates entering into work that is less stable, even if more flexible: part-time, free-lance, self-employed, short-term contract or temporary working. In this aspect, Art and Design postgraduates differ from other sectors, showing lower figures of early, postgraduation entry to recognised/familiar/stable patterns of work. Those who cannot

afford it inevitably avoid opportunities for unpaid work or work placements, which are often expected routes of entry into Art and Design fields of work. Recommendations that emerge from these two reports for enhancing widening participation in postgraduate Art and Design mainly cohere around financial considerations (cost of fees can be a significant barrier), enhancing Black and minority ethnic participation and role models in Art and Design institutions, facilitating part-time and flexible study routes to widen participation in PG programmes and, in line with Harbour, offering transparent guidance on the route from undergraduate, through postgraduate, to varied employment opportunities.

Chapter 10.1

Creative Careers
and Non-Traditional Trajectories
Stephanie Taylor and Karen Littleton

[…]

For this research project we interviewed 46 people for whom postgraduate study in Art and Design was actually or prospectively part of a non-traditional pathway into creative work and a creative career. The participants ranged from current students to people at the point of retiring after successful careers. Their fields varied but most saw themselves as working in the creative industries […]. They also varied in age (from early 20s to mid 60s), background and life circumstances, areas of work and in what they would count as success. Our close analysis of the interviews […] reveals a number of strong patterns within this variety.

Many participants had had negative school experiences. For some, these were linked to low achievement. The stigma of failure could persist for many years, despite subsequent successes. Participants who were later tested for dyslexia seemed relieved if that condition offered a possible explanation for their poor school performance. Other participants who had been successful in their school studies encountered different difficulties. Many had found that the categorisation of subjects, and students, as either academic or artistic forced them to put aside their creative interests for subjects which were considered more appropriate for high attaining pupils. Another problem associated with this period of participants' lives was poor

careers advice, from teachers, school careers advisers and from families. Participants received very limited information on careers in Art and Design and were often strongly discouraged from following their creative interests.

All the participants had studied or were currently studying at HE level. Again, there was huge variety in their experience, in their areas of study and the qualifications which the courses led to, but there was considerable consensus on the features of courses which were valued. Most participants agreed that a good course in a creative area allows students to explore their own interests. It is loosely structured but provides a high level of personal attention from tutors. At postgraduate level in particular, participants valued opportunities for informal discussion and collaboration, with fellow students and with staff, across the boundaries of particular courses and specialisations.

These preferences follow logically from the personalised terms within which participants frame their creative work, as a quest for 'what I want' and 'who I am'. They are tremendously committed to their own creative work, and they value courses as these are relevant to this work and their personal identity projects […]. Postgraduate study has a special role in the development of the unique personal voice and practice which provide the rationale and continuity for a creative career.

There is a paradox around money and creative work which we have discussed elsewhere (Taylor and Littleton, 2008). Participants were reluctant to prioritise money making over creative work, yet they also regarded earning as an important marker of success: they hoped to sell work or obtain commissions or employment, and they attached very little value to creative work as a 'hobby'. (A few participants did separate their creative work in photography and film from 'commercial' activities in similar fields, but they still presented the work as an important occupation, not a side activity in their lives.) One way to deal with the paradox was through an arrangement which we refer to as the 'double life' in which another occupation or even a full second career is maintained separately, alongside the creative work. This is inevitably demanding and requires constant 'juggling', particularly

when combined with further commitments from personal relationships, but it can be sustained, even long-term if necessary. Participants who had started their creative careers at a later point in their lives, for example with their postgraduate studies, were often helped in the double life by having marketable skills and some accrued earnings from a previous career.

Student debt is a special problem for more recent students since it is an additional burden for them in the crucial early stages of constructing a creative career. The levels of debt carried by some current students are worrying, even frightening, and will inevitably reduce the possibility of their proceeding to postgraduate courses, even after several years away from study, especially since for many younger participants the need to repay the debt will collide with other life commitments, such as supporting a family and/or a mortgage in London.

Our research indicated that part-time and short course study can serve several functions in the construction of a creative career. It provides opportunities for novices to make good opportunities which they had missed at school stage, whether because they were successful or unsuccessful students. Participants who had changed career had often begun with part-time courses, then proceeded to full-time undergraduate or postgraduate study. Part-time and short course study can also provide continuing stimulus and opportunities to develop new skills as these are required in an emergent career. For participants in the protracted process of establishing their careers or those developing their creative work in new directions, a return to study could function to establish or renew connections into art worlds, through the college and through others on the course. Part-time and short course study is, of course, more compatible with the 'double life' than full-time study. A particular point to note here is that many current full-time students were spending so much time on paid work to support themselves that their commitment to their course was effectively part-time, in the hours attended. Others were under huge stress because their paid employment conflicted with the opportunity which a creative course has conventionally provided, to immerse yourself in your work in order to develop your practice.

