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'I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE CREATIVE':  
POST-ACCESS to HE ART AND DESIGN STUDENTS,  
PHRONESIS AND DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Sunderland  
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## Publications and conference presentations list

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Broadhead, S. (2014) 'Inclusion, democracy and the pedagogised other in art and design higher education'. *Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences*. Vol 6, issue 1, April 2014, pp. 42-55. DOI: 10.11120/elss.2014.00020

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'Drawing on experience: mature students and practical wisdom in art and design higher education'. *The Forum for Access and Continuing Education's (FACE) Annual Conference*: University of South Wales, Treforest campus, UK, 1 - 3 July 2015.

'I always wanted to go to art school: an exploration of the hopes and dreams of post-access students'. *Making an entrance? a critical workshop on talent, merit, opportunity and selection in the cultural and creative industries*: Organised by Mark Banks and Doris Ruth Eikhof, University of Leicester, 5 - 6 March 2015.

“Out of the mouths of babes’: mature students and horizontal discourse in the art and design studio’. *Troubling Narratives, Identity Matters Conference*, Huddersfield University, 19-20 June 2014.

‘Educating Rita – but what about Sue and Bob too?’ *Towards a Progressive Arts Education: Inclusion, Change and Intervention Conference*: UAL, 6 - 8 November 2013.

## **Abstract**

The thesis drew upon the findings of a longitudinal study about post-Access to HE students' experiences as they undertook their degrees in art and design. It used the theoretical frameworks developed by Basil Bernstein alongside Aristotle's notion of phronesis or practical wisdom to analyse the data. Through narrative inquiry (Andrews, 2014; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Clandinin and Connelly, 2004) it has been possible to show that these students used continuous reflexivity and practical wisdom in order to meet both the demands of the degree programme and those of their families. At the same time they were pursuing the dream of becoming an artist or designer; seeing this as part of living a good life. The key research questions were firstly; did post-Access to HE students receive a democratic education as defined by Basil Bernstein (2000) when they studied in art and design higher education? Secondly, were post-Access to HE students able to draw upon their practical wisdom in order to act well for themselves and others whilst studying their degrees in art and design? And finally did receiving a democratic education also entail students as well staff being able to deliberate wisely according to their previous experiences and practical wisdom? The institutions where the students studied appeared to be mostly inflexible so that the post-Access students had to be adaptable and responsive in order to achieve excellence in their art and design work. The imagined future was an important strand of the students' stories. In this future the aim was to be paid for creative work whilst paying off the student loan. The degree was seen, in some cases, as being instrumental in gaining employment in the

art and design industry and not an end in itself. Some students began making external links in their first year with a view to gaining experience for the future. Post-Access to HE students did not always enjoy their academic achievements due to worry and self-doubt coming from a perception that they were different from the other students in their cohort. It was found that some aspects of art and design pedagogy positioned mature students as 'other'. However, on occasion all mature and younger students drew upon their past experiences and character to act well on their degrees for themselves and others; often through generous acts of friendship. This was sometimes stymied by the managerialism of the institution so students did not always maintain or develop self-confidence; feel included or participate politically in their education (important facets of Bernstein's democratic education).

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## **Position Statement:**

I passed the eleven-plus examination in 1978 and went to a Grammar School. My mother struggled to buy the uniform and I was entitled to free school meals; a cause of embarrassment when I had to stand in a separate dinner-time queue. At this time the family had moved into council housing in West Yorkshire, as a result I felt myself to be both an outsider at home through wearing the Grammar School uniform and an outsider at school due to having free school meals. During the 1980s my father was unemployed and I felt a further separation from my peer group at school. My early report cards showed a set of marks that were constantly in flux, but generally my efforts in English and physical education (PE) gained the lowest results; art being the highest. I began to develop a sense of self-esteem through being able to draw from an early age and was praised for being able to capture the likenesses of the people around me. By the age of 16 I had gained nine O levels which included grade As in maths, biology and art; however I just scraped a C in English (even during primary school I had been smacked for not being able to spell properly).

I stayed on into the sixth form and in spite of being passionate about Art I was put into sixth lower science study group because my A levels were maths, biology, art and general studies. At this time I moved in with my boyfriend. At the end of my school career I left with 4 A levels and was really interested in feminism, subscribing (to my mother's horror) to the

feminist magazine *Spare Rib*. The next change in my learning career was to go to the local Art College in order to study my *Pre-BA Art Foundation Course*.

Again I was one of the few students within my peer group to receive a hardship grant and I continued to feel like an outsider as most of the other art students appeared to be very middle-class to me. I also felt very critical towards the art and design history elements of the art school curriculum as it appeared that all the artists and designers that were discussed with us were men and every week the group was shown slides that always included images of *Women as Furniture* by Alan Jones.

The tutors encouraged me to do a textiles course but I held out for fine art. At the end of my foundation year I did not follow my class mates in going to a polytechnic to study art and design but took a more academic route at one of the few universities that delivered a theory and practice course. I was the first person in my family to go to university. Being an undergraduate was a positive experience; I also studied sociology as well as the visual arts and was a member of the women's society.

I was encouraged by my tutor to undertake a Master of Arts after my studies. Instead, I chose to become part of a studio group where I continued my own art practice and began teaching in adult education and community arts. I returned to my home area and more particularly to the estate where I was raised. There I began to carry out various arts projects with young women's groups that were supported by the

community workers from the local council. Through this practice in community arts, a job opened up in a high security prison; it was here that I first became familiar with the idea of an Access course.

Inmates were given a pre-BA course that introduced them to the humanities whilst training them in the relevant study skills. On achieving their Access certificate the inmates could then study an *Open University* course. This was viable because these inmates were doing very long sentences. As a result of this experience, during the incorporation of Further Education (FE) colleges in the 1990s I worked in three local prisons developing General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) art and design programmes for the inmate/students. FE colleges historically had provided penal education but were now having to bid for the prison education contracts from the Home Office.

I remained in penal education for eight years. I felt frustrated that my students did well inside the institution but most were unable to continue their education when leaving and going back into the outside world. Concurrently, I was able to study for and gain a Master of Arts in Art History and the City and Guilds 7306 in post-compulsory education. An opportunity came at the beginning of 2000 to work on another housing estate where a local art college had started to collaborate with the council and other providers to create a learning centre based in a disused school.

New Labour initiatives were also based there, for example, *New Deal* advisors, *Sure Start* and *Connexions*. In the learning centre I worked on the Access model within an art and design context and successfully supported adult students (who previously had had poor educational experiences and achievement) onto the art and design degree of their choice. I also ran GNVQs at foundation level for school children who had not succeeded in school. These tended to be 14-16 year old boys from the estate. A couple of these young people from the cohort managed eventually to go on to university.

During this time I studied at a University for my *Postgraduate Certificate* (PGCE) in *Further Education* and was fortunate enough to get the research paper I wrote for the course published. This project looked at how expert and novice tutors in prison education taught students with psychopathic personality disorder. However, except for a small external moderator's role, I did not have much contact with prison education from then on, although occasionally I recognised a couple of ex-offenders who were coming to college and doing well.

When the learning centre closed down, I began to work within the art college as a course leader, running the part-time *Access to HE* course; supervising Bachelor of Art dissertations and teaching contextual studies to surface pattern and fine art students. I was also asked to return to the university where I studied my PGCE into order to deliver some of the modules; I did this until the continuing education department closed. In



particular I enjoyed visiting a wide range of FE colleges and observing their teaching practices.

I took the opportunity to study another PGCE which was delivered within the art college that focused on education and educational management. After my father passed away in 2009 I slowly began to take stock of my career and felt I had got into a bit of a rut. So I applied for a Research Development Fellowship (RDF) scheme that was sponsored by the *Institute for Learning* (IfL) and the *Learning and Skills Improvement Service* (LSIS). This fellowship revitalised my interest in academic study and teaching practice.

At this time, in my early 40s, I also undertook an initial test for dyslexia and found that I scored highly - my reading was particularly slow. This made sense of some of the struggles I had had with reading and spatial awareness throughout my life but mostly at school. It also made me convinced that although it may take me more time than other people without dyslexia, I could I achieve academically and as a result in 2011 I began undertook doctoral study supported by my employer.

Reflecting back on my learning career I have noticed how much poverty and social disadvantage can make educational success difficult. But if people are given the opportunity to achieve academically they can prevail and this sense of achievement is important to a person's self-esteem and confidence. Interventions like the Access course, prison education and outreach projects can make a difference to people's lives

because they can address problems do with the pace and sequencing of curricula that mainstream mass education is not able to do. This is due to do the professionalism and commitment of the educators who work in these fields but also to the underlying philosophy of a humane approach to teaching and learning.

Feeling as an outsider, that one does not belong, is something I can empathise with, particularly in how this can stop one from excelling educationally. Although I did quite well at school I was very unhappy there as I felt misunderstood by my teachers and peers. I believe I could have succeeded at a higher level and have gained more confidence if my dyslexia had been identified and I had felt more comfortable in the classroom. The visual arts teacher and the actual art practice were really important in giving me a sense of achievement and ability; but most importantly I could imagine a future where I was an artist rather than a biologist or a mathematician. Perhaps this was because my tutor was a very good teacher, a practitioner and role model.

As I matured I also began to make more purposeful decisions about my education. These were not tied into improving employment opportunities. Rather, participating in education was for me an integral part of being alive, even more so than being an artist. Perhaps this is the same for others, where even though they have found education at times a humiliating and frustrating experience they still are determined to succeed and fulfil their dreams. People are not passive receivers of educational experiences but are sometimes motivated to actively seek

out the kind of education they want even if this means making personal and economic sacrifices. This is because when a good education is gained by a person it enhances their life.

## Rationale

The starting point for this thesis was rooted in a small research project a colleague and I undertook which asked if *Access to HE* students were being well prepared for their art and design degrees (Broadhead and Garland, 2012). We were both tutors who had worked in Access education within the field of the creative arts for over 10 years. We had contributed to developing the regional *Access to HE Diploma* with the *Open College Network* (OCN) and also implemented the grading regime of the *Access to HE Diplomas*. So not only did we have a certain amount of expertise in this area of education; we also had invested a lot of time and commitment into this important work.

We both believed in the values of inclusive education that underpinned the Access movement. The initial study used interviews and focus groups to discover how well the students were doing during their first year in art and design higher education. The results were used to inform improvement in the ways in which the *Access to HE* course used studio critiques as formative assessment (Broadhead and Garland, 2013). The aim was to improve the confidence of Access students when they went on to present their work at a higher level.

As this was a one year project I felt that the feedback from the students had just 'scratched the surface.' They told us that they often felt they were positioned differently on their higher education courses due to them

being perceived as 'mature', 'non-traditional' or as a 'second chance student'. Interestingly, the participants in the study felt that the cohorts of students in which they found themselves were not as diverse as they had expected them to be. As I wanted to explore these issues in more depth I decided to continue the work my colleague and I had started.

The first project was very much about improving teaching practice and did not consider, critically, the wider social, political and cultural context of contemporary Access and higher education. At the time of the first, small, project the future of *Access to HE* provision was very uncertain. The study coincided with the election of 2010 which brought in the new coalition government. Economically, we were working in a time of austerity which meant we were constantly threatened by possible cuts to educational budgets. Higher education was being restricted by government funding policies and the introduction of nine thousand pound fees had a negative impact on the numbers of mature students applying to HE through UCAS, (Independent Commission on Fees, 2013).

The reduction in mature students entering higher education could be seen in the subject area of art and design. Most worryingly there were now (at the time of writing) only two OCN *Access to HE* Diploma courses left in the Yorkshire and Humberside area (QAA, 2013). The part-time *Access to HE* course that I managed unfortunately ended due to the introduction of the 24plus loans. This was where students over 24 were deemed to be financially responsible for their level three education and were enabled to pay for their course by taking out a student loan

(Gov.UK, 2015). My employer was unsure about the economic risk this would present to the institution due to potential drop-out rates of part-time students and so decided to stop offering the provision.

I planned to follow the progress of a group of students who had achieved their *Access to HE* Diplomas throughout their time on their degrees. I wanted to see what experiences they had whilst studying in an uncertain time of austerity, where the widening participation agenda seems at odds with current state policy. They had picked a subject area which was associated with risk in terms of gaining employment after their higher education; often creative people had 'portfolio' careers where they might be managing their own practice alongside other forms of work (Bryan, 2012, p.3).

The participants in my study had all achieved the *Access to HE* diploma, but they would now have different future experiences in different institutions and on different HE courses. On the other hand they would always be constructed as 'non-traditional' by the mere fact of coming from an Access route rather than with the more traditional A levels. Other characteristics such as age, class, race and gender would also compound their status as 'non-standard'. As the project would now last for at least three years I sought to see what impact their art and design education had on these 'post-Access' students over time. Would I see a transformation in the students' confidence? Would they become successful creative practitioners? Would their commitment to their art and design education be rewarding?

## Introduction

This thesis draws upon the findings of a longitudinal study (2011-2014) based on the narratives of 'non-traditional' students coming to art and design Higher Education (HE) with an *Access to HE* diploma. The art and design HE field includes the main subject areas of fine art, design studies, cinematic and photographic studies, (Vaughan and Mantz, 2009). Art and design teaching can take place in many different kinds of spaces but it especially occurs in open plan studio spaces where students often have designated work areas. Traditional entry for students into art and design HE has been through the Foundation Diploma - sometimes called the Pre-BA Foundation course- which 'diagnoses' students as to which area of art and design would suit their interests; at the same time preparing them academically for entry into the creative arts (Hudson, 2009).

However, more recently pre-entry qualifications to art and design have become wider with fewer students coming from Foundation Diplomas and more coming directly from A level (Vaughan and Mantz, 2009, p.18). For mature students who wish to study art and design but do not have the necessary qualifications an *Access to HE* diploma is a means of achieving that aim. The *Access to HE* course gives students a broad introduction to art and design skills at level three and enables them to develop a portfolio of work for their application to HE through the *Universities and Colleges Admissions Service* (UCAS).

The work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) has often been a useful tool in

analysing different social groups within the field of education (Duckworth, 2014; Byrom, 2010; Hudson, 2009). Educational disadvantage has been discussed in terms of cultural, social and economic capital. Depositions to learning have been understood as coming from a person's habitus that is: who the person is; where the person is positioned in society and their interactions with others. It is the embodiment of social factors like class, gender, ethnicity (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000, p.589). However, as the focus of this thesis was on the educational experiences of students Bernstein's theories relating to horizontal and vertical discourse; visible and invisible pedagogies and democratic pedagogic rights were useful lenses through which to see (Bernstein, 2003; 2000; 1999). His ideas have provided an important critical framework with which the narrative accounts of post-Access students can be analysed. There are three closely related research questions which the thesis considers. Firstly, did post-Access to HE students receive a democratic education as defined by Basil Bernstein (2000) when they studied in art and design higher education? Secondly, were post-Access to HE students able to draw upon their practical wisdom in order to act well for themselves and others whilst studying their degrees in art and design? And finally did receiving a democratic education also entail students as well staff being able to deliberate wisely according to one's previous experiences and practical wisdom?

Chapter one begins by introducing the work of Basil Bernstein (1924-2000) who was a sociologist of education. Bernstein, on occasion, has also referred to Bourdieu's key ideas, for example the notion of symbolic violence. Bernstein (2000) commented that some social groups were subject to a form of symbolic



violence when they were not represented by educational institutions on their communications platforms (for example websites or prospectuses).

Chapter two considers the art and design context. It argues that there are particular pedagogies used within art and design higher education that comply with Bernstein's analysis of progressive education and these advantage those from middle-class backgrounds (Bernstein, 2003; 1975).

The discussion in chapter three describes *Access to HE* courses and I propose that post-Access students who come to higher education from this route are constructed as non-traditional or non-standard. Furthermore, I argue that these students are not a homogeneous group of people and using a lens based only on the metanarrative of class (which can sometimes be illuminating) can also mis-represent the experiences of these students. The second part of this argument is that art and design practices construct the post- Access students as the 'pedagogised other'. The literature and research around the transition of students to higher education is reviewed at the end of the chapter where it is argued that mature students potentially have the capacity to use their previous experiences to respond positively to life changes such as going to university for the first time.

One critique of looking at educational disadvantage using a sociological approach, as in the case of Bernstein's work, is that it can appear as if students are as passive bodies with no sense of agency to change the situation for themselves and other people. Foucault (1980, p.142) argued that wherever power relations operate within an institution there will always be some

resistance to this, although some have argued that Foucault's historical work has also viewed the subjugated as docile bodies upon which power is inscribed (McNay, 1991, p.134). Chapter four considers how Aristotle's notion of phronesis (practical wisdom or prudence) can be a useful way of thinking about how students could deliberate and act well to overcome educational disadvantage.

Mature students potentially could use their life experiences and their good character in order to actively navigate around any barriers they may face in their art and design education. An important aspect of phronesis is the person's moral responsibility for the 'other'. It could be argued that the post-Access students take on a responsibility to act well for themselves and others in order to live a good life and this is motivated by their hopes and dreams to become artists and designers.

As the method of this study was based on narrative enquiry it is also important to show how phronesis and the recounting of experience are related to narrative (poiesis). The ideas of Nussbaum (2001; 1990) and Ricoeur (1994) show that practical wisdom relies on an ability to think about a situation narratively and this is an inherently creative process. The ways in which phronesis is an important concept for both educators and students is also considered, arguing that those who receive a good education might be more predisposed to practice practical wisdom.

Chapter five discusses Bernstein's claim that a democratic education is based on individual enhancement, inclusion and political participation. It also argues

that students need to act with practical wisdom so that they make wise decisions for themselves, their families, their teachers and others in their cohort. Ultimately those students who become included are confident and participate do so for the right reasons. Phronesis can give the democratic education of Bernstein a moral quality that actions are done for the best for everyone not just the individual. The ability to think narratively, which in itself can be improved by educational experiences, is seen as an important aspect of practical wisdom; that is the ability to draw on past experiences whilst recognising the particular context of the present and imagining the future.

Chapter six considers the methodological approach used in the thesis and explains the rationale behind the research methods used. It positions the research as being from a tutor's point of view and that students can be seen as expert witnesses of the educational process. The need to use a longitudinal approach when considering the experiences of people studying on a three - six year course is argued for in this chapter.

The research comes from a social constructionist point of view (Burr, 1995). It uses narrative inquiry (Andrews, 2014; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Clandinin and Connelly, 2004) which is then represented in the form of four case studies. The work is guided by an ethical statement which is greatly informed by the British Education Research association's (BERA, 2014) guidelines. They describe the ways in which participants, institutions and other parties should be treated according to the belief that research should cause no harm and respect the person. The participants who took part in the study, their institutional context, and the place where interviews and discussions took place are described. The

process is then reflected on critically to ensure that claims that are inferred from the work are tentative and contingent.

Chapter seven is based on a case study that describes the experiences of Chad, a 40 year old mother of two small children, during her surface pattern degree. This discussion considers Chad's story where I noticed links to phronesis or, on occasion, the absence of wise judgement. Chad was a post-Access student studying on a surface pattern degree course. Surface pattern designers are concerned with designing for surfaces and embellishments which could include wallpapers, fabrics, flooring, and packaging. She previously has had a varied career in the Navy and as a flight assistant on a commercial airline. She began her degree with a small child to care for and lived with her husband who was in full-time employment.

Chapter eight looks at Bob's story as he studied his degree in art and design. Bob was in his mid-50s and had left a secure career to follow his dream to become an artist. Bob was an older working-class man who had a background in industry, his previous participation in academic education had not always been positive but he passionately wanted to become an artist. Chapter eight particularly looked at the role horizontal discourse within the studio played in Bob's educational journey. Often his narrative was about past regrets and feeling he was at a disadvantage when comparing himself with younger students who had just left school.

Chapter nine considers Eliza's experiences on her textiles degree course. She was a successful professional woman in her early 50s and the only black

student within the group of participants. Issues to do with the ways part-time students were excluded were often recounted within her narrative. As she had a level of confidence and agency she was able to question staff about why part-time students' needs were not addressed or considered when information about the programme was communicated to her cohort. However, things did not seem to change for the better as she continued with her studies. Eliza at times considered leaving as she felt frustrated by the lack of information she seemed to be getting from her institution about her learning.

Chapter ten explores the experiences of Jane who gave an account of how she felt confident and included on her course. Jane was in her early 50s; she was a mother to two grown up children and lived with her husband. She studied for a Bachelor of Art degree in art and design full-time at the local higher education institute. This was the most positive story because Jane felt able to participate in order to make her educational experiences more positive for herself and others; at the same time she was able to practice practical wisdom at various points during her studies. This did not mean that Jane found higher education straightforward; she still had to work hard to overcome aspects of study she found challenging.

The thesis concludes by drawing together common themes from the four case studies where students have had similar or differing experiences. Firstly, had the students experienced a democratic education and secondly, did students practice practical wisdom? Instances where I noticed prudent actions recounted by the participants were noted. The extent to which the students were enhanced and included by their education in art and design was reflected upon.

Importantly, it was noted where students were able to participate in order to improve their education for the benefit for themselves and others. A series of recommendations were finally drawn up addressing three interested audiences: the staff teaching and managing *Access to HE* art and design courses; the staff teaching and managing higher education art and design programmes and finally the *Access to HE* art and design students themselves.

## Chapter one: Theoretical Lens

This chapter introduces the ideas of Basil Bernstein as an important thinker who can provide a series of theoretical frameworks with which to analyse the experiences of post-Access students during their degrees in art and design. It begins with describing his early work in relation to pedagogic codes; framing and classification; and horizontal and vertical discourses. It then goes on to discuss his ideas about progressive education in terms of visible and invisible pedagogy, which will in later chapters be applied to studio teaching. Finally Bernstein's understanding of democracy is discussed and how this relates to the work of other theorists including Gert Biesta (2010), Frank Coffield (2008) and Jacques Ranciere (1999).

### Introducing the work of Basil Bernstein

Basil Bernstein sought to explain how inequalities in education were reproduced through the pedagogical processes. In *Class, Codes and Control, Volume 1* (1973) he developed a social theory, looking at the relationships between social class, family and the reproduction of power relations through education. *Code* referred to those principles which regulated the meaning systems of various social groups (Sadovnik in Power et al., 2001, p.13). He aimed to explain why and how working-class people were disadvantaged in education.

His original theory was that there were differences in the restrictive codes of the working-classes and the elaborate codes of the middle-classes. Schools, for example, required an elaborate code for success. The work of Bernstein

provided an important model with which to analyse the experiences of post-Access students in their art and design degrees because his work was concerned with addressing the waste of working-class potential (Bernstein, 1961, p. 308).

Later in his career he expanded his ideas to consider other social groups in education. He demonstrated how power and control could operate through pedagogy and the curriculum in an essay called the *Classification and framing of educational knowledge* (Bernstein, 1973, pp. 202-227). He explained how changes in education were driven by a change from a mechanistic society to an organic one where people increasingly needed skills that were specialised and interdependent (Bernstein, 1973, p.225). He developed a theory of the pedagogic code in terms of classification and framing that began to show how power and control operated in the curriculum (Bernstein, 1973). *Class, Codes and Control, I-V* represented a continuous development and refinement of his ideas where he sought to gain a powerful but delicate language of description.

The collective code is where classification and framing of the curriculum is strong; that is the boundaries between subjects are kept separate and control over the content is clearly given to the transmitter (parent/teacher/facilitator/trainer/lecturer). The collective code can be seen to drive a visible pedagogy. An integrated code is where classification and framing are weak; the boundaries between subjects are more fluid and both transmitters and acquirers (infants/pupils/learners/trainees/students) have control over the content this can be seen as part of an invisible pedagogy.



His early work was informed by the ideas of Emile Durkheim. For example *horizontal solidarity*, a Durkheimian term developed by Bernstein (Sadovnik, 2001, p.2), referred to those solidarities constructed by educational institutions through mythical discourses about cohorts of students having similar characteristics. This functioned as a way of disguising any social inequalities between students that impeded some groups from achieving their educational potential.

Bernstein (1999) described how horizontal solidarities functioned to selectively distribute knowledge through the day-to-day contact in families, communities and in particular student cohorts. Horizontal discourse was, “oral, local, context dependant and specific, tacit, multi-layered and contradictory across but not within contexts,” (Bernstein, 1999, p.159). It was organised segmentally according to the sites where it was realised (for example the HE art and design studio). Most importantly just because a discourse was horizontally organised did not mean that all segments or sites had equal importance.

A vertical discourse by contrast was a, “coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised, as in the sciences or takes its form from specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation and specialised criteria for the production and circulation of texts, as in the social sciences and humanities,”(Bernstein, 1999, p.159). It could be argued that it was actually the horizontal discourses occurring in the art and design studio that prevented some students from gaining access to some of the horizontal and vertical knowledge related to their subject. Because the distributive rules of horizontal discourse “structure and specialise social relations, practices and

their contexts,” (Bernstein, 1999, p.159) the day-to-day talk between students and tutors could construct and maintain power relationships between groups leading to differing access to knowledge. Both vertical and horizontal discourses were likely to set up positions of defence and challenge. If people were isolated and excluded within their working space they would not be able to take part in exchanges of shared strategies, procedures and knowledge (Bernstein, 1999, p.160). In other words students who were marginalised could find it more difficult to draw upon the reservoir of strategies for success available in their learning community (Bernstein, 1999, p.160). This could impact on the individual students because:

The structuring of social relationships generates the forms of discourse but the discourse in turn is structuring a form of consciousness, its contextual mode of orientation and realisation, and motivates modes of social solidarity. (Bernstein, 1999, p.160)

The kinds of discourse that occur within particular sites, the studio for example, were constructed through various social relationships (between educators and students or between students and students or between educators and managers). Thus certain kinds of discourse were encouraged and others may have been discouraged through social interaction. Discourse, in turn, structured and formed a subject’s consciousness; constructing and enabling (or repressing) different dispositions or ways of being motivating particular modes of social solidarity. Thus social relationships could be reproduced and people could ‘be kept in their place’.

There were two criticisms that were often applied to Bernstein's work in terms of the *what* and the *how*. Firstly, it was claimed that he was talking about a cultural deficit; something lacking in working-classes families (Hurn, 1978; Bennett and Le Compt, 1990). However Bernstein countered this by saying he was describing how restricted and elaborate codes of the working and middle-classes were different due to their relationship to the division of labour and consequently how this led to the advantage of one group over the other within formal education. He also emphasised the *individualism* of middle-class aspirations compared with the *collectivism* of working-class community life. Secondly, his writing style has been criticised for being hard to understand where the meaning of his terms are 'slippery' (Danzig in Sadovnik, 1995, p.166; Power in Moore et al, 2006 p.105). The difficulty with language was perhaps due to Bernstein's aim to describe an integrating and generalised theory. This was illustrated by his terminology as in his use of *transmitter* and *acquirer* to describe educators and learners.

### **Bernstein's model of visible and invisible pedagogy**

Bernstein (1975) wrote an important paper called *Class and pedagogies: visible and invisible* which showed how, on a very practical level, both visible and invisible pedagogies acted selectively on different social classes of students. It could be argued that teaching within an art and design studio was an example of an invisible pedagogy which had been embedded within a visible one. Bernstein (2003, p.211) said that these opposing pedagogies were rarely seen in their pure form. The characteristics of a visible pedagogy benefited the

market model and the managerial control of current higher education due to it been a cost effective form of education that also produced easily measurable, explicit outcomes (Bernstein, 2003, p.213). However, the art school tradition of studio teaching could be seen as a way of facilitating creativity, 'uniqueness' and originality in students. The art and design briefs and assessment procedures were examples of a visible pedagogy that framed the more open and self-directed activities in the studio.

Bernstein (2003, p.198) argued that all pedagogic relationships were based on three rules. The first, which he called a regulative rule, was that of *hierarchy* where the transmitter and the acquirer understood their roles and recognised the asymmetrical nature of their relationship. The second rule was that of *sequencing and pacing*, where the order of what was transmitted (learned) was pre-determined through curricula. Also, the pace at which something was learned, the time it took for a student to cover a particular topic was also to some extent pre-set. The final rule was that of *criteria* – this was by what means the student's efforts were judged to be legitimate or non-legitimate outputs. Bernstein called *sequencing* and *criteria* discursive rules.

Within a visible pedagogy hierarchy, sequencing and criteria were made explicit in that the student was aware of what was expected of them and what they must achieve and in what time period. Bernstein described how this actually disadvantaged social groups other than the middle-classes. This was because it assumed everyone was at the same level when they entered a stage of education and would take a similar period of time to learn something.

It often also assumed that part of the curriculum would be done at home because to fulfil the curriculum requirements often two sites of transmission were needed; the home and the institution. Those students, from working-class backgrounds for example, may not have had a quiet space to read at home and would not have had access to the official pedagogy through text books. A visible pedagogy was potentially quite cost effective as it required a relatively small part of institutional space for it to occur and it was supported by the home as a site of transmission as Bernstein said:

Currently the visible pedagogy of the school is cheap to transmit because it is subsidized by the middle-class family and paid for by the alienation and failure of children of the disadvantaged classes and groups. (Bernstein, 2003, p.207)

In order to combat some of the problems of students who could not meet the sequencing and pacing rules the institution could carry out various interventions. Firstly, a repair system could be put in place to give students extra help. Secondly, the sequencing rules could be relaxed; the first two interventions would have had cost implications attached to them for the institution. Thirdly, the pace of education could be kept the same but less would be expected of those underachieving students in terms of outputs that met the criteria. The final intervention could have far reaching consequences later in a student's learning career and this could be seen in the need for *Access to HE* courses that gave mature students 'a second chance'.

In effect an Access course was a delayed repair system that helped students ultimately achieve their learning goals later in life. It seemed that visible pedagogies often disadvantaged some students from working-class

backgrounds and prepared those middle-class students who will work in directly in the economic field. The discussion will now progress to considering invisible pedagogy.

## **Invisible Pedagogy**

Bernstein (2003) defined this as being where the focus of education was placed on the acquirer rather than the transmitter. Thus the regulative rule of hierarchy was implicit rather than explicit; control of the student by the tutor operated in an indirect way. There was less emphasis on the acquisition of specialist skills. Instead, students were free to play, explore and rearrange their environment. Evaluation of learning was based on diffuse criteria. Tutors acted as facilitators whilst putting a lot of time into preparing the context where learning took place. Whereas visible pedagogies required less expansive resources, invisible ones needed to utilise large amounts of time and space.



**Image 1**



**Image 2**

Symbolically, space in a visible pedagogy was clearly defined; similar objects were grouped together; clearly defined activities occurred within specific spaces (see Image 1). Within an invisible pedagogy space was more open plan; there

were less likely to be clearly defined boundaries and it would be less obvious when a rogue object 'polluted' the space (see Image 2). Students had control over how to order and utilise the space. This was one way of encouraging creativity within a student cohort and could be seen as promoting student-focused education.

It is as if this pedagogic practice creates a space in which the acquirer can create his/her text under conditions of apparently minimum external constraint and in a context and social relationship which appears highly supportive of the 'spontaneous' text the acquirer offers. (Bernstein, 2003, p.201)

As in the case of visible pedagogy there were also class assumptions with respect to the concepts of time, space and control (Bernstein, 2003 p.208). The cognitive and social messages of an 'open plan' life style were less accessible to working-class students who did not have the resources of space and time in other areas of their life (Bernstein, 2003, p.209). Non-traditional students may have then misread the cultural significance of such an educational practice.

An invisible pedagogy, as we shall see later, is likely to create a pedagogic code intrinsically more difficult, initially at least, for disadvantaged social groups (from the perspective of formal education) to read and to control. (Bernstein, 2003, p.207)

Bernstein saw that middle-class families could afford the resources needed to facilitate invisible pedagogy at home where acquirers were controlled by sophisticated levels of communication (Bernstein, 2003, p.210). As a result people from middle-class families were more likely to thrive when exposed to an invisible pedagogy in an official site of learning. This method of education privileged those middle-class students whose employment had a direct relation

to the “field of symbolic control and who work in specialized agencies of symbolic control usually located in the public sector. . .” (Bernstein, 2003, p.204).

Bernstein (2003, p.200) argued that within an invisible pedagogy the acquirer was constructed as a text that could be read by the transmitter who drew upon a bricolage of theories (Piaget, Freud, Neo-Freudian, Chomsky, Ethological theories of critical learning). These theories tended to be those that focused on developmental stages based on age. Acquisition was only meaningful if contextualised within a certain stage where learning was viewed as a tacit, invisible act. The institutional and cultural background of the acquirer was absent; the bricolage of developmental theories was asociological. The acquirer was active in their own acquisition any intrusion from the transmitter was seen as potentially dangerous as it subverted ‘natural’ development of learning and discovery by imposing social rules (Bernstein, 2003, p.200).

As the transmitter viewed the acquirer as a text which was read, the space in which invisible pedagogies took place enabled the surveillance of students where their learning practices were open to public scrutiny. This meant there was a potential for tutors to misread the students, particularly mature students who seemed at odds with age - related stages of development.

Two opposing pedagogic practices have been distinguished between each other, “in terms of those which have explicit hierarchical rules, explicit sequencing/pacing rules, and explicit criteria and those with implicit hierarchical sequencing/pacing and criteria rules,” (Bernstein, 2003, p.201).



## Democracy

Bernstein referred to education in all sectors from schools to universities. He implied that his theory could be applied to all instances of acquisition through pedagogical devices (gaining new knowledge, disposition, and behaviour). He developed his theory throughout his career but it was in his later writing he defined clearly the democratic values he sought to promote in his work. In *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity* Bernstein (2000) announced the conditions for an effective democracy.