We use the term 'relationality' to refer to the connections with other people, such as life partners, children and birth families, which make up a personal life. Relationality cannot be easily dispensed with. Although some participants referred explicitly to decisions they had made to minimise their commitments, such as a choice not to have children, they still needed other people in their lives, including for emotional support to sustain them in their creative work.

The experience of our participants also indicated that success, once achieved, may not be consistent or sustained. Although some of our participants had established themselves in relatively stable and financially secure career positions, others had not. Fine artists can move in and out of the spotlight of recognition and critical acclaim leading to sales. People who are self-employed or run small businesses may experience 'peaks and troughs' of success, even when the peaks are considerable, in financial and other terms, and average out to provide a comfortable living.

Our research suggested that it is important for novices to be able to look to the specific examples of the creative careers of known people. Even though these cannot serve as an exact template to be followed (because of the emergent nature of creative careers), they provide evidence of how points in a pathway may be negotiated, and also reassurance that this can be done. The novices will need to construct their own careers and identities, but the examples show that success is possible. Wenger (1998) suggests that the experiences of 'old-timers' in a field serve as 'paradigmatic trajectories'; they provide details of how the field actually works and even set some of the possibilities for newcomers. Many of our participants referred to the example of seniors in established design practices. They also talked about their peers, family members, people they had encountered during work experience, and the mentors appointed by universities for students on some courses.

The importance of paradigmatic trajectories derives from the interconnections which make up what Howard S. Becker calls an 'art world' ('the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via

their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for', 1982, p. x). Although he refers to 'art' his discussion is not limited to fine art and has a broader relevance which encompasses the variety of work and circumstances of our participants. A creative career is an individual project but it is also, in a seeming paradox, fundamentally social and collaborative. The work may be individual but the ultimate marker of success for our participants is recognition, within a complex creative milieu which corresponds to Becker's art world. The possibilities and values for creative work are set by others. Participants emphasised the importance of contacts and networking within their chosen art worlds and they appreciated how HEIs function to link them into these worlds.

Constructing a unique creative career and identity is likely to take time. Our research showed the enormous importance, and the difficulty, of maintaining self-belief during this process, especially during the early stages. Some people, inevitably, have greater personal confidence. Others will lean more heavily on the encouragement and emotional support provided by peers, friends and family. HE education and qualifications, especially postgraduate qualifications, can boost confidence. Other success markers which participants valued include opportunities for work experience (often unpaid), consultancy work, competition prizes and media attention. It was noticeable that participants could be highly successful in terms of these markers without achieving financial success, or even, in some cases, without earning enough to live on.

The personal and the professional are closely connected within a creative identity project. But relationality could also be a burden, especially when the other people in a participant's personal life had little understanding of creative work. In addition to financial and practical demands, such as those associated with child care, participants faced more subtle pressures, for example, to justify their creative work in conventional career terms, and to fit it into a career path and projected life plans in ways which go against the emergent nature of a creative career.

These remarks summarise the key points of participants' experience, as we interpret them. In this project we have divided and grouped our participants in various ways, in the initial decision to interview former and prospective postgraduates, as well as some people currently studying at postgraduate level (and we also draw on our previous research with postgraduates, Creative Journeys), and then in the three groups which emerged from the analysis. This cross-cutting is an indication of the richness and complexity of the participant sample and the body of interview material. A single participant is not to be taken as a generalisable 'type' whose experience can be a basis for projections or future decision making. The findings of this research project will need to be interpreted with relation to the issues and circumstances of different parts of the postgraduate Art and Design sector and the particular institutions within it.

Chapter 10.2

Mapping Provision and Participation in Postgraduate Creative Arts and Design[1]
Emma Pollard, Helen Connor and Wil Hunt

[…]

The research project to map provision and participation in postgraduate study in creative arts and design […] was undertaken by IES researchers, and a parallel, qualitative element, involving in-depth interviews with potential and current postgraduates, has been undertaken by an Open University research team [Chapter 10.1 in this volume].