Firstly, people should feel they had a stake in society by giving and receiving something. Secondly, there should be a belief that the political processes of society should realise this stake unless there were good reasons for this not being the case. After this initial proclamation Bernstein went on to apply the conditions to the school context in particular. Parents and students, he argued, should feel that they had a stake in the school and have confidence in the political arrangements of the institution and that they would enhance that stake, unless there were good reasons why this was not the case (Bernstein, 2000, p.xx). This underpinned his model of three institutional rights (enhancement, inclusion and participation) that he used to compare educational systems.

Enhancement, Bernstein argued, was a condition for experiencing boundaries (social, intellectual, and personal) not as prisons or stereotypes but as tension points between the past and possible futures. It was not simply about being more intellectually, socially, personally or materially developed, but about having critical understanding and access to new possibilities. The condition for the right

of enhancement was confidence and this acted on an individual level. Most importantly, Bernstein argued that without confidence it is difficult for teachers and students to act.

The second right was to be included - socially, intellectually, culturally and personally. Bernstein made it clear that to be included did not mean a student should be assimilated or absorbed into the dominant culture of the school. He argued that to be included could also be the right to be autonomous and separate – to be different. Inclusion was the condition of *Communitas* which operates at a social level.

The third right was the right to participate, which for Bernstein was about discourse, practice and outcomes. This meant that students participated in procedures that constructed maintained and changed the order in the institution. Participation was the condition for civic practice and operated at a political level.

Bernstein then stated that this model could then be used to see whether all students enjoy these rights or whether or not they were unequally distributed, (2000, p.xxi). Importantly, Bernstein described why some students would not have access to the pedagogic rights by considering the unequal distribution of images, knowledge and resources. He described how the use of images, knowledge and resources by an educational institution was interrelated should be interrogated.

## Images

Bernstein asked does the image projected by the school exclude some students because they could not recognise themselves as being of value. He also interrogated the acoustic of the school. Whose voice was heard? Who was speaking? Who was hailed by this voice? For whom was it familiar? He saw the images that the school reflected as projections of a hierarchy of class values.

## Distribution of knowledge

Did the distribution of knowledge vary based on the social group of the recipient? Bernstein claimed that knowledge distribution was not neutral but based on knowledge that had unequal value, power and potential.

## Material resources

Bernstein pointed out that resources followed the distribution of images and knowledge so that those at the top got more than those at the bottom. This meant there would be an unequal access to the acquisition of legitimate knowledge.

Bernstein argued that unequal distribution of images, knowledge, possibilities and resources would affect the rights of participation, inclusion and individual enhancement of groups of students, (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxii). The students who did not receive these rights were seen to come from those social groups that were treated unequally in the wider society outside the school. Bourdieu in

(Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiii) described the trick of the school where it appeared to be neutral and the inequalities of social groups in the school were created by causes other than those inequalities outside the school. The school disguised the ways in which the social hierarchies in the school were created by those outside the school. Inequalities between social groups in terms of attainment were legitimised as they were seen to be not caused by external power relations.

Taken together the outcomes of the disguising of inequalities was an example of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1990; Duckworth, 2014). Bernstein went on to say that some groups within the school were aware of the trick and were able to use familiar knowledge to promote their own child's education at the expense of others, (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiii). Any potential conflict between groups was reduced by creating a mythological discourse that emphasized what groups shared; this could be seen as a way of constructing horizontal solidarities that appear to blur inequalities between groups.

## **Myths of hierarchy**

Bernstein (2000, p.xxiv) argued that the school stratified its students based on age which appeared to be non-arbitrary whereas gender, class, race, religion and region were arbitrary and that different groups within the school were given different treatment based on seniority. Therefore age-groups formed hierarchical banding of horizontal solidarity that could be used to legitimate the temporal progression of students. Success and failure of students within the school year group or cohort threatened the corresponding horizontal solidarity.

The school distanced success and failure from outside social inequalities and ineffective teaching by defining any problems as the result of the deficiency in the students. These deficiencies were seen to lie in individual cognitive and affective attributes or in cultural failings of the family background. Reay (in Ball, 2004, p.32) talked about the way students from working-class backgrounds were pathologised by the education system where any failure was the due to the 'lack' in the student rather than in the institution.

Professor Frank Coffield has continued to work with and adapt Bernstein's ideas of democracy. In *Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority* (2008) he talked about effective democracy being where all students had three inter-related pedagogic rights: the right to *individual* enhancement; the *social* right to be included which also meant the right to be separate and the *political* right to participate. This showed the multi-faceted nature of democracy having an individual, social and political dimension.

The conditions for democratic rights could include confidence, community and civic practice, (Coffield and Williamson, 2011, p.53). The argument put forward by Coffield and Williamson (2011) was that the market model that had been applied to education had turned schools and universities into exam factories and further education colleges into skills factories; where managerialism had led to a focus on targets rather than on teaching and learning. From this perspective teachers taught students to pass tests rather than to think for themselves; students focused on grades rather than the content of what was being learned. They proposed that an alternative future for education that comprised of *communities of discovery*, where the collective creativity of

students and educators was released through democracy (Coffield and Williamson, 2011, p.11). They pointed out that democracy could not only exist within the realm of education. Society as a whole needed to address inequalities:

Otherwise education will be helping to form active citizens who will only have a thin façade of democracy in which to live learn and work. (Coffield and Williamson, 2011, p.64)

It was the wider context that could impede on the democratic nature of a particular course, if the institution or the nation-state in which the course was situated did not facilitate and act on these pedagogic rights of students then the democracy of the course would be shallow and partial. For example, who had access to education before the course started and what happened to students when they left education?

If Access courses were not available to everyone who wished to pursue an art and design education and if students did not retain their pedagogic rights when they progressed to HE, then a particular course only provided a veneer of democracy. Bernstein (2000, p.xxii) also made this point when he discussed accessibility where he argued that the school needed to be set within a framework where there were adequate pre-school, medical, social and vocational provision.

Drawing on the work of Young (2000), Biesta (2010, p.112) discussed the tensions between the unequal distribution of democratic rights and inclusion, pointing out that Athenian democracy was anything but inclusive. He described

two models of democracy- the *aggregative* and the *deliberative*. The aggregative version of democracy meant that decisions were made based on majority interests. When transferring this idea to the context of education it could be seen that the interests of non-traditional students were in danger of being not considered where they differed from the majority of traditional students.

The deliberative form of democracy stressed the participation of people in collective decision-making based on argument and agreement on the best reasons for action. This was not dissimilar to Bernstein's third pedagogic right of participation as a condition of civic practice. Indeed Biesta (2010, p. 44) argued that in a democratic society education was not taken as a given but a topic for constant deliberation and discussion, and not just by interested parties but society as a whole.

Although the deliberative mode of democracy had the potential to include the interests of the whole group there were problems for non-traditional students. Bernstein, when discussing his first pedagogic right of enhancement, stated that the condition for this was confidence, without confidence it was difficult to act, (Bernstein, 2000, p.xi). Not everyone may have the confidence or the resources to participate, to act, to discuss and to deliberate.

When considering non-traditional students and working-class students in particular the fear of 'being found out' of not having anything to contribute could undermine confidence (Raey, 2001 in Ball, 2004, p.40). Biesta (2010) argued

that education should not aim to create democrats from 'newcomers to democracy' as this would not transform the old order.

By referring the work of Ranciere (1999) he argued that democratization could not be a process emanating from the centre to the margins where those who were democratic included others in their sphere. Democracy was a claim from the 'outside' based on a perceived injustice against equality. Those who made that claim not only needed to be included but needed to transform the existing order and ways of doing things so they could be heard and counted (Biesta, 2010, p.122).

This chapter has discussed the importance of Bernstein's work when looking at how social inequalities are reproduced through pedagogy. In particular the ways in which visible and invisible pedagogies privilege the middle-classes has been explored along with the importance of horizontal discourse in relation to attaining the vertical discourses of academia. Bernstein's call for a democratic education based on the pedagogic rights of enhancement, inclusion and participation has been considered, alongside other notions of democracy, arguing that moments of democracy depend on the needs of those who are marginalised being heard, understood and acted upon.



## **Chapter two: Art and Design pedagogy in higher education**

This chapter aims to set the context of art and design education generally within the United Kingdom. It describes the range of subjects included within the art and design sector. It also discusses how students are selected by institutions as being suitable for entry into higher education within this particular area.

Bernstein's model of visible and invisible pedagogy is then applied to the means of setting assessment tasks (the brief), studio practice and assessment.

### **Art and design higher education**

The art and design HE field includes the main subject areas of fine art, design studies, cinematic and photographic studies, (Vaughan and Yorke, 2009). The crafts are also an important part of the creative arts, but even though multi-disciplinary programmes are flourishing there is a decline in the numbers of specialist degrees in areas such as ceramics or jewellery (Yair, 2012, p.9).

Art and design teaching can take place in many different kinds of spaces but open plan studios, where students often have designated work areas, are most commonly found. Traditionally entry for students into art and design HE is through the *Foundation Diploma* sometimes called the *Pre-BA Foundation course* which 'diagnoses' students' suitability for particular areas of art and design interest whilst preparing them academically for entry into the creative arts (Hudson, 2009).

However, more recently broader pre-entry qualifications to art and design have become common with fewer students coming through the *Foundation Diploma* route. Today more come directly from A level and extended diplomas (Vaughan and Yorke, 2009, p.18). Conventionally, part of the application process includes an interview where a student talks about their portfolio of work (Bhagat and O'Neill, 2011, p.47). For mature students who wish to study art and design but do not have the necessary qualifications an *Access to HE Diploma* is a means of achieving their aim.

This Access route gives students a broad introduction to art and design skills at level three which is the required standard for entry to HE and enables them to develop a portfolio of work for their submission through the *Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)*. *Access to HE* courses are monitored by *Access Validating Agencies (AVAs)* such as the *Open College Network (OCN)* now *Certa* and *Ascentis*. The *Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)* licenses the AVAs to ensure they are fit for purpose.

### **Studio-practice as an invisible pedagogy embedded within a visible one**

Bernstein can be described as a generalist in that he aimed to construct a theory of education that could be applied to a range of pedagogic contexts. There were many examples of empirical research that applied his theory to the higher education context (Maton in Davis et al., 2004; Power in Moore et al., 2006) but perhaps not so many that considered the area of art and design in particular. Bernstein (1975) himself used the child-centred or progressive education movement of the 1960s as an exemplar of invisible pedagogy.

He argued that children were often exposed to invisible pedagogies during pre-school and primary levels, but due to the middle-class need of passing examinations the secondary system reverted to a visible pedagogy (Bernstein, 1975). Most interestingly, he suggested that invisible pedagogies were only retained in secondary school art departments where he said the teachers were more likely to be open to change and innovation. He also commented that within a person's educational journey they could experience an invisible pedagogy again at university.

It then seemed appropriate to apply his theory to the context of art and design higher education. The discussion will now look at how the way art and design learning outcomes are communicated to students are suggestive of a visible pedagogy - but this gives way to the invisible pedagogy of the studio. These modes of transmission do not work easily in synergy. This can be seen at the point of assessment where tensions and inconsistencies in the process become apparent to staff and students.

The academic regulations that guide the educational process along with module specifications and art and design briefs aim to be explicit. Learning outcomes, assessment criteria and deadlines are stated on the art and design brief (the means by which learning activity is communicated to students). The brief and academic regulations are made available to all students through briefing sessions, student handbooks and virtual learning environments (VLEs).

This frames the activity in the studio and can be seen as a visible pedagogy where hierarchies are made clear. The transmitters who write, mark and verify

the brief are clearly distinguished from those who are the acquirers who respond to the tasks set and in so doing demonstrate the learning outcomes in their work. What is legitimate learning activity is also suggested on the brief. The discourse within the briefs can be described as vertical as it is abstract, re-contextualising and general (Bernstein, 1999, p.161).

However, there can also be a class bias in the way criteria are expressed where students from different backgrounds may not fully understand the language used. The deadlines published on briefs control, to some extent, the sequencing and pacing of learning. Students who are unable to meet deadlines must go through bureaucratic procedures to justify extensions to deadlines. Although finding and understanding the rules and regulations around the assessment process may be a challenge to some students, they are mostly visible and explicit.

Once the brief has been made available to students it can be seen that an explicit, visible pedagogy gives way to an implicit, invisible one. Students are free to explore the brief; usually by engaging with investigation, play and experimentation - at least at the initial stages of the learning process.

Open plan studios provide the space in which learning takes place; timetabling is kept to the minimum so students can immerse themselves in studio-based activity. As with Bernstein's definition of the invisible pedagogy, control of the learning process ultimately remains with the tutors although this is communicated implicitly. For example there will be large periods of time where tutors do not *appear* to be present in the studio. However, subtle and

sophisticated methods of control operate through dialogic communication in tutorials, studio critiques and horizontal discourse between students and tutors.

Susan Orr (2010) has pointed out that the role the learning outcomes played in the actual face-to-face teaching could be ambivalent. Some tutors were unlikely to refer to the outcomes, seeing them as problematic to the learning process, often being written by those who were distanced from what actually happened in the studio. Learning was seen as tacit and invisible; the studio culture was used as a way to promote the 'uniqueness' of outputs. This corresponded with the 'pedagogies of uncertainty' which Shreeve (2012) has described as a means of promoting creativity and thinking outside the box.

The performance of the students is under surveillance within the open plan studio space and during studio critiques where work in progress is often presented to staff and students. This gives staff the opportunity to read and also to misread students based on the *bricolage* of general and subject-based educational theories available to them. Sequencing and pacing rules are still present but are implicitly communicated as students have to produce the appropriate amount of practice-based outcomes, which may seem mysterious and hard to quantify, in time for scheduled critiques. 'Good students' are those who spend time in the studios, those who are not present are seen as a cause for concern.

Evidence that some students find this means of teaching confusing and difficult comes from the National Student Survey (NSS) results. Within the arena of art and design students often complained of feedback, particularly formative

feedback, as being ambiguous and contradictory (Vaughan & Yorke, 2009). Orr (2010) has described a mismatch between the assessment of outcomes and teaching practice.

It can be seen that there are tensions between the visible pedagogy of the brief and the invisible pedagogy of studio practice. When work is assessed by tutors and summative feedback is given this tension is apparent. Orr (2010) called for an acknowledgment that within fine art recognition of connoisseurship was needed which was based on the tutor's expertise, experience and professional judgement. She said that part of the assessment of creative outputs was tacit and this needed to be accepted rather than cloaked under a myth of total objectivity.

There are two points that can be made in response to this. Firstly, there is an increased danger that unconscious bias can come in to play where the processes of assessment decision-making cannot be openly articulated. Secondly, judgements based on tacit knowledge cannot easily be held up for scrutiny and debate, so therefore can art and design work be assessed and graded fairly? By referring to areas of tacit knowledge in art and design learning and assessment, discussions between students and tutors can become problematic and contradictory and misunderstandings can arise. The unequal power relationship between tutors and students means that ultimately the criteria for legitimate learning activity is set and understood by the tutor and is difficult to challenge by students, especially if these issues are difficult to articulate.

There are class-assumptions inherent within the invisible pedagogy of the studio. Byrom (2010) drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1990) has described education as a game where not everyone understands or is adept in performing the rules. Not being equipped to play the game was related to social class and was perceived as a failing of the student.

I soon became aware of teacher attitudes that positioned particular students as deficient - their attitudes and values not matching those of the institution. (Byrom, 2010)

However well the framing of studio practice was within a highly visible pedagogy where the learning outcomes were communicated on the brief and feedback was given in relation to the stated criteria; Orr suggested that the learning outcomes, in practice, did not clearly tell the student how they would be assessed. Therefore the rules of assessment may be only fully understood by those who were familiar with the game of art and design education.

### **Hidden curriculum, visible/invisible pedagogies and signature pedagogies.**

Some of the messages about the 'othering' of non-traditional art and design students could have been inherent in the content of a curriculum as well as the means that content was transmitted. The hidden curriculum referred to the content of what was taught/transmitted on a course that fell outside of the parameters of the recognised, formal, educational programme as communicated through a scheme of work or course handbook. It was first described by Jackson (1968) as those aspects of school life not publicised by the institution. In other words, the hidden curriculum comprised of values and

beliefs held by the institution or individual lecturers that were unknowingly or unconsciously transmitted to students; this was different to the subject content which tutors and students anticipated would be part of a curriculum. These values and beliefs could impact on students' learning, achievement, and future professional formation (Winter and Cotton, 2012). The hidden curriculum was seen by Hafferty (1998) to function at the level of structure and culture within organisation.

Another way of looking at this issue was to see how both formal and informal learning took place within education. Within the context of medical education Hafferty (1998) identified how the formal curriculum could stress the importance of empathy within patient care whilst at the same time the informal or hidden curriculum could promote the values of selfishness and self-interest; thus creating a conflict within the culture of the course (Mossop et al., 2013). Often there seemed to be a divergence between the curriculum and the hidden curriculum (Winter and Cotton, 2012).

Conventionally the notion of the hidden curriculum has been about the negative aspects of socialisation, for example one early work by Willis (1977) showed how class and gender roles were reproduced through the school so that working-class lads ended up getting working-class jobs regardless of the official curricula taught (Cotton, Winter and Bailey, 2013). Apple and King (1977) described 'weak' and 'strong' conceptions of the hidden curriculum. Where 'weak' referred to those features of educational structures that valued punctuality, professionalism and obedience that led to the socialisation of students within a particular community of practice (Cotton, Winter and Bailey,



2013; Cheng and Yang, 2015). This was very similar to Biesta's (2010) notion of socialisation where 'newcomers' became inculcated into a moral and social order through education. 'Strong' aspects of the hidden curriculum were those processes that preserved the existing social privilege of one group over another (Ahwee et al., 2004). For example the dominance of white attitudes and beliefs (that is a white hidden curriculum) within educational institutions has reproduced racial inequalities (Brandt, 1986; Mullard, 1982).

The continued use of the term 'hidden curriculum' could be criticised, for example, it constructed students as the passive and blind receivers of institutional messages. Alternatively students could be viewed as agents who are partly complicit in constructing a range of contradictory values and beliefs. To what extent has the hidden curriculum remained hidden when it has been openly discussed (Macleod, 2014). Some students and some staff may become aware of the myriad of conflicting messages that are transmitted by their institutions and are able to respond reflexively. Macleod (2014) has argued that by suggesting that processes were 'out of sight' then the responsibility for challenging and questioning these beliefs by people within education became decreased. If the hidden curriculum could not be seen then it could not be addressed; if it could not be addressed then it could not be changed. There was a danger akin to what Willis (1978) called a reductionist tautology where, "Nothing can be done until the basic structures are changed but the structures prevent us from making any changes." (p. 186).

The hidden curriculum within an art and design institution potentially could socialise students into various professional communities of practice within the

cultural industries. However, it could also reproduce gendered, elitist and ethnocentric beliefs and values that are informally communicated to the students.

The hidden curriculum was related to the content of what was taught informally whereas invisible/visible pedagogies were possible approaches to how that content could be transmitted. The focus of Bernstein's (1975; 2003) work on pedagogy aimed to show how the means of transmission used by an educational institution advantaged some social groups over others. As has been argued there were aspects of visible and invisible pedagogy that could be identified in the ways art and design was taught in higher education.

It could be argued that studio practice as an invisible pedagogy was an aspect of the signature pedagogies of art and design. The notion of 'signature pedagogy' started with the acknowledgment that teaching and learning differed from discipline to discipline. This has been identified as a result of the different 'academic tribes and territories' that existed in academia (Becher, 1989; Becher and Parry, 2005). Individual disciplines evolved distinct cultures. There were also distinct boundaries between the languages and social practices which each discipline espoused. Not only were there differences in academic content and language but also in the ways that students learned the content of their disciplines; particularly where these are related to professions (Shulman 2005a). The signature pedagogy of art and design privileged 'pedagogies of uncertainty' (Schreeve, 2011; Shulman, 2005b). This was closely aligned with the idea of the invisible pedagogy which aimed to promote 'spontaneous' innovation and creativity from the student by appearing to decrease the didactic

relationship with tutor. That is, the student should be engaged with experimentation and risk rather than being told what to do in a prescribed way. As has been described Bernstein argued that invisible pedagogies would advantage some social groups and disadvantage others.

This chapter has argued that there are aspects of art and design teaching that are explicit such as the use of a studio brief that clearly tells the student what they need to achieve; by what deadline and how their work will be assessed. This can be seen as an example of a visible pedagogy. For this approach to be effective the information needs to be accessible to students in terms of the language used to write the learning outcomes. If briefs are only present on VLEs then a certain level of computer literacy is assumed which may be a problem for some students. Characteristics of an invisible pedagogy can also be seen when studio practice is used as a mode of transmission. It is dependent on students being able to immerse themselves in a flexible space where they have relative autonomy to explore possibilities, experiment and test out materials and processes. The learning processes that occur are controlled implicitly by subtle modes of communication between tutors and students in studio critiques and tutorials; where the studio culture is well developed then students legitimate each other's activity through day-to-day discourse. This combination of modes of transmission could be seen as the signature pedagogy of art and design.

## **Chapter three: Access education and the positioning of the student as ‘non-traditional’ or ‘other’.**

The aim of this chapter is to establish the current context of the Access movement. It also describes how post-Access students are referred to as described as mature, non-traditional or non-standard. It argues that within art and design post-Access students can be constructed as the ‘pedagogised other’. The literature about the transition of students, and in particular mature students, to higher education is then reviewed. It is argued that mature students’ experiences contribute towards their practical wisdom which potentially can help them become adaptive in new situations and to be able to navigate around any barriers they may experience during their periods of study.

### **Who are post-Access students?**

During the 1980s there was an expansion of ‘non-conventional students’ into higher education which coincided with an increase in Access courses (Wakeford, 1993; Osborne et al., 1997). The Access route was seen as the ‘third’ way for students to enter university (DES, 1987). Parry (1996, p.11) claimed that Access courses were set up for those students who were, “excluded, delayed or otherwise deterred by a need to qualify for (university) entry in more conventional ways.”

In 2011/2012 there were 42,150 students studying on *Access to HE* courses and six per cent of UCAS applicants accepted onto a higher education course held an Access qualification (QAA, 2013, p.12). There was a 22 per cent drop in numbers of these programmes specialising in art and design from the previous year (QAA, 2013, p.3). Recently, a report has shown that, since 2010 the introduction of the nine thousand pound fees regime has had a serious and damaging impact on 'second chance' students. There has been a 15.4% drop in applications to HE from people over 25 (Independent Commission on Fees, 2013).

The focus of this paper is on those students who had achieved an *Access to HE* diploma in art and design and had gone onto do an appropriate degree. The objectives of the Access course were to work with mature students to enable them: to achieve a level three qualification; to prepare a portfolio of work and to progress onto an art and design degree. The Access course was aimed at mature students who had not been in conventional education for at least a year. What constituted a mature student had become vaguer; students could be as young as nineteen, but may have found the pace of an Access course more suitable to their needs than a Pre-BA Foundation course or A levels, which were seen as the more traditional route to degrees (Hudson, 2009, p.25).

Within a typical cohort there was usually considerable variety in the ages of students ranging from ages twenty to seventy upwards; often they had a diverse set of experiences and backgrounds. It was not useful to make assumptions about the class, gender, race or age of these students, as non-traditional, mature students were not a homogenous group (Osborne et al, 2004, p295).

Mature students with an *Access to HE* Diploma tended to be a diverse group of people (Busher et al., 2012; Broadhead and Garland, 2012).

However, James (1995, p.453) has shown how mature students in higher education have been described in terms of what they have in common as a group and of how they differ from traditional age-at-entrance students. Wilson (1997, p.362) made a very good point about the inconsistency between the status assigned to them by the institution and their age. Mature students with Access backgrounds tended to be in a different stage in their life and it could be argued that they were not typical students who had studied A levels and the pre-BA Foundation Course, (Penketh and Goddard, 2008, p.316). Higher education institutions presented and promoted degree courses and university life through open days and programme materials that assumed:

...the normative 'middle-class' construction of students emphasises the opportunity of leaving home (to a protected environment and in gradual stages), meeting new friends (who might become a bedrock of friends for life) and going to new places – a formative experience that broadens horizons. (Christie et al, 2005)

This image projected by institutions did not represent Access students who tended to stay at home having established lives, jobs, families and responsibilities. They may have had working-class or middle-class backgrounds. There was a danger that by describing Access students as non-traditional or untypical, they were being represented in a pejorative manner. Osborne et al (2004, p.296) attempted to further analyse different types of mature students into subgroups. They could be *delayed traditional students* who were in their 20s, but actually shared a lot of common interests and values with

18 year olds. Secondly, *late starters* who due to life changes like redundancy or children leaving home sought 'a new start in life'. Thirdly, mature students could be *single parents* who were in need of improving job prospects through gaining qualifications and being role models for their offspring. Fourthly, *careerists* were those who used qualifications to develop at work. Fifthly, *escapees* who wanted to escape a 'dead end job' and finally *personal growers* who had a love of learning for its own sake.

Some researchers in lifelong learning believed that education was beginning to be viewed by mature students in a more instrumental way linked to employment rather than personal development (Tedder and Biesta, 2008, p.1) and as a result the profile of Access students was actually becoming younger and career-focused (Busher et al., 2012). This project's participants were (with one exception) people who had not participated in higher education before.

Wakeford (1993) argued that Access students have few but rarely no previous qualifications. Bowl (2001) made a similar point where she said that mature students had often attempted to participate in education before but had been frustrated by various barriers so did not always succeed. One way of explaining why 'non-traditional' students were frustrated in formal education was to consider how they were positioned as the 'other' by dominant pedagogical discourses and practices.

### **Access students and otherness**

Hatton (2012) has argued that the values, beliefs and positions of an institution always took central stage. She described how the word 'pedagogised' implied

something which was done to the student by the institution. By referencing the work of Atkinson (2002) she showed how pedagogised identities of students and courses developed from signature learning and teaching practices. Within the area of art and design signature pedagogies included the studio critique, open briefs and studio practice. This resonated with Shreeve's (2011) point that art and design practitioners used 'pedagogies of uncertainty' as a means of facilitating creativity. These practices were represented as the norm.

Burke and McManus (2011) have shown how worthy art and design students were recruited on to degree programmes because they demonstrated risk-taking and invention and their portfolios represented middle-class notions of taste. Bernstein would say that recruiting students with a similar age, and who also conform to normative art and design practices would help to create a sense of horizontal solidarity within the student body. Hatton (2012, p.39) developed her argument further to point out that the legitimating power of tutors and institutions led to the normalisation of certain ways of learning which could marginalise some students who did not 'fit' in. These students could be positioned as the pedagogised 'other', those who were different to the norm. *Othering* language and curriculum used in institutions constructed a person or a group of people as being outside the realm of hegemonic normalcy by suggesting a *them/us* binary opposition (Gorski, 2009, p.313).

Pedagogic practices and discourses were also shown by Bernstein, throughout his work, to reproduce social inequalities. In particular, he sought to link, "microprocesses (language, transmission, and pedagogy) to macroforms—to how cultural and educational codes and the content and process of education



are related to social class and power relations,”(Sadovnik, 2001, p.692). This research aimed to capture the experiences of ‘non-traditional students’ within an art and design context. These students were described as ‘non-traditional’ because they were mature students from diverse backgrounds who had entered HE with a qualification that was other than the traditional A level route, (Burke, 2002, p.81).

Post-Access students who had come from a ‘non-traditional’ route (Hudson, 2009); may have looked visibly different due to age, race, gender, disability; may act differently due to social class, religious backgrounds or previous experiences; were usually in the minority within an art and design programme; were at risk of being ‘othered’ by art and design pedagogic discourses and practices. A democratic education that enabled a participative and deliberative pedagogy could potentially resist the ‘othering’ of non-traditional students, through friendship, courage and generosity.

Due to these students often looking and acting visibly older than the rest of the students in the degree program, the device of constructing horizontal solidarities based on age (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiv) was difficult to sustain. Furthermore, within the area of art and design, there was often an association with creativity and youth. This debate could be seen in a discussion forum run by the Design Museum, where it was asked if a person could be too old to be a designer. Many competitions and exhibiting opportunities either have the work ‘young’ in the title or have age restrictions. Art movements studied as part of a fine art curriculum also refer to age. For example the Young British Artists (YBAs) and

the manifestos written by the Italian futurists both linked artistic creativity with being youthful (Broadhead and Garland, 2012).

## **Post-Access to HE students and transition to higher education**

The examination of the experiences of post-Access to HE students within art and design higher education also involved the examination of transition and life change. Many of the participants had not gone to university before and so they were being confronted with new learning contexts. How the participants dealt with 'newness' and sometimes the barriers to their learning was the subject of this thesis. After reviewing the literature on transition it was possible to suggest that mature students had the potential to draw upon their practical wisdom gained from their previous experience in order to be adaptive and responsive in new situations and counter the 'othering' practices of some art and design pedagogies.

The notion of transition has been used to understand people's experiences in education. Transitions could be seen as processes of change to new contexts or life circumstances. Zittoun (2007, p.195) said, "Usually transitions follow ruptures – modifications of what is taken for granted in a person's life – which can be due to various causes." Early work on transitions looked at how young people made the transition from school to work (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2007). However the scope of this study was how people experienced higher education. Most of the literature on transition 'to' and 'in' HE identified the induction period and the first year as being significant (Kane et al., 2014; Stagg and Kimmins, 2013; Thomas, 2012; Harvey et al., 2006). Much of the literature focused on the

experiences of traditional age at entry students where it was assumed they would be coming from doing A levels at school or a sixth form college (Hudson, 2009; Jackson, 2003). Often transition to higher education was seen as part of becoming an adult; for middle-class students in particular (Thomas, 2012; Pampaka et al 2012; Christie et al., 2005). 'Good' or 'successful' transitions were often desirable because they led to increased retention and academic success (Thomas, 2012; Harvey et al., 2006).

Four themes were identified in the literature on transition to higher education. Theme one was based on a desired transformation in a student's academic skills and engagement with learning which required a particular kind of support or transition pedagogy. This was supplied in an induction period or on the first year of the programme. Theme two focused on the transformation of an individual's affective capacities (resilience, confidence, belonging, and self-worth) which would enable them to succeed in higher education. Theme three, considered how students had to adjust to being members of new communities and social groups. Often work within this theme drew upon Bourdieu's frameworks of habitus, dispositions and cultural capital in order to understand the barriers some 'non-traditional' students faced when studying in higher education. Theme four could be seen in that literature which problematised the notion of transition as a single event or crisis point that used a deficit model to understand student's experiences of higher education. The experiences of mature students within higher education suggested that transition needed to be understood in a different way as they brought with them capacities which could be valued by those in higher education.

## **Theme one: Transformation in academic skills and engagement with learning**

The literature, particularly that written by teaching practitioners, concentrated on academic transition. For example Pampaka et al (2012) sought to identify mathematics students' perceptions of transition then measured the association to learning outcomes. They described learning outcomes as being the dispositions to study further mathematics; the dispositions to complete their course and mathematics self-efficacy. Improvement in academic skills was often seen as being through increased support as in the case of Edirisingha (2009) who reported findings that suggested e-mentoring was beneficial for student transition into higher education. Also, within the context of an Australian university Stagg and Kimmins (2013) have applied the ideas around transition pedagogy and the first year in higher education (FYHE) to the context of returning postgraduate students. They argued that there was little difference in the types of support these students needed to complete their coursework when compared with their undergraduate counterparts. This way of looking at transition divorced learning and the attainment of academic skills from other affective, cultural and social factors that may have impacted on a student's disposition to study.

## **Theme two: Transformation in affective capacities to increase engagement in learning**

There was work that linked successful transition into higher education to certain affective qualities or capacities within the students such as confidence, belonging and resilience. Institutions who nurtured these attributes would

potentially improve retention and attainment. Jackson (2003) carried out research on the effects of transition into higher education on self-perception of academic competence. She looked at the impact of seeing oneself as a 'big fish in a small pond' (in a sixth form or college) then moving to a larger 'pond' (university) where a student could feel like a 'smaller fish'. It was argued that perceptions of academic competency as part of a student identity were very vulnerable during a time of transition. Also, Thomas (2012) reported on a study that was published by the Higher Education Academy. It was a synthesis of messages from seven projects funded by the *What works? Student retention and success programme 2008-2011*. The report said that the transition to learning in higher education was challenging to most students. Personal tutoring was identified as one way of supporting students through transition to higher education. Peer mentoring was also a way of making students feel they were part of the university. A sense of belonging and students' friendships were identified as being important aspects of a good transition into higher education learning. Similar to the work of Thomas (2012), Kane et al. (2014) carried out a cross-institutional, collaborative project that investigated students' sense of belonging in higher education within three neighbouring universities. The work was carried out during the first semester of the first year. They used a questionnaire approach that drew upon the responses from 1346 students. The researchers used Goodenow's (1993) *Psychological Sense of School Membership Measurement*. The results showed that ten to fifteen percent of students were unable to feel accepted at university. They suggested that mature students found it more difficult to fit into higher education. It was also argued that the sense of belonging in most students had already begun before they

joined the institution if it had been their first choice in the application process. Engagement in induction and extra-curricular activities were recommended as a mean of improving a sense of belonging. Work that linked affective attributes with successful transition, retention and attainment did not always consider the social and cultural impact higher education had on different groups of students.

### **Theme three: Cultural and social transformation**

Literature that focused on the theme of cultural and social transformation also considered barriers certain social groups faced when making the transition to higher education (Fragoso et al., 2013; Hussey and Smith, 2013). Often the work of Pierre Bourdieu was used to explain that some students did not have the cultural capital that was valued in universities (Duckworth, 2014; Byrom, 2010; Hudson, 2009).