There were three research strands in the quantitative part of the project:

— one involved secondary analysis of HESA student statistics, covering the student population in postgraduate creative arts and design (CAD) (data for 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06)
— the second also involved analysis of HESA data, but covering the destinations of undergraduate and postgraduate CAD students (data for 2005/06)
— the third involved primary data collection via surveys of 'potential postgraduate' students to explore in more depth their choice of postgraduate study and attitudes (surveys undertaken in 2007).

All three strands provide a wealth of new information about widening participation and diversity in the later stages in the student life cycle – postgraduate study – where relatively little research has been undertaken to date. They give NALN a much better evidence base on the flows into (and out of) postgraduate study in creative arts and design and also the attitudes of students towards taking a postgraduate qualification. The surveys were intended to supplement the national HESA statistics by providing insight into decision making and behaviour of likely postgraduate entrants but, due to the challenges in identifying student samples at institutional and course level and then surveying them, they were somewhat less successful in this respect. This was because low response rates and small numbers in places have affected our ability to generalise from the sample data and identify differences between different student groups. However, they have been able to start to fill an information gap and indicate where further research work would be helpful. […]

Provision of postgraduate study in creative arts and design

Creative arts and design (CAD) postgraduate study makes up a relatively small share of the total UK provision in higher education institutions (HEIs), between three and five per cent of the total postgraduate student population (16-31,000), depending on how wide a subject definition is taken. It is often not clear where to draw the subject boundaries, in particular whether to also include all or part of related subjects like architecture, publishing, landscape design and media studies, which fall outside of the standard JACS subject classification of 'creative arts and design' used by HESA, so form part of a wider CAD definition when counting students (the 31,000 figure). This report has mainly focused on the wider definition, as it fits better with how NALN members view the subject but the variations in scope can sometimes cause confusion in student data analysis.

More than four out of five UK HEIs (146) provide postgraduate CAD study, but they have widely varying levels of provision. The NALN member HEIs cover 20 per cent of the total UK domiciled CAD postgraduate

population in HE (using a narrow definition of CAD), and whilst NALN includes some of the larger CAD postgraduate providers there are several non-NALN institutions with large CAD postgraduate provision. CAD is a growth subject nationally, up six per cent in the last three years, higher than for postgraduate students overall. But some of this growth has been from attracting more overseas students (around one in three CAD postgraduates are not UK domiciled), and when only home students are compared, the growth rates have been more similar.

There is noticeably less part-time study in postgraduate CAD than in postgraduate study overall, and less provided by the NALN members than other HEIs. Although a range of types of postgraduate courses are provided, two out of three postgraduate CAD students are taking a taught masters course. This focus on taught masters is a growing trend, and also more common in NALN than other HEIs. Another important feature is the uneven geographical distribution in postgraduate CAD study, with a bias towards London, and under-representation in some regions (the West Midlands and North West in particular) compared to total postgraduate provision (a pattern reflected also in NALN institutional distribution).

Widening participation and diversity

Some of these patterns in CAD postgraduate study overall, and in the NALN HEIs in particular, have implications for widening participation and increasing diversity. Overall, CAD postgraduates are more likely to be younger in age profile, male, from a white ethnic group and have a first degree, than the average postgraduate (home students), though a sizable minority come to CAD postgraduate study in later life (over 50 years), and female still outnumber male students. Disappointingly, there are no reliable national statistics available on socio-economic status of the CAD postgraduate student population (nor on postgraduates in general), which is a major information gap. Compared to the whole CAD postgraduate population, NALN students are younger still and more likely to be female, and slightly more likely to be from a white group. It is not clear whether

or not this pattern relates more to the subject/course mix on offer, the full-time bias or the geographical distribution of NALN institutions (or some other factors), but it is something that NALN institutions should be aware of and may wish to consider in its targeting of groups and widening participation strategy (mature, male and some black and minority ethnic (BME) groups). It is also something that could be explored more by individual NALN members as the pattern is likely to vary between them.

By far the main entry route to CAD masters courses for UK students is via undergraduate study (BSc/BA degree), and this is similar in NALN institutions (n.b. it was not possible to determine whether they came into HE initially via the vocational route but it could be investigated). It is a more important route than for entry to all postgraduate study, where there are a comparatively greater proportion entering with other postgraduate qualifications. It can possibly be implied from this that fewer people seem to be making 're-training' choices by taking CAD masters courses than happens in other disciplines. It could be that this 're-training' is happening at a lower level through graduate diplomas, which are classed as undergraduate qualifications by HESA although are postgraduate 'in time'. Very few enter CAD postgraduate study via APEL arrangements or an institution's own entrance exams, indicating that this is not yet a widely used entry process.