The research undertaken by Reay (2002) was a good example of a class analysis of transition that did concern itself with mature students in particular. Reay (2002) carried out research that explored the sociological and psychological processes that made working-class transitions to higher education problematic. In particular she has looked at the point when students chose their higher education course. Her work focussed on the narratives of 23 mature students who attended an inner London Further Education College which she compared with data from interviews carried out on 97 sixth formers in a range of private and state schools. She argued that class although mediated by gender and ethnicity always counted in the transition process. Reay (2002) identified different working-class fractions based on their attitude to risk,

challenge and fitting in. She argued that often middle-class cohorts were represented as fragmented whereas the working-class identities were represented as being homogenised. Within her work she identified working-class students who opted for the risk of higher education as being atypical; but within that group of people there were two fractions. The first one being the majority of students, who sought to avert risk, fit in and felt comfortable. The second fraction; the minority of students sought the challenge and risk of higher education. She described the stories of mature students as being about determination, commitment and adaptability; a triumph of will in the face of class inequalities of access. Many of the initiatives designed to increase access to higher education were seen not to decrease the barriers for working-class mature students (Wakeford, 1993; Reay, 2002).

Hudson (2016) carried out work on the transition of *Access to HE* students to higher education in East London. This work drew upon the notion of a learning career which was developed by Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000). A learning career was subjective and objective. It was a career of events, activities and the making and remaking of meaning. It took into account position and disposition and development over time (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000, p.590). By considering Pierre Bourdieu's disposition as related to position, that was the habitus: - a portfolio of dispositions to all aspects of life largely tacitly held this influenced actions. Habitus was who the person was; where the person was in society they were positioned as well as their interactions with others. It was the embodiment of social factors like class, gender, ethnicity as well as genetic inheritance. Often it seemed that some social groups did not appear to fit in

when they made the transition to higher education due to their particular habitus.

Similar work was undertaken outside the United Kingdom. Fragoso et al. (2013) analysed survey results, focus-group interviews and life histories to research the transition of mature students into higher education in Portugal. The recently implemented Bologna Process had led to an increase in non-traditional undergraduate students. The study considered the barriers which identified by the students as well as the significance of peer support and the reflection of life history as part of the transition process. Fragoso et al. (2013) called for a different understanding of the term transition, where it was not just an event within a linear timeframe but a more everyday event. They also claimed that 'non-traditional students' and 'transition' were concepts that were problematized by institutions which diverted their responsibility towards facilitating change.

Gale and Parker (2014) described 'transition-as-development' as a concept that focussed on a 'shift from one identity to another' (Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes, 2010, p.6). This could be about moving from one life stage to another where going to university was part of this change or development. This was conceptualised as where people were accepted into a new community: by stages of separation from the previous group; transition and interaction with a new group and finally incorporation or integration into the new group. The film *Educating Rita* (1983) was a good example of this understanding of transition. Rita was represented as a mature student who slowly developed into a successful undergraduate through separating herself from her working-class community. Gale and Parker (2014) claimed that this approach still reproduced



and maintained existing hierarchies. Typically, students from under-represented backgrounds would experience the challenge to their identities and the threat to their usual ways of knowing and doing. Therefore, “If a student feels that they do not fit in, that their social and cultural practices are inappropriate and that their tacit knowledge is undervalued, they may be more inclined to withdraw early,” (Thomas, 2002, p.413). Successful transitions were seen as being those who could overcome barriers by becoming members of new social groups; rather than the university or HEI adapting to include different dispositions and practices.

#### **Theme four: Contesting transition as a useful concept for mature students in particular.**

The problematising of transition to higher education as an inevitable crisis point was criticised in much current literature on the subject. Alternative understandings of going to university as part of the constant life changes that happened in people’s lives were relevant to the experiences of mature students.

Within the context of lifelong learning Ecclestone (2009) explored three perspectives on transition (identity, agency and structure). It was argued that thinking about transitions , “not only risk pathologising transitions by depicting them as unsettling, disruptive, daunting, anxiety inducing and risky but also create normative assumptions about how best to manage them,” (Ecclestone, 2009, p.23). The negative aspects of transition were often the focus of the debates and it was assumed that people needed help to get through periods of uncertainty and change like going to university. This perspective, “erases the positive effects of difficulty, challenge and overcoming problems and risks

attributing 'problems' to particular groups so that people become a problem to be supported and managed effectively," (Ecclestone, 2009, p.23).

Similarly O'Shea (2014) has carried out extensive research on the experiences of first-in-the-family students at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Within this particular institution people from disadvantaged groups were applying and gaining entry to the university, however, the retention of these students was not very good; the attrition rates being between 18 and 25%. O'Shea (2014) was critical of what she described as the deficit model that was often applied to students from certain social groups. Instead she used a concept developed from critical race theory by Yosso (2005) which was a critique of Bourdieu's cultural capital. It was argued that although first-in-the-family students may not have the white, middle-class cultural capital of traditional students they did come with other kinds of capitals (aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant). O'Shea (2014) argued that students and the institution should recognise and value these attributes that would improve the educational experience for everyone. Implicit in O'Shea's argument was that seeing the idea of transition into higher education as being about a change from one identity to another could devalue the attributes the student already had.

Gale and Parker (2014) argued for 'transition-as-becoming' as a rejection of the previous approaches to thinking about transition. It was also the rejection of 'transition' as a useful concept altogether because it failed to capture the fluidity of people's lives and the ways they learn. Rather than transition being viewed as linear and smooth; the lived experiences of students was understood to be more complex. There was an acceptance of the interdependence of 'public

issues' and 'private troubles'. Anxiety and risk was seen as part of day-to-day life rather than attributed to a rare and special event. It was acknowledged that,

...transitions can lead to profound change and be an impetus for new learning, or they can be unsettling, difficult and unproductive. Yet, while certain transitions may be unsettling and difficult for some people, risk, challenge and even difficulty might also be important factors in successful transitions for others. (Ecclestone, Biesta and Hughes, 2010, p.2)

Gale and Parker (2014) claimed that a focus on induction or individual development modes of transition implied assimilation and integration of students into the dominant culture of the university, which inevitably privileged some students from middle-class backgrounds over under-represented students. However, the 'transition-as-becoming' approach called for an institutional discourse of adaptation, where the diverse cultural capital brought by students to higher education was affirmed. Thus higher education knowledge systems and practices should become more open and flexible.

## **Transition and phronesis**

After reviewing the literature on transition it could be argued that whilst going to university could be seen in terms of being a change in one's life, this may or may not be a cause for concern. At the same time a life constituted many changes and transitions which could happen on a day-to-day basis. It was how people navigated and responded to changing circumstances that was significant; such instances could be perceived as opportunities for new learning, achievement and increased self-belief. Mature students were likely to have experienced life changes before coming to higher education. These

experiences alongside other factors and capacities could contribute towards a person's practical wisdom which would aid them in acting well through life changes. The concept of phronesis or prudence was potentially useful when applied in situations of abrupt life changes and transition to unfamiliar settings. This was because mature students could draw upon previous instances of change and apply that knowledge to new situations. Previous experiences were always recontextualised in new situations.

Potentially mature students would have gained practical wisdom from previous experiences of perceiving, assessing situations, choosing courses of action and evaluating the consequences of action (Korthagen et al., 2001, p.27). Practical wisdom was not only about learning from previous experiences in a mechanistic, simplistic way; it was also concerned with recognising situations where wisdom was needed whilst using universal laws or conceptual principles as a guide to inform deliberations about future actions.

Nussbaum (2001, p.306) proposed that there should not be a fixed way of understanding a situation and articulated how the generalities of character and principles needed to be modified in light of a particular context or situation. Acting well in the light of change and being a good judge involved being ready for surprises; the unknown and being adaptive and responsive (Nussbaum, 2001). Nussbaum (2001) said there was a two way illumination between particular and universal so that the good judge needed to be flexible and open.

Thus phronesis enabled people to not only act well in situations familiar to them but also those situations which were unfamiliar, like going to university for the

first time. Phronesis allowed people to modify their previous actions in relation to the new situations they were in. Experience was not simply repeated without reference to the unique contexts in which events occurred; knowledge based on previous experience was adapted and recontextualised. Memories of previous situations of change contributed to good judgments and actions but they were not the only guide. The experiences of other people, abstract knowledge and good character were ameliorated in the deliberative process.

The mature student who could who make good decisions that were seen to benefit themselves and others would be able to navigate the surprises thrown up by entering a new situation as in the transition to higher education. Being able to judge and act well, at the same time was, intrinsic to being human and living a good life. Again how someone lived a 'good life' was in some ways dependant on context and the particularities of the situations thrown up by life.

This chapter has described *Access to HE* education and the groups of diverse students who achieved the diploma in order to entre higher education rather than the more traditional A levels and foundation course. It has argued that some of the signature pedagogies of art and design education can construct these students as 'other' thus reproducing social inequalities within art and design higher education. A democratic education was also been seen as a possible means of facilitating the agency of these students along with the virtues of courage, justice and friendship. By considering the evolving literature about the transition of mature students it has been possible to argue that post-*Access to HE* students should not be seen as problematic, but as people with capacities. Practical wisdom was seen to be potentially a capacity students had

which gave them a sense of control and agency. The next chapter will explore phronesis or practical wisdom in more detail.

## Chapter Four: Critical Phronesis.

*Phronesis*, practical wisdom or prudence was an Aristotelian notion. It was of relevance to experiences of post-Access students during their degrees in art and design in three particular ways. Firstly, Aristotle described practical wisdom as being gained through a long life of experience. Does this enable older students to make good decisions and to act well about their own education?

Secondly, as the narratives of post-Access students recounted their judgements, actions and their hopes for a good life, a notion of *poiesis* (as in literature or autobiography) was recognised as being necessary to capture their experiences, decision making and actions (whilst at the same time recognising the limitations of narrative as a representation of phronesis).

Thirdly, those who act in the interests of the 'other', that is the educators of post-Access students, should take the reported experiences of post-Access students into account when operating with the openness of character that practical wisdom demands.

This chapter begins with a discussion around practical wisdom based on Aristotle's ideas; it briefly explores how phronesis relates to ideas of the *good life* and the virtues of character. By using a particular construct of practical wisdom devised by Thomas Aquinas as comprising *memoria*, *intelligentia*, *docilitas*, *solertia*, *ratio*, *providentia*, a complex definition is explored and supported by the work of the American ethical philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2001). In particular how general and abstract laws or theories about right

actions are modified by an understanding of the particularities of a situation will be considered.

The chapter then goes on to consider the relationship of *phronesis* to *poiesis*, or in other words practical wisdom related to narrative, by again drawing on the work of Nussbaum and also that of Paul Ricoeur. It can be seen that stories offer models of practical wisdom from which the wise person can learn; here narrative is acting as a pedagogic tool. However, it can also be argued that there is a more intrinsic relationship between *phronesis* and *poiesis*; that in order to make good deliberations it is necessary to think narratively; to practice a moral imagination about the possible outcomes and consequences of actions. Thinking narratively also can be seen to construct a unity of self and a moral continuity that guards against the charge of randomness and arbitrariness in decision making (Ricoeur, 1994, p.178; Nussbaum, 2001).

The discussion then is developed to argue that the work of Basil Bernstein can be triangulated with the work Ricoeur through their shared concerns with social aspects of narrative, time and the unequal relationship teachers as *phronimos* (a person of understanding, wisdom and discretion) have with their students as the 'other'.

Finally there will be an exploration of the ways in which practical wisdom relates to Gert Biesta's definition of a good education. This is further developed as part of the methodology of this thesis. This chapter provides an important framework in two ways, firstly in its providing another theoretical lens with which to consider the experiences of mature students and their educators, but also in



relation to the methodology of this thesis as to why in it is important for teachers to become researchers and act in the interests of others and the role of testimonial narratives of students can play in this (Skilleas, 2006, p.274).

## **Phronesis as a judgement based on generalities and particulars**

Book six of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* offered a complex model of deliberation known as phronesis, practical wisdom or prudence where the person who practised this was known as the phronimos (Ricoeur, 1994, p.174). An initial definition could be that it is: the capacity of deliberating well about what is good and advantageous for oneself (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.176).

The phronimos firstly recognised the singularity of a particular situation and was able to determine a best course of action. Ricoeur (1994, p.175) considered this in terms of recognising the need to modify or adapt actions based on a moral norm towards an ethical aim in singular situations. The phronimos understood what it meant to act well, justly, with courage and was a practically wise, prudent person (Wall, 2005, 315). Phronesis was about being able make good decisions that allowed us to act well for ourselves and others so we could live a good life together.

It is due to virtue that the end we aim at is right, and it is due to prudence that means we employ to that end are right. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapter 12, p.188)

Phronesis was an intellectual virtue where we did not just do the right thing through habit or conditioning, but through thought and deliberation and it sat with the other forms of intellect *sophia* (purely theoretical intelligence) and *techne* (technical expertise) (Skilleas, 2006, p.267). Practical wisdom or prudence was closely interconnected with the other cardinal virtues such temperance, fortitude and justice. So the person of practical wisdom was a person of good character who was concerned with friendship, justice, courage moderation and generosity.

From these characteristics which would have become internalised through early training (early childhood rearing and socialisation), the phronimos was guided by these virtues in determining the correct course of action (Nussbaum, 2001, p.306). Thus the person with practical wisdom could identify a situation in which courage was needed or perhaps another one in which moderation was required.

Korthagan et al. (2001, p.30) built on the work of Plato and Aristotle in order to distinguish between two types of knowledge, episteme and phronesis.

Episteme was defined as abstract, objective knowledge which was derived by generalising about many situations. Phronesis was the practical wisdom derived from the perception of a particular context. They argued that, "It is the eye that one develops for a typical case, based on the perception of particulars," (Korthagan et al., 2001, p.31).

Korthagen et al. (2001, p.27) pointed out that a person could only gain practical wisdom with much experience of perceiving, assessing situations, choosing courses of action and evaluating the consequences of action. Practical wisdom

could not be gained through learning only universal laws or conceptual principles; however, these would act as a guide to inform deliberations about future actions. The implications for what could be a democratic education were that people learned about laws and concepts but were at the same time able to put these into practice. Through practical wisdom they also were free to challenge traditional ways of seeing the world and acting.

Nussbaum (2001, p.306) proposed that there should not be a fixed way of understanding a situation and articulated how the generalities of character and principles needed to be modified in light of a particular context or situation:

Nor does particular judgment have the kind of rootedness and focus required for goodness of character without a core of commitment to a general conception – albeit one that is continually evolving, ready for surprise, and not rigid. There is a two way illumination between particular and universal. Although in the way we have described the particular takes priority, they are partners in commitment and share between them the honors given to the flexibility and responsiveness of the good judge.  
(Nussbaum , 2001, p.306)

The 'phronimoi' made good decisions that were seen to benefit themselves and others. Being able to judge and act well was seen as intrinsic to being human living a good life. Again how someone lived a 'good life' was in some ways dependant on context and the particularities of the situations thrown up by life.

A sagacious man is supposed be characterised by his ability to reach sound conclusions in his deliberations about what is good for himself and advantage to him, and this not in one department of life – in what concerns his health, for example, or his physical strength – but what conduces to the good life as a whole. (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.176)

For Ricoeur (1994, p. 177) the word 'life' designated the person as a whole rather than a series of practices. He said that to live a life well was the standard of excellence which Ricoeur called the life plan. The 'good life' was for him a nebulous of ideals and dreams of achievements in regard to a life to be fulfilled or unfulfilled (Ricoeur, 1994, p.179). The good life was where all actions (even though they may have had ends in themselves) were directed by these ideals and dreams.

It seemed that this was very pertinent to those mature students who chose to make difficult decisions in order to pursue the good life, by achieving a degree or by becoming an artists or designers. Living a good life was also pertinent to younger students; however, they were likely to have less life experiences to draw upon and may not have the responsibilities that older students had. It was recognised that some young people do have very complex and difficult lives, being young carers for example and it was them who may in the future become Access students when they were older and able to study.

Aristotle said that it would not be correct to describe prudence as a purely rational quality. This was because the motivation to act well came from recognising the appropriate passions or emotions like fear or desire. A well-formed character was able to blend thought and desire so well that one did not guide another, (Nussbaum, 2001, p.308). If this was not the case and a person acted only according to their passions and not with prudence or common sense then this could lead to acting badly and leading a life of suffering (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.177). This was because the phronimos (a person with practical wisdom) perceived the need for the virtue of

temperance in order to moderate the passions so they were appropriate to the situation and did not lead to making poor decisions.

An interrogation of prudence based on the scholastic tradition which sought to harmonise classical and Christian philosophy can be found in part two of *Summa Theological* Thomas Aquinas. In particular, question 48 of the second part described the parts of prudence being: - *memoria, intelligentia, docilitas, solertia, ratio, providentia*, circumspection and caution.

*Memoria* was the ability to remember past events accurately so that a person could learn from experience. Practical wisdom was different from a deductive scientific knowledge in that a crucial prerequisite for practical wisdom was a long experience of life that enabled a person to understand the salient features of a situation, (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 305).