Flows into postgraduate study

Overall, it is estimated that around one in four graduates are taking further study at around the six month stage after completing their undergraduate course, including ten per cent who are studying while working. It is likely that others may start a year or two later, but the HESA initial destinations survey (DLHE) does not capture that.

It is not possible to map CAD subjects of further study onto undergraduate subjects from this survey, which limits its usefulness for exploring progression to specific types of courses, such as CAD taught masters courses. However, it is possible to make some subject approximations, and when we

did this, it showed that around eight per cent of those taking further study are studying in 'creative' disciplines, with almost a third of them taking a higher level qualification (such as a MSc/MA). However, going on to further study in any field is slightly less common among CAD undergraduates than others, and even less common among CAD first degree graduates. If they do go on, there is a greater tendency to study in a creative discipline, as might be expected (almost 40 per cent do), and they are slightly less likely to be taking a specific postgraduate qualification. The reasons for this difference are not entirely clear but may be linked to the greater opportunity and attractiveness in creative disciplines to build up a professional portfolio rather than take a specific professional or academic qualification. CAD graduates are also more likely to do further study on a full-time basis than others, and at a specialist institution, such as in NALN.

Going directly on to further study is less likely for students who entered undergraduate CAD courses via vocational routes, but more likely for female than male graduates and for older than younger graduates (but equally likely for BME and white groups). These gender and age differences in CAD are not seen in the graduate population as a whole and, where indeed, there is a greater propensity generally for BME groups to take further study. It is more likely for one key group of CAD students in particular to go directly on to further study – those with other undergraduate qualifications (such as foundation degrees and diplomas), who are essentially 'topping-up' to an honours degree.

View of potential postgraduates

While the HESA data tells us a lot about patterns of flow of students from undergraduate to postgraduate study, it has limitations on how much it can tell us about individual motivation and decision-making and choices about postgraduate courses. We aimed to explore this further through surveys of two groups of students – final year CAD undergraduates and applicants to CAD postgraduate study. Although the surveys turned out to be more limited in helping to explain some of the differences found in

the HESA data (because of challenges with their execution) and were also limited to students and applicants at NALN institutions, they do provide some new and interesting points of relevance for NALN.

Just under a quarter of the sample of final year undergraduate students were thinking about continuing CAD study in the few months after their courses, a similar proportion to that found to be taking further study in the HESA destinations survey six months after graduation (see above). However, over half of the final year students had already applied or were likely to apply for a postgraduate course at some point in the future (ie not necessarily immediately), and most were confident about being accepted. Subject preferences tended to reflect undergraduate subjects but there was more uncertainty about which institutions to apply to, although an intention to stay in the same institution was common.

At this stage, few final year students intending to take further study had a definite career in mind. This is in contrast to the postgraduate applicant sample, which generally had much clearer career plans. It may be because more of the applicants were older, with work experience, and so had had an opportunity to find out more about jobs and careers. Indeed some applicants had spent time working between finishing their first degree and applying for postgraduate study; at the time of the survey 40 per cent of applicants were working in the creative sector (whilst waiting to start their course). But two out of three applicants held (or hoped to get) a first degree as their highest qualification, so they were still mainly traditional types of postgraduate applicants.

Motivations for going on to postgraduate study ranged from personal interest/enjoyment to more instrumental reasons related to future employment, but the main motivator or driver for both final year undergraduate students and postgraduate applicants was the development of further knowledge and skills. Social/networking and employability reasons had a slightly higher priority for applicants, again possibly because they were more aware, on the whole, of how careers are developed in the creative industries. There were few perceived barriers to going on to postgraduate

study identified. Reasons why some final year students were not considering this option were more to do with a lack of interest, wanting to work or not wanting to study any longer than any specific barrier, such as the costs involved, though a small number of them did mention this.

The extent to which finance is a deterrent is difficult to say from the survey evidence. On the one hand, it features as a main concern of applicants, especially the fees involved (mentioned by 72 per cent) and cost of materials (54 per cent), but on the other hand, this did not put them off applying and generally did not feature highly in deciding where to apply. Also, in another question, applicants have generally positive views on the longer-term value of postgraduate study and its cost being outweighed by social and economic benefits. Generally positive views about postgraduate study also came through from all final year students, though there seemed more uncertainty amongst this group about the specific premium that a postgraduate qualification brings in the labour market and how essential it is to have one to work in the creative industries. Again, this may be because undergraduates tend to have less industry experience and more uncertainty generally about future employment and careers.