It is notorious that young persons are capable of becoming excellent geometricians and mathematicians and accomplished students of that nature. Yet the public is not easily persuaded that a young person can be prudent. The reason is that prudence involves a detailed knowledge which only comes from practical experience, and practical experience is what a young man lacks – it comes only after many years. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapter 8, p.182)

This did not mean that all mature people acted with practical wisdom. Some people with much life experience did not act wisely and could often keep making similar bad decisions that led to constant suffering and grief. Judgments on the correct course of action were not only based on previous experience, an element of discernment was also required in acting well in a particular situation

based on many attributes. *Intelligentia* was the understanding of *first principles*. Aristotle's account of a first principle (in one sense) was as, "the first basis from which a thing is known," (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Delta, p.114). However any general or universal principles must give way to the particularities of a situation. Aristotle, (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, Chapter 10, pp.166-167) said, "So in matters where it is necessary to make a general statement, and yet a general statement cannot exclude the possibility of error, the law takes no account of particular cases." Nussbaum (2001, p.305) recognised that practical wisdom used rules as summaries or guides, but these must be tempered to fit a particular situation.

*Docilitas* was open-mindedness where a person recognised the wide variety of things and situations to be experienced, 'docility' retained a meaning of acceptance of a situation. People not only drew upon their own experiences but that of others in order to make good decisions. Aristotle said that:

And so we ought to pay no less attention to the unproved assertions and opinions of elderly people and men of experience than those which they seek to prove. They have an 'eye' for the truth, and this can only come of experience. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapter 11, p.186)

This could also be interpreted as being open to surprise. Nussbaum (2001, p.305) argued that practical wisdom should be, "flexible, ready for surprise, prepared to see and resourceful at improvisation." This hinted at the fact that parts of situations/events are often 'non-repeatable' and it was not always possible to expect with certainty what could happen in everyday life.

*Ratio* was discursive reasoning where a person could research and compare various possibilities. This could be comparing past experiences of the self with those of another phronimos and comparing universal laws with the present new situation.

*Solertia* or quick-wittedness was where a person could size up a situation quickly in order to perceive it as a situation that needed a particular course of action. This could also be seen as the need to be perceptive that a situation requires a particular course of action, (Nussbaum, 2001, p.300; Ricoeur, 1994).

*Providentia* was the ability to see the possible consequences of actions and to estimate how well a course of action would fulfil a goal. Aristotle said that, "For the person of practical wisdom must recognise these, and understanding and judgement are also concerned with practical matters i.e. with ultimates. And intuitive insight is concerned ultimates in both directions," (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 11, p.186). There was an element of this that implied imagination, being able to imagine the possible outcomes of a particular action.

Circumspection was the ability to take all the circumstances of a particular situation into account.

Finally caution was often associated with prudence as opposed to risk; this could be read as mitigating possible risks.

Thus, phronesis could be seen as a complex intellectual virtue that worked with other virtues such as temperance, courage and justice. The aim of the person with practical wisdom was to act well in order that they and others could live a good life. The motivation to act well was based on a unity of rational thoughts and irrational emotions; where desire or fear (for example) was tempered when deemed to be appropriate. The Phronimos was able to perceive the complex elements of a particular situation whilst noting the need for practical wisdom.

The situation was considered from different points of view. They were able to draw upon pertinent previous experiences from themselves and others in order to guide their decisions whilst, at the same time, being open to laws and theories. The ability to imagine the possible consequences of actions was also important and risk was often managed through caution. The Phronimos was able to adapt their judgments to accommodate new and original situations, even though they were drawing upon past experiences and knowledge.

## **The relationship between poiesis and phronesis**

*Poiesis* could be seen to refer to the creation of works of art; these might include literature, performances of plays, sculpture, and architecture and so on. Involved in these works could also include *techné* which represented the skill and craftsmanship aspects to making something well. An understanding of *poiesis* in relation to *phronesis* was important because the subjects of this thesis were students who were involved in making various kinds of art and design objects and or performances as part of their education. The students also aspired to be artists or designers, and for them this was part of living a good life.



Another reason why it was important to explore the relationship between phronesis and poetics was that the narratives used as an indicator of the students' experiences could be seen as poetic in one sense but also as a representation of their deliberations, judgments and actions, that was their own practice of practical wisdom.

In book six of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished phronesis from poiesis or 'art'. Both were different from the universal, abstract nature of pure science or theoretical wisdom but phronesis was an 'end in itself' as acting well was good in itself, whereas, poiesis had an end other than itself that was a work of art, literature or performance. Phronesis was practised well, in itself, and involved right deliberation about human action in relation to the virtues like courage and justice. Poiesis was involved with making goods such as the crafts, or significantly stories that were imitative or shadows of action (Wall, 2005, p.313). Practical wisdom and poetics were both teleological practices, that is, practices that were aimed at a particular end, what differentiated the two was that phronesis found its end within practice whereas poiesis found its end beyond the practice. This separation, it could be argued, demonstrated how creativity has been separated from 'acting well' and making good decisions. Artists were seen as risk-takers or rule-breakers. Their subject matter may have dealt with moral subjects or there may have been moral constraints on an artist's practice (modifying images that could cause offence, for example) but the activity of making or creating was assumed to be different from living a good life, (Wall, 2005, p.314). It was tempting to understand this as a binary opposition that could be simply summed up by risk verses prudence. However,

Hariman (2003, p.292) described a bourgeois prudence based on sensibility with an opposing avant-garde that celebrated action and resistance. This would see the avant-garde standing outside bourgeois culture rather than actually a product of it. When applying the notion to the case of mature students within art and design it could be proposed that through age and experience they were more likely to practice phronesis and this could potentially be in conflict with the risk associated with creativity, unless a form of avant-garde prudence could be established.

Nussbaum (in Wall, 2005, p.319) argued that reading novels, tragedies, fictional literature provided one form of education in practical wisdom through their explorations of human dilemmas and conflicts. Stories helped us perceive and attend to the particularities of contexts and persons around us, (Wall, 2005, p.320). The purpose of practical wisdom was to respond to the complexity of people's lives with moral perception, moral imagination and moral sensibility. As Nussbaum (1990, p.184) put it, "Stories cultivate our ability to see and care for particulars, not as representatives of a law, but as what they themselves are: to respond vigorously with senses and emotion as before.... To wait and float and be actively passive."

According to Nussbaum, "We find, then in Aristotle's thought about the civilised city, an idea we first encountered in the Sophocles' tragic play *Antigone*: the idea that the value of certain constituents of the good human life is separable from the risk of opposition, therefore conflict," (Nussbaum, 1990, p.352). For Nussbaum poetics was useful for the practice of practical wisdom, but practical wisdom was not a poetic activity. Skilleas (2006) offered a criticism of

Nussbaum's understanding of poesis in relation to practical wisdom in that she considered only literary fiction as being a valuable guide in making good decisions; as for her it was only literature that could move a person emotionally and so enabled us to empathise with the motivations of others, (Skilleas, 2006, p.262). Personal narratives were only significant when they emulated the emotive power for fiction, (Skilleas, 2006, p.266). As this thesis drew upon the personal narratives mature students it was important to show how they could be an important contributor to practical wisdom. In order to achieve practical wisdom the phronimos needed experience, one's own experience was of the highest significance, however Aristotle also allowed for the influence of the experiences of others (Skilleas, 2006, p.268). It was through personal narratives in particular we could gain an insight into people's feelings, motivations and beliefs. This contributed towards deliberating and acting well, but it was not a replacement for experience. Skilleas (2006, p.274) argued that personal narratives in the form of 'autobiography as testimony' based on lived experiences were more powerful and meaningful to the reader because they were not fictions. He argued that even though events may be misrepresented, or partly forgotten, within a personal narrative they still could contribute to the knowledge of personality and motivation.

Whereas Nussbaum and Skilleas talked about how poetics in the form of narrative could be useful to the phronimos Paul Ricoeur saw phronesis as a poetic activity because ultimately it could lead to innovation in the way we acted for and with others. Ricoeur situated practical wisdom within what he called the 'poetics of the will', or 'critical phronesis' (Wall, 2005, p.321). What made

phronesis critical for Ricoeur was the inclusion of human life; an open-ended responsibility towards the other. Ricoeur used the Lacanian 'other' into an Aristotelian practical framework (Wall, 2005, p.322). Practical wisdom then became poetic in the sense that it decentred and destabilised the self's moral will and hence demanded its on-going self-transformation that was creative, innovative and imaginary.

Critical phronesis was the human capacity for navigating between self-narration and responsibility towards others. This activity was seen as poetic as it involved, "inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception required by solitude... the exception on behalf of others," (Ricoeur, 1994, p.269). Here Ricoeur was talking about the innovative and aspects of phronesis as we think and act well for ourselves and at the same time for others. Ricoeur interpreted tragedy as a description of the human condition of violence towards otherness, and it was the purpose of critical phronesis to engage in the task of responding to others through an ever more inclusive moral narration. The poetics of the will became ethical, therefore, not just for moral perceptiveness, but actively responding to others in a morally self-transforming way (Wall, 2005, p. 324). "Critical phronesis is the inherently poetic capability for remaking one's conception of the good to become ever more radically inclusive of otherness." (Wall, 2005, p.325).

For Ricoeur, (1994, p.180) phronesis aimed at the ethical intention of, "the good life with and for others in just institutions." Often this was understood as combining an Aristotelian good with a Kantian right (Wall, 2005, p.322). Within this context morals and ethics were distinguished; morals being the adherence

to rules of good behaviour whereas ethics was concerned with what it was to be a good person in general. Ricoeur also understood ethics in relation to narrative claiming that the good life was that which was worth recounting (Simms, 2003, p.101).

Ricoeur's overall project was to argue for the narrative dimension of human life, which justified hermeneutics not only as a process of reading texts but of reading lives, moreover, reading oneself was the case of self-understanding and self-esteem (Simm, 2003, p.101; Ricoeur, 1994, p.179).

Narrative was not only a guide for understanding the motivations of others but thinking narratively was a characteristic of phronesis. In order to act well, one must first perceive and describe the given situation in the world before one should decide what to do. Ricoeur's (1994) formula for human action was: describe, narrate and prescribe. Narrative evaluated situations and told us what we should do in a moral sense. Seeing our own lives as a narrative gave a sense of the connectedness and unity of life (Simms, 2003, p.103).

Ricoeur aligned narrative with life, however this could be contested as 'stories are told' and 'lives are lived'. Stories it could be argued were at the most models for how a life should be lived or not lived (Nussbaum, 1990; Skilleas, 2006).

Ricoeur would say that real lives required others to interpret them, and it was this which brought closure to the narrative of life not death. As our narrative of life was entangled with that of others we needed others to interact with in order to have a narrative identity. Importantly an ethical way of interacting with others preserved one's own narrative identity and constancy of character.

To paraphrase Ricoeur (1994, p.189) the 'other' could count on me and it was this that made me accountable as I was 'summoned to responsibility'. There was an asymmetrical relationship between the self and other, (doctor/patient; teacher/student; lawyer/client) which Ricoeur acknowledged and this needed to be considered during the practices of phronesis. Although he also explored the possibility of mutual friendship between self and other, the relationship was seen as fragile (Ricoeur, 1994, pp. 184-189). Bernstein (2003, p.197) also describes the relationship between the transmitter (educator) and acquirer (student) as unequal. The next section will explore how the work Ricoeur and Bernstein have some common interests.

### **Common themes in the work of Basil Bernstein and Paul Ricoeur**

It was possible that some of the ideas of Basil Bernstein and Paul Ricoeur could be used together in order to analyse the narratives of post-Access students as they experienced their degrees in art and design. Even though Bernstein and Ricoeur came from different theoretical traditions there were certain common interests within their corpora.

[A]lthough they have very different intellectual antecedents – Bernstein as a sociologist of pedagogics and Ricoeur as an hermeneutical phenomenologist – they are both concerned with a way of developing personal identity among social forces or, to put another way, of developing a social theory of personal identity. (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.253)

There were common concerns with narrative; although the terminology that was used to explain concepts may have been different. Basil Bernstein's work

explored how codes function as regulation and how this could mean that some people were restricted in their ability to articulate stories. Paul Ricoeur firstly saw narrative as dealing with time and constructing a coherent sense of self (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.253). Dickinson and Erben (1995, p.254) argued that, “Both are concerned with the social circumstances that constrain individuals in the production of narratives.”

For Bernstein, his dominant theme was a sociology of regulation, whereas Ricoeur was interested in the social meaning of time, “Both are linked by the agreement that to be denied the experience of social life through narratives is to be rendered powerless not only at a formal level but in the act of interpretation itself,” (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.254). As has been previously argued narration also played a role in phronesis so if one could not narrate well it may not be possible to make good decisions and judgements. Also, methodologically, those incapable of self-narration could not be fully studied.

Narrative was important within this thesis because of its relationship to action. The relationships between practical wisdom, action and narrative were significant as seen together they could provide a lens with which to analyse the experiences of post-Access students and the actions of their teachers and peer groups. They also formed a rationale for using personal testimonies of mature students as a means of acting well in the future. That was students and educators could draw upon the stories of others to inform their own decision making around education, learning and teaching.

MacIntyre (in Dickinson and Erben in 1995, p.254) claimed that the notion of 'an' action was a potentially misleading abstraction and that an action was one moment within a possible or actual history or in a numbers of histories. Thus 'narrative action' was firstly important because it organised the actions and events it tells into a meaningful whole. It placed meaning in a social framework of regular expectations and obligations; also into a moral and cosmic framework (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.255).

The second point was that narrative was also constantly organising the human experience of temporality. "Narratively, for Ricoeur, is a solution to what he terms the *aporias* – the doubts, uncertainty, and flux – of time. Narrative – public and private, real and fictional – continuously links the past with the present and the future thus rendering the present meaningful in terms of what went before and what will (probably) come after." (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.255)

The stories from the post-Access students were all concerned with time: making up for lost time; imagining future goals and aspirations and reflecting on past actions and decisions.

It would be appropriate to say that fictional narratives (comedy, tragedy, romance) employed the same structures that 'real-life' stories do. 'In fact, the two kinds of narratives mutually influence one another as life and art imitate one another.' (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p. 256). Interestingly Murray (1989) has shown how life-stories can be presented within narrative genres such as romance and comedy.



It was important to point out that narrative accounts did not simply reflect judgement, action and experience, but were mediated by contrary and competing narratives. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.181) warned against making student narratives or life-histories fit fictional narrative conventions and structures. However, literary narratives did allow people to imagine, or think about possible consequences of their actions and judgments by reading fictions and other people's accounts (Nussbaum, 1990; Skilleas, 2006).

Narrative is expressed through language and it was of interest to Bernstein (1971) how people are positioned in society by their acquisition of language and how this leads to their access or otherwise to power. Dickenson and Erben (1995, p.257) claimed that narrative was impossible except through language. This view could be contested; can silent film, for example, be understood without words? They claimed that strip cartoons, paintings, stain glass windows needed to be supported by words in order to tell the story.

As a visual artist I would argue that a language is not just made up of words, there is a visual language and a cinematic language. Images can still constitute a narrative. The interpretive possibilities for visual narratives may be more open and varied than those made more explicit through the spoken or written word, but they are still narratives. This was encapsulated by Paul Klee's definition of drawing as 'taking a line for a walk'. However, for the purposes of seeing how Ricoeur and Bernstein's ideas operated within this thesis, a focus on spoken language was useful.

Although Bernstein's theoretical work was very abstract and generalised; his field-research was more contextualised within particular educational institutions and social groupings. Bernstein (1971) asked middle and working-class children to tell the story of what was presented to them pictorially. The middle-class children made the meaning of the narrative explicit thus the hearer could understand the story without the picture being present.

The working-class children's stories were more implicit and therefore needed the pictures to understand them. This can be understood not as being deficient linguistically but of the classes having different narrative conventions. It must be remembered that he showed that within certain contexts middle-class children used restricted accounts. Also, by analysing narratives within the playground context, he demonstrated a demand for a social solidarity within the group which prohibited an expression of personal feeling.

Bernstein was concerned with the fluidity of the biographical as it intersects with the fluidity of the social. This is also echoed in Ricoeur's work *Oneself as another*, "The individual to be an individual must be part of a social relation," (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p. 259). The social relation was regulated through pedagogic communication; those forms of communication that involved the transmission and acquisition of language.

These pedagogic discourses, these communicative settings, are essentially the imagining moments during which that which is learned (instrumentally and/or expressively) is experienced through a continual process of interpersonal recontextualising. (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p. 260).

Bernstein tended to be concerned with words like *discourse* rather than *narrative* and in particular the word *code* was significant. He has used the concept of code from his earliest to his most recent works, to mean acts (normally hidden) that promoted regulation; acts which he has analysed to reveal the regulatory processes that control people's thoughts, decisions and actions. Codes were then the acts of cultural transmission by which society was sustained. In Bernstein's thinking, codes also inhibited or encouraged certain types of personal expression and presentation – hence 'restricted' and 'elaborated' - and thereby set limits to individual development of distinctive set of values and identities.

For the social, moral and cosmic framework that situates the events of a narrative into a culturally meaningful entity, Bernstein uses the overarching concept of the code. Codes whether linguistic, whether regulating the performance of social roles or regulating conduct, or whether mediating learning are culturally accepted frameworks of meaning that govern the responses of individuals in the gamut of social situations of daily life (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.260).

The code had then a particular relevance to phronesis or practical wisdom which guided people's judgements, actions and conduct. In order to understand one's own and other's actions it was necessary to also be aware of how actions were regulated. For Bernstein it was important to analyse codes in those forms of narratives that were associated with power (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.261). An understanding of how power operated was important when making practical and shrewd decisions.

A person's narrative journey through a day will encounter, create and utilize many forms of coding activities –

restricted/elaborated, positional, strong/weak framings, visible/invisible pedagogies and so on. (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.260).

The way regulative activities were internalised was through the rehearsals of their narratives – by example, by practice and by recounting; however codes did not produce full narratives.

Complex societies are arranged so that frustrated narratives will be common place. However, it is the degree of frustration that is important and almost always needless to say it is those with the least power and cultural capital that are most negatively affected. (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.261).

So Bernstein demonstrated the cultural modes of transmission and Ricoeur the moral aspects of narration.

For Ricoeur the social imaginary was made up of the collection of stories, histories and narratives that construct our understanding of social reality and existence (Ricoeur, 1994, p.77). He considered that there were many levels of narrative working everyday on the local and the national level. It was at the everyday level that our narrative competence was developed (or through horizontal discourse as Bernstein (1999) would have described it (Broadhead, 2014, p.44). It was through narrative competence that we fully understood our own actions and sufferings.

Time was experienced by persons at both the naturalistic and reflective level (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.262). This resonated with Bernstein's (2003, p.209) idea of time within an invisible pedagogy, where it could be understood

both economically and symbolically. Time was experienced through narrative. Dickinson and Erben (1995, p.262) claimed that, “These narratives place on existence – past, present, future – a cohering feature constituting the reasons for thoughts and actions.”

Thus a student’s ability to learn through an invisible pedagogy could be seen as dependent on how they narrated past and present actions within a particular timeframe. The experience of being was the experience of time (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.264). Recounting narrative to ourselves and others was a way of making life coherent, so narrating one’s own actions within an educational context could be a way of making learning coherent and meaningful.

Although it was difficult to understand what action is; it was possible to interpret action by perceiving it through a network which could be described as the *semantics of action* (Ricoeur, 1991, p.28). This was about how action(s) could be represented by narrative, in that our actions became recognised as moments in plots “les intrigues” of stories known to us, (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.263).

‘The meaning of human lives for Ricoeur is apprehended by an engagement with the plots through which they are live. The benefit of this lack of completeness, this approximation, is that the narrative is interpreted by the mechanism of its own epistemological foundations – and as such prevents the fetishizing of both the social context and the individual. (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.263).

Due to the fact that narrative was a language that has temporality as its referent it could never be complete. But this meant that it was through this medium that

the aporias of existence, as well as its harmonies, could be explored. Erben (1998, p.12) described the role of imagination as part of the interpretation of incomplete narrative where lost opportunities, lost time and regret could also be understood.

Events were analysed by making them into narratives so that it, “creates something new, in precisely the same way that human agents by their actions fashion distinctive forms of historical life out of the world they inherit as their past” (White, 1992, p.150). Narratives had meaning because human actions produced meaning; it created continuity but also separated the past and future from reflection and prefiguration. The convergence of narrative with phronesis was important to re-establish because it facilitated the process where past experience informs future actions.

One of the consequences for socially oppressed groups and individuals who had reduced narrative possibilities was that they were unable to promote innovation (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.265). Bernstein made the point that people who were isolated or excluded from each other within particular social groups had fewer opportunities for the development of either repertoire or reservoir of strategies for success. This was particularly true within educational groups where those who were positioned as ‘other’ or on the margins of a cohort did not have equal access to the horizontal discourses of the classroom or art and design studio, and this could impact on their potential for risk-taking and creativity (Broadhead, 2014, p.51). Both Ricoeur and Bernstein are concerned with the social context that restrained the production of narratives and thus innovation. Narratives offered representations and imaginings of

possible change, if these were of a restricted repertoire then they could be foreshortened or unrealistically speculative.

This is because possibilities of change need to be contextualised by universalistic rather than particularistic, self-confirming codes [Bernstein] or, obversely, because when change when divorced from realistic narratives of innovation it becomes merely fanciful and devoid of meaning [Ricoeur]. (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.265).

The universal lost contact with the actual therefore the individual was unable to make good decisions. The importance of narrative to the practice of phronesis was once again made apparent by reading the work of Bernstein and Ricoeur together. Furthermore, democratic education, when it was understood to be about innovation or bringing newness into the world (Biesta, 2006, p.139), was also dependant on people being able to narrate their own experience so that others could take up their ideas.

This was because the narratives of experience wait to have their transformative features exploited by the narratives of expectancy. If action was based exclusively on previous experiences then innovation and creativity would be difficult to achieve, indeed there might be a conservatism leading to actions which are staid and nullifying. It was simply not good enough to rehearse the past without building on tradition in order to transform it (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, pp.265-266). The role of imagination and foresight was necessary in terms of having sympathy with other people through their narratives (Erben, 1998, pp.10-11). However it was also important, to imagine possible futures and possible consequences of our actions, so we could conceive of acting better than we did in the past to transform our futures.

It could be seen that Bernstein and Ricoeur, although they came from different academic perspectives shared similar interests in narrative as a means of innovation and change. They both saw the importance of narrative in analysing one's own actions and life stories. In particular their work explored the social significance of narrative and how through discourse and the recounting of narrative on a day-to-day basis could expand narrative competence. This could be developed into both an actual and symbolic understanding of time. Both were concerned with the social circumstances that constrained individuals in the interpretation and production of narratives (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.265). There was a democratic pedagogic value in enabling students to be confident in challenging those narratives or discourses that acted as forms of symbolic violence by producing narratives of agency and change.

The ways in which people were socially excluded could be seen to have a detrimental effect on their ability to narrate their experiences and create meaning which in turn could lead to a diminished ability to change and innovate. By going further, an inability to narrate one's own experience or learn from another's narrative effectively could impact on the development of someone's practical wisdom.

Within the work of Ricoeur and Bernstein was a concern with the universal and the particular. Erben (1998, p.14) said that socio-historical reality could be captured through a complex and singular account about one person's experience. As has already been argued phronesis is also about encapsulating the general and the universal.



## Phronesis and education

Both Bernstein and Ricoeur valued education as a means of sustaining and promoting those relationships between people which enlarged the temporal and influential components in the narratives of students and that the practice of education in itself comprises of virtuous acts that find their own expression (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.266). This next section explores the ways in which the development phronesis is a significant concept when considering education. For example it has been used as a concept to argue for teacher/practitioner professional autonomy within the institutional setting. Education is also seen as important as a means of training people to act according to good and appropriate values. This section also points out that a good education should allow students to practice their own particular forms of practical wisdom and this is not dissimilar to Biesta's (2010) notion of subjectification.

Education could be seen as a moral practice rather than a technological one because educators do not employ any means to get a result, but deliberate on the quality and value of the education they seek to produce (Biesta, 2010, p.36-37). Curren (2010) described how notions of phronesis were relevant to teacher autonomy and professionalism in the face of increased managerialism and instrumentalism.

However he qualified this by claiming that this was based on a misunderstanding of practical wisdom. He claimed that too much emphasis had been placed on the contingent and singular qualities of phronesis to the extent

that it has been perceived to not be concerned with generalities. Without paying enough attention to generalities there was a danger of being blinded to those aspects of experience that could be re-contextualised in new situations, where practitioners were in danger of forever 'reinventing the wheel'.

Curren (2010) reiterated that phronesis was concerned with generalities and particulars. The role of education within achieving practical wisdom was also significant. The phronimos as has been described needed to be of good character and virtue in order to firstly perceive situations well and then to act with the appropriate motivations. Curren (2010) pointed out that Aristotle claimed that good character was gained through early childhood training in acting with virtue. Gert Biesta has asked what a good education is. He began with saying that education was a composite concept. A good education had three functions or aims: qualification which was the acquisition of skills, knowledge and dispositions that qualified a person to do something specifically or generally; socialisation where students through education became part of socio-cultural, political and moral 'orders' and finally subjectification where people could be autonomous from existing orders (Biesta, 2010, p.8). Biesta said that the three dimensions of education were not entirely separate as engaging with qualifications could also influence socialisation and subjectification.

The element of phronesis which depended on early training, that is how people act according to appropriate virtue and passion (Nussbaum, 2001, p.306) could be seen to correspond to the notions of socialisation and subjectification combined. This was where 'newcomers' became part of a moral and social

order either explicitly by educational institutions concerned with cultural and religious reproduction or implicitly through the 'hidden curriculum' (Biesta, 2010, p.20). However, people could also stand outside of existing orders and this needed to be so in order for change and innovation to exist.

Subjectification was an educational aim where people were not only socialised into communities but could at the same time be critical and think for themselves. It was about being both open to newcomers 'coming into presence' and being unique in that they did not simply slot into but were different to existing orders (Biesta, 2010, p.81). Biesta (2010, pp. 91) called for a pedagogy of interruption where students encounter otherness and difference that would 'interrupt' and trouble their 'normal' ways, so students would begin to test their assumptions about the way things are.

This was not a blueprint for generating newness and uniqueness, but a means of opening up a space for a potential uniqueness to appear. A pedagogy of interruption resonated with Ricoeur's notion that critical phronesis is inherently innovative when acting for the 'other' (Ricoeur, 1994, p.269). Phronesis drew partly on experience, which cannot be gained through education alone; however, it could be argued that people of practical wisdom could develop from an education that valued uniqueness and newness because the phronimos should be open to innovative solutions and the surprise that comes with living a good life (Nussbaum, 2001, p.305).

So phronesis as a moral activity for educators was important and is revisited in the methodology chapter; however education could also be where students

were prepared for a future life of action based on practical wisdom through the aims of socialisation and subjectification. Not everyone who received a good education would necessarily practice phronesis but they might be more predisposed to do so following their experience of a good education.

This chapter has briefly defined phronesis (practical wisdom or prudence) by considering the ideas of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas along with those of the contemporary ethicist Nussbaum. Phronesis has been described as a complex intellectual virtue that is mediated by other virtues such as justice or courage. The motivation to act well is driven by the appropriate passions like fear, love or desire but these passions must be tempered to fit the context. Judging and acting well is seen as inherent to living a good life. Characteristics of the phronimos include perception, knowledge, memory, openness, shrewdness, foresight, caution and circumspection which enable a person of practical wisdom to draw upon past experiences, general knowledge and the experiences of others in order to judge the best course of action in a particular and unique situation or problem.

The relationship between poiesis and phronesis was also explored using the ideas of Nussbaum and Ricoeur. Literature or biography as a form of poiesis was seen as a means of representing models of phronesis to readers who could identify and sympathise with characters within the narratives, (Erben, 1998). Life stories in particular were seen as relevant as a means of sharing experiences which the phronimos could potentially utilise when making good judgments. However, Ricoeur said that phronesis was also a poetic activity because in order to deliberate and act well a person must first be able to narrate

well, that was to describe past actions and imagine the consequences of future actions within a narrative unity. He also said when acting well for the interests of others, the phronimos must be open to innovation and originality, aspects which could be aligned with a notion of the avant-garde. There were also speculations about how mature students wished to become artists/designers in order to live a good life rather than just to make objects, suggesting that happiness is in being a creative person rather than in the objects that are produced through technical and poetic endeavours. This could be aligned to the ideas of William Morris who advocated the crafts as a way for working men and women to have a better quality of life where making was good in itself. In Art and Labour (1884) Morris said:

.... by art, I do not mean only pictures and sculptures, nor only these and architecture, that is beautiful building beautifully ornamented; these are only a portion of art, which comprises, as I understand the word a great deal more; beauty produced by the labour of man both mental and bodily, the expression of the interest man takes in the life of man upon the earth with all its surroundings, in other words the human pleasures of life is what I mean by art. (Morris, 1884 in McAlister, 1984)

Within the context of this thesis Morris's words can be understood to mean that for artists, designers and craftspeople (and perhaps for everyone) making and creating were entwined with living a good life.

Narrative was seen as a way for representing the shadow of phronesis (Wall, 2005, p.313) and it was argued that any disadvantage in being able to narrate well could impede the development of a person's practical wisdom. The ideas of Basil Bernstein and Paul Ricoeur were seen to have some common interests; these being a concern with the social aspects of narrative and language within

everyday life encounters. There was also a common interest in the symbolic meaning of time. It could be seen that by using the ideas of these two theorists, the generalist concepts of class, pedagogy and power could be connected to the more particular and contingent aspects of a person's experience.

Finally it was argued that education was a moral activity rather than a technological one and this idea has supported notions of educators' professionalism. However, education also had implications for students as potential persons of practical wisdom through early their socialisation into pre-existing moral orders. But it was through subjectification where students were encouraged to think outside 'normal' constructs so they could potentially add newness to the world where the conditions for living, acting and judging well in the future could be found.

## Chapter five: Democratic Education and Phronesis

The theoretical lens with which the experiences of post-Access students have been examined has come from two sources. Firstly the democratic education proposed by Bernstein (2000) and secondly, phronesis, first described by Aristotle and later developed by Ricoeur (1994). This chapter aims to show how these two concepts can work together so that educators and students practicing democratic education can also consider its moral dimension.

Bernstein's theories could be criticised for presenting the disadvantage that is reproduced within educational systems as being inevitable; where the middle-classes were always advantaged by current pedagogic codes and devices. His work could be defined as structuralist and as such could be seen as presenting social processes as ahistorical and static (Thompson, 1978, pp. 299-300).

However, it could be argued that towards the end of his career Bernstein became more explicit about what he felt a good education should be. He talked about a democratic education where students would have pedagogic rights (enhancement, inclusion and participation). Within these rights it was possible to see that students had the potential to change their education and also there would be scope for creativity and innovation to be realised by those who were marginalised by educational processes; in the other words the pedagogised other. This was because he called for confident students who were included in the organisation of their education to be able to participate politically to instigate change. If a student experienced a democratic education did this necessarily mean that they would have the agency to meet not only their own potential but

also improve education and ultimately society for other people? Coffield and Williamson (2011) have argued that a democratic education would be of little value if the society outside the institution remained undemocratic, indeed the educational system would be providing a veneer or façade of democracy. Bernstein (1970 in Rubinstein and Stoneman, 1972, p.116) himself said that education on its own could not compensate for society because it was the power relations outside the institution that constructed the organisation, distribution and evaluation of knowledge. Wiliam (2011, p.21) has argued that, through assessment for learning, education could compensate for society by increasing the achievement of all learners. However, this did not address bias, prejudice and issues of cultural capital which were more subtle barriers to living a fulfilled life than the lack of recognised academic achievement. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2015) reported that, “Less able, better-off kids are 35% more likely to become high earners than bright poor kids.” It went on to say that middle-class parents used their social and cultural capital to help their children gain employment, creating a ‘glass floor’ in the labour market. A student could receive a democratic education as defined by Bernstein (2000); they might be confident and critically adept; they might be included in education systems; they might also take part in the democratic processes set up to listen to the opinions of students; but this did not necessarily mean they would act well for themselves and other for people. Nor did it mean they would be treated justly in the fields where these democratic rights were not practiced. A democratic education could still benefit those who have privilege in the wider society.



Phronesis or practical wisdom could be a means of ascribing a moral dimension to those pedagogic rights experienced by students. Democratic education might facilitate a student acting with practical wisdom, but this might not be necessarily so. In other words students could draw upon their previous experiences gained through living a life to deliberate well for themselves, families and friends. Phronesis could also drive innovation and creativity through taking into account the needs of the ‘other’; it is inherently fluid and dynamic rather than static or fixed (Wall, 2005, p.325; Ricoeur, 1994, p.269). I designed *Diagram 1* to show how phronesis and democratic education could work together whilst acknowledging that this was not necessarily inevitable.