Applicants generally found the process of applying for a masters course fairly easy, but over half had only made only one application, and most had been successful in getting offers. Usually their preferred institution was not the one where they had taken their first degree, an indication of the mobility taking place in the move from undergraduate to postgraduate study (however, there will be variation here between institutions, and one institution in the sample, the RCA, only has postgraduate provision which may slightly have skewed this overall result). Course content and subject and the reputation of the institution were the main factors influencing choice of institution. Course fees were comparatively less important, but more so for some groups (part-timers, BME students) than others. Most were going to be paying for study from earnings and savings, followed by loans and bursaries. A number of factors were seen as contributing to getting an offer, with their portfolios and interview performance being seen as carrying only slightly greater weight in decisions than a good degree, references and relevant work experience.

Destinations of postgraduates

Finally, as already highlighted, applicants to the masters courses tended to have relatively clear career ideas at that stage about jobs they wanted to do, mainly to work as artists, in fashion or textiles, and teaching or research. These occupations align broadly with actual destinations of masters degree graduates from the national HESA destinations data, an indication that most are aware of likely employment outcomes. The most common initial destination (six months after graduating) of CAD masters degree graduates is to go into work, but the proportion doing so is slightly lower than the average for all masters degree graduates, and lower still if the narrow CAD subject definition is taken. Of more significance though is the greater flexibility but less stability associated with the initial type of work they do: part-time work, freelance or self employment and short term contract or temporary working are all more prevalent among CAD masters graduates. Also, they are less likely to perceive their qualification as an entry requirement or advantage, which may mean that some are not utilising their skills and talents at the level expected. Getting work is more likely to happen through personal contacts and networking (and applicants are aware of this, as shown above). Jobs are very concentrated in London (half of them are based there) and cover a diverse range of cultural, media, arts and entertainment industries.

These are broad indications of labour market outcomes initially at least from taking a postgraduate course, but as graduates take some time to settle into the labour market a longer-term perspective would be beneficial. HESA's new three year longitudinal survey may provide some further insights, depending on how many CAD postgraduates are included in the sample, but would be worth following up (first report published October 2007). It would also be useful for individual [HEIs] to track their own graduates through study and into employment to get a better insight into outcomes and specific widening participation groups in particular.

Chapter 10.3

Employability issues
for fine art educators [1]
Sophie Harbour

[…]

Fine art educators

Creative graduates often start their careers with a selection of part-time work and freelance contracts. However, graduates in all subject disciplines are now finding that conventional career routes simply do not exist any more. In fact, the whole notion of a 'graduate-level' job and a 'linear career path' are no longer realistic expectations for graduates in any subject discipline, and as arts graduates engage with the diversity of work on offer, many may end up working in smaller enterprises (SMEs), as self-employed or on a freelance basis (Ball, 2002, p. 3).

When the complex issues associated with the 'employment agenda' in higher education are applied to fine art educators, the picture becomes less clear. The issue of whether gaining a degree actually leads to increased employment opportunities and higher salaries is even more confused when applied to the fine art disciplines as traditionally this subject has almost exclusively produced 'artists' whose career profiles do not sit comfortably

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within the overall graduate employment debate. Fine art has its own very particular set of issues and concerns in relation to the employment agenda. In particular, there are two major issues that have shaped recent thinking in relation to the very nature and experience of fine art education. The first is as David Haste suggested in his article 'The Demands of the Fine Art Curriculum' that the bedrock of a fine art education has been built over many years on two basic assumptions: 'Firstly, that an artist is the end product of a fine art education and, secondly, that students, once they have chosen fine art as their specialisation, are *ipso facto* artists' (Haste, 1994, p. 20).

The problem with these long-held beliefs is that higher education itself is changing – and quickly. The notion of a traditional 'art school' institution 'with its subject enshrined in its very constitution' (Haste, 1994, p. 20) is no more. Institutions are now delivering 'modular' programmes of study, which means that the 'arts' areas of the curriculum are often being delivered in the same manner as other subjects in the university portfolio. Fine art education is no longer exclusively a practice-based subject but embraces academic practices and 'ideologies of discourse' in relation to culture and society as a whole.

This should mean that Fine Art students have a broader, more flexible and relevant set of skills for today's society. In an area where a small minority succeed in what they have been directly educated in – in as much as they are self-supporting practising artists – it is crucial that all students are aware of the significance and importance of the education they have received and its relevance to other areas of society (Corner, 1999, p. 11).

These recent changes to the whole fine art experience raise a variety of questions for higher education institutions about how to keep up with the constantly shifting parameters of student expectation. With only a small minority of fine art graduates 'succeeding' in becoming self-supporting practising artists, one questions what the rest of these graduates are doing? This is a question that many prospective fine art students may now be asking themselves. The 'end product' of a fine art education is often neglected in

many prospectuses that 'advertise' fine art courses. As Judith Mottram states in her article 'Perceptions, Professions and Precious Practices' this is only too clear in the presentation of the National Association for Fine Art Education (NAFAE) guide texts, in which almost 50 per cent of the courses do not refer to outcomes other than professional artistic activity (Mottram, 1996, p. 20).

Fine art courses are traditionally perceived to focus on the development of students' skills in 'making'; however, fine art students also acquire a series of valuable skills that are implicitly linked to the work place. Fine art courses by their very nature provide a great opportunity for personal development and exploration. Students learn how to effectively analyse and research ideas, how to appreciate and critically appraise culture and society and how to contribute meaningfully to what we see in our world 'providing new opportunities for understanding vision and communication by visual means' (Mottram, 2002). However, despite students gaining these invaluable and transferable skills, many may be unable to associate what they have learnt with the parameters of a professional working environment. What needs to be made more explicit to students is the intrinsic link between what they are being taught and its translation into useful skills for the work place. It is crucial that, in an environment where education is becoming an increasingly costly business, all students are aware of the 'significance and importance' of the education they have received and its 'relevance to other areas of society' (Corner, 1999, p. 10).

The second major issue affecting fine art education is that whilst educational institutions have been busily changing course structures and their methods of delivery, not to mention the complete reorganization of the fee structure, the creative industries themselves have also been undergoing some very dramatic changes. In fact, over the past few years there has been a complete 're-classification' of the creative industries that implies huge social and political significance for graduates in all areas of art, design and media. While many of the manufacturing industries are in decline, the creative industries are currently being presented as the great hope of the British economy.

[…]

Surprisingly, despite the positive implications these changes signify for institutions offering creative subject disciplines, so far they seem to have done little to utilize this information. What institutions need to recognize is that it is not the fine art curriculum that needs to change but that what is offered needs better contextualization in terms of possible employment opportunities. Fine art students can and do have a variety of transferable skills that directly relate to the working environment but these skills need to be identified by institutions and promoted as such. Despite promoting the positive image of the possible employment opportunities available within the creative industries, it is known that it takes creative graduates a lot longer to establish their careers than graduates from other disciplines.

> Immediately after graduation, the proportion doing non-art-and-design-related work is somewhat higher but this is often to get a foot in the labour market and to support themselves while doing commissioned or freelance work, developing a portfolio, or doing voluntary work designed to help them improve their contacts, gain experience or improve their job prospects.
>
> (Blackwell and Harvey, 1999, p. 128)

If institutions did more to support their graduates in the development of a career 'plan' then perhaps this 'gap' in experience could be somewhat decreased. University prospectuses often refer exclusively to the role of the self-supporting artist as the limit of the employment possibilities available for fine art graduates. The problem with institutions failing to acknowledge the breadth of possible employment available to fine arts graduates is that this message, by default, suggests that anybody who does anything other than become an artist has 'failed'. While it is acknowledged that a small minority of creative graduates will inevitably succeed in becoming 'artists', there are also many other exciting employment opportunities that enable graduates to use the skills that they have acquired through fine art study in the areas of marketing, advertising, film, television, management, publishing, education, and research. With levels of student debt rising, it is simply no longer acceptable for institutions to ignore the issue of employment. Institutions should begin to research the possible areas of

employment available to its fine art graduates and celebrate the growing assortment of employment opportunities that studying this discipline may afford.

Moving forward/good practice

There is no doubt that HEIs currently offering fine art qualifications need to do more to address the employment issues that are affecting their graduates. Although far too many institutions are simply not doing enough to inform their graduates about possible employment opportunities and to assist them in the acquisition of useful and transferable 'employability' skills there are some examples of good practice in institutions that are making an effort to change their management of graduate employment.

There are currently a number of employment-focused fine art courses that incorporate graduate placements or artist's residencies as a key part of the assessed curriculum. What these courses offer that many others do not is the chance to 'have a go' at setting up a project or residency and therefore gaining hands-on experience of how to go about setting up potential employment opportunities for themselves. Many of these courses operate within the 'contextual practice' fraction of the fine art curriculum and focus primarily on 'public/environmental or community' arts. By their very nature the core philosophy of these courses is to focus on the 'context' in which artworks are being created and as a consequence the institutions delivering these programmes have already acknowledged that there is a role for the artist working outside the gallery context.

Examples of good practice in this area include courses run by the Dartington College of Arts, UWE's School of Art, Media and Design, Glasgow School of Art and the University of Plymouth's Exeter School of Arts. Within these programmes, students are encouraged to set up a range of residencies, placements and work-experience opportunities that mirror the possible employment activities of artists working in this area. Galleries, museums, and arts centres all now have active educational and outreach policies and

in terms of public arts there are a growing number of very real employment opportunities available for graduates that include community arts projects, artists-in-residence schemes, arts in schools, and hospital arts programmes.

Perhaps one of the first courses to really engage with this issue was the 'Art and Social Context' course, which was first started at the Dartington College of Arts in Devon in the late 1970s and was then relaunched at the University of the West of England's School of Art, Media and Design in Bristol in the early 1990s. The course started in 1977 at a time when there was a 'growing sense of crisis nationally, both in the purpose of art and design education and, more broadly, in the role of the arts in society' (Crickmay, 2003, p. 119). The course focuses specifically on the themes of art and social context, concentrating primarily on artists' placements and 'residencies' that aim to bring art practice out of the studio and closer to 'everyday life'. By its very nature this course actively encourages its students to begin to think about making work that is appropriate outside the gallery and addresses the issues of audience and community, which are crucial in emphasizing that not all artworks have to be created for the gallery.

> Universities and colleges need to take account of the opportunities for graduating students. Since few make it into the gallery world as a career, this means a high proportion of those that carry on in art at all, will find themselves practising some form of contextual art. Yet, fine art education in general seems to remain deeply committed to the conventional image of the gallery artist.
>
> (Crickmay, 2003, p. 132)

Exeter School of Arts and Design (University of Plymouth) also operated a project called 'Window Sills'. This project aimed to develop collaborations between contemporary artists, residents of Exeter, fine art students and professionals and organizations in the 'public and cultural sectors'. Initiated by the staff at the School of Arts and Design the project's overall intention was 'to foster understanding and identify common ground between different organisations in Exeter in order to encourage inclusive and substantial social change through art' (Bennett, 2000, p. 273).

Students from the School's undergraduate 'Fine Art: Contextual Practice' pathway and the integrated Masters programme in Fine Art collaborate in a variety of 'off-campus' locations across the city/region addressing the issues of audience, site and context.

> This process also provides opportunities for students to collaborate on 'live' projects with professional artists and the public, so contributing to their future roles as professional artists. Because some of these students are already from the area, after graduation they will return to the locality with specialist and transferable [key graduate] skills.
>
> (Bennett, 2000, p. 275)

The School of Arts and Design also has partnerships with both arts and non-arts organizations across the region such as the Family Development Trust, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Spacex Gallery. In addition, the 'Environmental Art' course at the Glasgow School of Art also has a similar programme with a core philosophical basis that 'the context is half the work'. The course was set up in the late 1980s in response to 'the growing art practice that was taking place outside the recognised art institutions of museums and galleries' (Harding, 1997, p. 35).

> In making work for unregulated, non-art institutional spaces the particular context in which the work is to reside takes on greater significance. Furthermore the artist is often required to engage in negotiation and collaboration.
>
> (Harding, 1997, p. 37)

Although currently less visible, there are also a selection of placement projects currently running that have been specifically set up by institutions to provide a platform for creative graduates to develop career options. A series of examples of successful projects that are operating in this area are outlined below.

The 'Life, Work, Art: Integrating Entrepreneurship into Art and Design programmes in the North East' is a university-led employability project aimed at improving graduates' awareness of the creative employment opportunities

that are available to them. The Department of Fine Art at the University of Newcastle in conjunction with the university's careers service successfully secured funding from Phase 4 of the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning. The project itself proposes to work with Cleveland College of Art and Design, Northumbria University and the University of Sunderland in the sharing of good practice in the preparation of students for a career in the cultural sector. The University of Newcastle aims to develop two 'articulated' modules: 'Art Theory in Practice' (a theoretical and vocational skills module) and 'Evaluating Work and Worth' (a placement programme where students test the experience of work in both theory and practice in the work place).

In addition to the development of these two modules the project also recently included a regional networking event that took the form of a conference set up for students and run by students. The event, which was held in 2003 just as that particular year group were about to graduate, was subsequently heralded as a great success. Workshops were run by practising artists who spoke about fundraising and negotiating venues and students were also able to discuss future concerns with contemporaries from other universities.

The 'Life, Work, Art' project coordinator David Butler recently commented in the Times Higher Education Supplement that 'it is no longer acceptable for institutions to provide students with a fine-art degree but take no responsibility in preparing them for graduation'. He went on to say that the project acknowledges that many fine art students are likely to be freelance and self-employed but that they need support in developing the ability to network and to understand what it really means to work in the visual arts (Butler and Weatherston, 2004).

The Bristol School of Art, Media and Design (part of the University of the West of England) has also developed a project focused on 'employability' called 'The Graduate Placement Scheme'. Initially set up as a partnership project between the Bristol School of Art, Media and Design and South West Screen, the main aim was to provide an opportunity for talented graduates to work within interactive media companies for a period of

three months (twelve weeks). Now in its second year of implementation the scheme's overall focus is on organizing funded graduate placements with local creative companies who are interested in sharing their knowledge and understanding of production with graduates whose creative and technical skills and knowledge could enhance the potential of the host company. Companies are invited to propose a project or piece of work that the prospective graduate could research and develop utilizing their specific skills whilst working alongside company staff.

The Graduate Placement Scheme is a valuable project in terms of what both graduates and companies involved gain from the experience. Many projects are aimed at the growth of cutting-edge product development and in many cases the companies are surprised and delighted at the graduates' ability to contribute innovative, creative and technical ideas and skills. The scheme not only offers those involved many invaluable learning opportunities, including the opportunity to make contacts and network within the industry. It also allows graduates to recognize the opportunities available to them in the region and to gain a better understanding of the potential their skills afford them. Inspiring confidence in the local creative industries that the graduates being trained in the area are worth employing in turn gives an institution the opportunity to help its graduates gain the confidence to go out and really show what they can do.

The Bristol School of Art, Media and Design has now expanded this network to include regional HEI partners Bournemouth University, Bath Spa University and Falmouth College of Arts and Design. In addition, the scheme has secured funding from the Higher Education Innovation Fund to support two further years of 'paid' placements.

Finally, Student and Graduate Placements in Creative Enterprises (SPICE) is a collaborative employment project between the University of Manchester and UMIST Careers Service, Creative Industries Development Service (CIDS) and Bolton Creative Industries Development Team (CIDT). SPICE aims to help Manchester's creative sector access the wealth of skills and talent offered by students and graduates in the area.

The SPICE project has been set up to help students (from the University of Manchester and UMIST) and graduates (from any university) to gain work within Manchester's creative industries. This sector includes arts administration; performing arts; music; community arts; film; graphic design; new media; and many other fields of work. Several organizations and businesses in the area are seeking to recruit students/graduates to undertake projects and placements, or for part-time work. SPICE gives graduates access to a number or paid and non-paid opportunities over a range of different timescales (minimum of 35 hours over a six-month period). These may involve business administration; event organization; fundraising; marketing and publicity; office management; research and development; IT development; website design; etc. If a graduate is successfully recruited for one of these excellent opportunities the SPICE team then guides the graduate through an induction with the employer, and will remain in contact with them throughout the placement to provide support wherever needed.

The SPICE project really seems to make finding high-quality, enthusiastic and skilled individuals easy for the local creative industries and sets up placements in a number of areas, including business administration, event organization, fundraising, marketing/publicity, office management, research and development, IT development and website design. The project is a fantastic resource for graduates and SPICE's pool of talent is drawn from a diverse range of disciplines and backgrounds, giving the creative industries the widest possible range of expertise and experience.

[…]

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Inclusive Practices, Inclusive Pedagogies explores ways in which university practitioners can enhance diverse students' access to and success in UK Higher Education Art and Design. This volume brings together recent research and argues that best practice in widening participation demands an inclusive approach whereby *all* students are embraced in truly participatory universities. It recommends that all Higher Education practitioners take action not merely to widen access but more radically to change the 'field' of Higher Education itself.

This volume is structured around a learning life-cycle: from pre-entry to entry, from Further Education to Higher Education, from undergraduate to postgraduate, from graduation to career. *Inclusive Practices, Inclusive Pedagogies* will stimulate debate and further research on Higher Education practice and pedagogy in Art and Design.

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