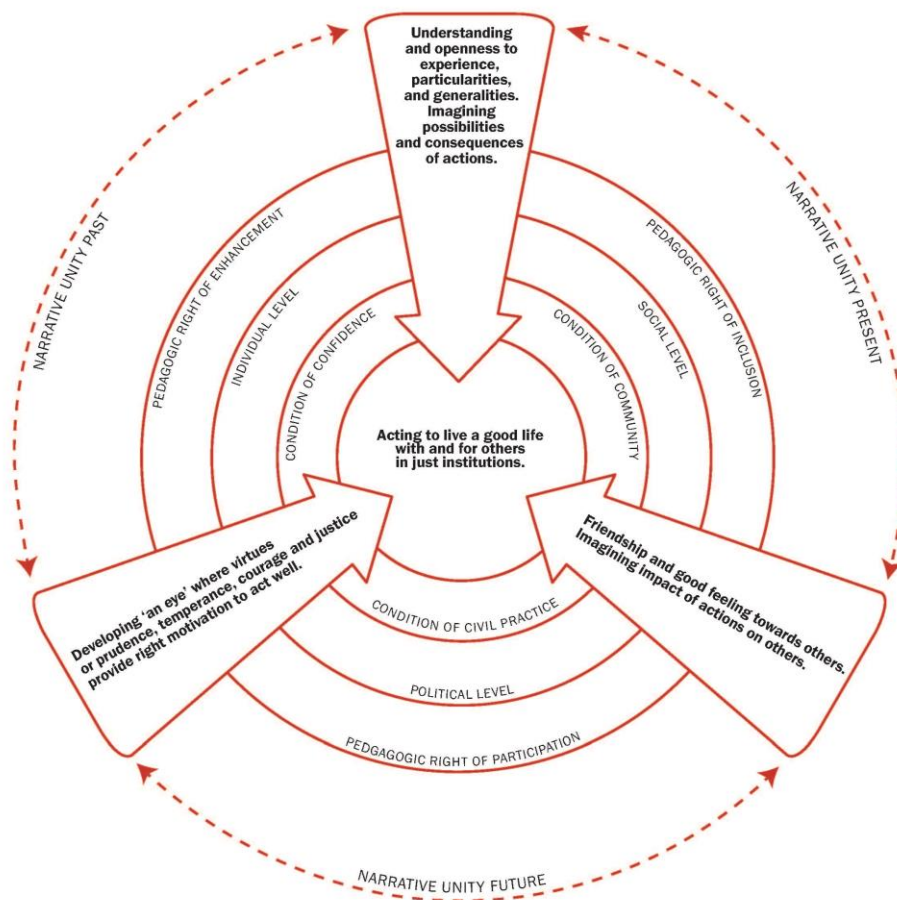


Diagram 1: The interrelationships between democratic education and phronesis

The concentric circles represented the pedagogic right; its associated condition and the level upon which it acted. Phronesis was represented as an arrow as it was the intellectual virtue of deliberation which guided the actions coming out of a democratic education. Within the centre of the diagram the overall aim of democratic education guided by phronesis was shown to be that of living a good life with and for others within just institutions. If subjects enjoyed a democratic education but did not consider the needs of other people nor seek to improve institutions (not just those of education) then the experience remained an incomplete project, a façade of democracy.

### **Individual enhancement and phronesis**

Individuals should feel confident in exploring the tension points between their past and possible futures; Bernstein (2000) saw this as enhancement. Students should be able to develop their knowledge and skills whilst pushing the boundaries of what it is possible in order to achieve; they become open to newness. In other words educational institutions should not only ensure students can meet their perceived potential but should also encourage them to supersede it; to be innovative and creative.

Part of enhancement should also be about 'developing an eye' that was being able to recognise a situation where practical wisdom is needed. At the same time thinking phronetically about the past, present and possible future could help students to consider how their educational experiences contribute to a better future. They could reflect upon their past and current actions with a view to acting well in the future. The drawing together of general and particular

aspects of education within a coherent temporal framework enabled students to rehearse, recount, examine and take stock in order to help them plan for achieving their personal aspirations.

The importance of virtue in not only doing the right thing but also by the right means and for the right reasons was explained by Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 12, p.188). In order to become confident students needed to act with courage in facing new situations. At the same time they needed to temper their own fears so they could see a situation clearly. Students also needed to make prudent decisions so they succeeded in attaining the right goals which would eventually lead to improved confidence. Thus individual enhancement meant students were able to employ phronesis and at the same time the practice of practical wisdom could promote self-assurance and self-reliance.

### **Inclusion and phronesis**

A democratic education should be inclusive, socially, intellectually, and culturally. However Bernstein (2000) also insisted that this did not mean people were assimilated into a homogeneous whole. Students should be able to maintain their autonomy and difference. Deliberation on whether or not one should align oneself with a particular a community could depend on identification of shared values and goals. Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 11, p. 186) talked about how acting with practical wisdom was based on a good or fellow-feeling towards others and this could also be seen as an important aspect of inclusion. Within an educational context for example,

students and teachers have empathy for others whether they are similar or different to themselves. Ricoeur (1994) would extend this idea of good feeling towards others as a mutual responsibility, where an individual to be an individual must be part of a social relation. For Aristotle too, living good life entailed acting well for and with others; friendship can be seen as an important aspect of this. Including others and being responsible for people who were not always like ourselves entailed thinking with practical wisdom, whether one was a student, a teacher or a manager. Imagination played a role in that subjects could imagine the impact of their actions on the lives of other people. The risks associated with being open to newness and difference might be experienced as fearful but at the same time as an opportunity for creativity and innovation in our conduct.

## **Political action and phronesis**

In a democratic education students needed to be active participants in the reordering, maintaining or transforming of their education. Through enhancement and inclusion students could feel confident in their own wisdom and agency. Thus their education was something they co-constructed rather than that which they passively received and took no responsibility for. For Aristotle politics could be seen as the highest form of phronesis or at the very least a compliment to political science (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Chapter 2, pp. 26-27). Ricoeur (1994, p.180) concurred with this by seeing the aim of phronesis being the ethical intention of living 'the good life with and for others in just institutions.' Students and staff needed to work creatively together

to ensure a democratic education for everyone, but this needed to be something which could be responsive to a changing, diverse staff and student population and an uncertain wider social context.

Thus the ideals of a democratic education as prescribed by Bernstein (2000) appeared to be inexplicably connected to staff and students being able to think and act with practical wisdom. Bernstein's work revealed through symbolic violence; horizontal and vertical discourses; pedagogic devices; and regulative codes that some students who were not from white middle-class families were disadvantaged within formal education; not receiving a democratic education. It could be argued that the practical wisdom that some older students had gained through their life experiences could help them overcome some of the barriers they face in education; so they became confident, included and politically active. However, some students did not seem to have acquired practical wisdom and in spite of having life experiences, they encountered more and more barriers to their educational achievement. Conversely, a democratic education could facilitate and celebrate the practice of practical wisdom by staff and students within in a just institution.

The outer circle of the diagram encompasses the whole process signifying how important narrative was to both democratic education and practical wisdom. Dickinson and Erben (1995, p.253) have argued that Bernstein and Ricoeur have common concerns around the social circumstances that restrict individuals in the production of narratives. As narrative was an important aspect of phronesis, in that it enabled past experiences and imagined futures to be considered coherently so that informed deliberations could be made, it could be

inferred that individuals who cannot narrate their own experiences and aspirations fully were disadvantaged when exercising their practical wisdom (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p.262). This must be considered carefully, as Bernstein in his early work did not claim that middle-class children were more skilful at telling stories than working-class children but that they did it differently, creating universalistic or particularistic meanings through elaborate or restricted codes. (Bernstein in Rubinstein and Stoneman, 1972, p.113). Understanding and drawing together both the universal with the particular was an important part of phronesis and this came with time and experience and this would be the same for people from all social groups.

This chapter has sought to show how a democratic education and phronesis potentially could enable students from all social backgrounds to live a good life with and for others in just institutions with the qualification that people needed to also enjoy these rights in their wider social spheres. It also aimed to show how students could become agents of action within education rather than passive receivers of knowledge that had been constructed by those in power. Within this framework innovation and change is made possible due to people thinking of the needs of others, challenging a deterministic and structural understanding of social relations within education.

## **Chapter six: Methodology**

This chapter will describe the research methodology employed in this thesis. It will describe the methods employed and explain why they are appropriate. It will consider the research methods employed in relation to three key ideas: practitioner research; students as the experts in education and narrative as a means of capturing experience. The ethical framework in which the research was carried out will also be discussed.

### **The teacher/researcher point of view**

Stenhouse (1975) drew attention to the importance of teachers carrying out their own research. This, he argued would lead to teachers' understanding the wider contexts of their own practice which in turn would lead to improvement in educational practices and the student experiences. James and Biesta (2007, p.148) claimed that if the tutor's professionalism and experience was supported major improvements in FE would follow. They called for more space to be created for tutor autonomy and collaboration.

The same authors cited characteristics of tutor's practice such as imagination and creativity and innovation that needed to be supported and valued. They emphasised the need for tutors to work in expansive environments that let them step out of the immediate work place and engage in critical thinking, one example being research activity or links with HE courses and activities.

Unwin (2004 pp.5-6) has also discussed the importance of learning in work-based environments (including educational ones). Her model proposed that in an expansive learning culture there would be encouragement for workers to participate in different communities of practice where job and team boundaries could be crossed. Planned time off-the-job for reflection and deeper learning beyond immediate job requirements would be facilitated. Workers were given discretion to make judgements and contribute to decision-making. Workforce development could be aligned with both organisational and individual goals. Employees had dual identity: worker and learner. Worker expertise was widely distributed by acknowledging the multi-dimensional nature of expertise. The manager's role in an expansive learning culture was to encourage learning.

James and Biesta (2007, p.149) went on to argue that excellent pedagogy practised by tutors was sometimes different to that defined by national standards. They pointed out that good teaching was seen by those who understood a tutor's approach and professional judgement that was sensitive to a particular learning culture. The motivation for the research on the experiences of post-Access students was partly because I had taught and managed an Access programme in art and design within an FE college. The long term goal of carrying out research was to improve pedagogical practices in the studio, the institution and perhaps the wider educational policy contexts so that students would have a better educational experience (Elliot, 2009, in Calucci-Gray, et al., 2013, p.130).

Action research has often been associated with teacher/practitioner research, where experiments, interventions, strategies are reflected upon in the studio or



classroom leading to new actions that aimed to improve some aspect of the student experience (Stenhouse, 1975, Kemmis, 2006, Elliott, 2009). However, within this project the teacher focus was not directly on activities within the classroom but what happened to the students after they left the *Access to HE* course and went on to study their degrees.

The impact of an Access course on a student's future learning could be analysed at many points in time, during a session, after a module and at the end of the course. Often the long term impact of the course after the student has left was difficult to measure by the teacher. Biesta (2010) has commented that sometimes phenomena that were easy to measure appeared to be valued and actually we should endeavour to measure what was important and useful even if this was more difficult to do. Sometimes a student might provide feedback through some informal comments to the tutor through a chance meeting, but this was not systematic nor usually made public and therefore not valued.

This research project evaluated the impact of the Access course well after the students had left whilst they were studying their art and design degrees.

Therefore the improvement of educational practice might not be as immediate as an approach based on traditional action research due to this being a longitudinal study carried out over three years. Stenhouse, (1975, p134) commented on the value of studying taped lessons and groups of students longitudinally to the teacher/researcher; suggesting that teacher-research could vary temporally.

## **Students as the expert witnesses of educational processes**

The students who were the participants in this study studied on an Access to HE course within a specialist art and design college. The students' experiences during their degrees in art and design were partly informed by their past education and also the ways in which their new degree courses responded to them. The future aspirations of these students would also be recorded through this research project. Brookfield (1995, p92) stated that educational research should start with the students themselves and that teachers should try to see the educational experience through their eyes.

Coffield (2008, pp. 36-37) has argued that students should be engaged in conversations about education not just answering but asking questions about their experiences. By using the post-Access students as participants in this project it was their point of view about their participation in HE that would be represented. According to Bowl (2001) 'non-traditional' students had often been written about from the point of view from the institution and as a result of this, problems were seen to reside with the students rather than with the inflexibility of some HE institutions. In particular she noted how factors like institutional racism were not addressed because deficits were seen to lie in the students themselves (Bowl, 2001, p143). This project considered the students as being positioned by the practices and systems of the institution (and wider educational policy) as being the pedagogised other (Hatton, 2012; Atkinson, 2002).

As part of the case studies the narratives aimed to capture the voices of Access students for reasons of social justice and democracy (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011,

p.xxxvi). The study gave the Access students an opportunity to express their opinions that potentially could inform the institutions' policies and practices. Voices - a term expressed as a plural was used in anticipation that the participants would have diverse and sometimes contradictory attitudes towards their experience of HE (Thomson in Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011, p.22) over time there might be different voices from the same student (Hudson, 2009, p.26). As has previously been discussed Bernstein in his introduction emphasised the need for democracy as being about people having a stake in society by the act of giving and receiving something (Bernstein, 2000, p.xx).

Thus it could be seen that students should be included as part of research that sought to deliberate over educational action so they could be active in contributing to meaningful change. It could be argued that to do this students need to be able to act, and Bernstein (2000) has pointed out that confidence is a necessary condition for people feeling they could act. Confidence could be seen as a state of being where people could carry out actions without fear of failure; a belief in their abilities and a belief that they have something worthy to say. Broadhead and Garland (2012) pointed out that post-Access students can easily lose confidence on their degrees: for example they may not take part fully in studio critiques feeling less able than the other degree students.

It was important that the students could participate in this research. Bernstein's (2000, p.xx) definition of democracy in terms of the three pedagogic rights (confidence, inclusion, participation) resonated with the participatory aspects of this research where Access students could choose to contribute to the research that may change local and wider educational practices. As has already been

discussed Biesta (2010) has explored what a good education is. He began with saying that education is a composite concept.

A good education has three functions: qualification, socialisation subjectification (Biesta, 2010, p.8). Biesta pointed out that the three dimensions of education are not entirely separate as engaging with qualifications can also influence socialisation and subjectification. This research considered how the students were qualified to practice art and design; how they were socialised into the communities of HE and also the art and design communities and how they were able to deliberate and act critically and independently.

### **The need for longitudinal studies about non-traditional students in HE**

Field et al. (2009, p.227) contended that there needed to be more longitudinal studies about mature students' experiences in life-long learning. Hudson (2009, p.26) pointed out that there had been few longitudinal studies conducted on widening participation in HE. One example she gave was a study by Crozier et al. (2008) where middle-class and working-class students' experiences were studied over two years during their degrees. Many studies have captured mature student narratives at one fixed point in time (Stone and O'Shea, 2012; Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, 2006; Bowl, 2001). In this study I sought to capture a series of stories throughout a three to four year period. This would consider the past as experience and memory and the future as imagined possibilities (Simms, 2003, p.103; Linde, 1997, p.283; Dickinson and Eben, 1995, p.255).

This study aimed to find out how student experiences changed over time. It was concerned with how the students displayed who they were to the researcher, and how their participation in the higher education institutions influenced their identities as artists, craftspeople or designers. So the student's narrative accounts through the spoken word were used as the basis of this research. The narratives were collected through an interview approach where it was recognised that both interviewer and interviewee were constantly engaging and collaborating in analysis and making meaning as the interview progresses (Rapley 2004: 26-7). These narratives did in fact become the researcher's narrative.

Tannen (in Tedlock and Mannheim, 1995, p.202) pointed out that tape recorded, transcribed conversational narratives that appeared to be reported speech, in fact, were constructed dialogue, and she went on to demonstrate how constructed dialogue turned stories into drama. The dialogical relationship between the researcher and the participants was an important aspect of this work. Along with the previously stated link between research and improvement of practice this was another way as in which the embodied presence of the teacher/researcher was acknowledged as part of the methodology. Butler-Kisber (2010, p.65) drew attention to the implied importance of reflexivity in that the researcher must always consider what they bring to the narrative process.

The study was about the possible transformation of mature student's experiences over time, thus one way of analysing them was to listen to how the participants narrate their own experiences of HE education. Narrative functioned to give temporal unity and connectedness to an individual's account

of themselves, (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006 p.138). Local narratives were often connected to larger stories or meta-narratives/cultural plot lines (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006, p.139; Plummer, 1995 p.167).

Narrative inquiry was the primary method with which the post-Access students' experiences were documented and interpreted and represented in this study, where personal narratives within an experience-centred tradition were produced in several interviews over three to four years (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013, p.49).

## **Discussion of narrative inquiry as an approach**

Chase (2005 in Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.63) argued that narrative inquiry came from the Chicago school in the 1920s and 1930s, where sociological practice became interested in life stories. It was then developed further by the American Feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s as a way of telling stories of people who had been silenced by history (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.63). According to Butler-Kisber there were four reasons that narrative inquiry became important. Firstly, the dissatisfaction with the scientific method that was controlled, objective and decontextualized as opposed to narrative which is subjective, relational, contextual and constitutive; an approach which was seen as more appropriate when considering the complexity of human interactions.

Secondly, there was a move away from collecting data as numbers towards collecting data as words which could capture the nuances of human experience unlike numerical information. Thirdly, there was a move towards from the

general to the particular. Finally, the realisation came about that the premise that there was 'one way of knowing' was suspect, in particular because of the bias of the researchers as they were coming from particular raced, classed and gendered points of view (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.64).

Narrative inquiry could be seen as partly deriving from ideas of reflection and reflexion. When considering the context of the post-traditional order of late-modern societies 'the self becomes a reflexive project' (Giddens, 1991, pp.32). Self-identity was thus no longer seen as something that was given but appeared as something, "that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (Giddens, 1991, p.52). Narrative was a means of re-creating the self through telling and re-telling one's life story. Giddens (1991, p.33) argued that, "the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change." This was seen as a means of dealing with life's uncertainties and anxieties over social change and fragmentation.

His views have contributed to the idea that late-modern societies required a new kind of lifelong learning that was concerned with the ongoing reflexive construction of the self in response to ongoing uncertainty and risk (Biesta & Kang 2008). Despite Giddens's use of the phrase 'life politics' his particular understanding of the self has been contested within the context of lifelong learning. Biesta and Kang (2008) have said that, "the individualistic nature of such learning processes suggests that his depiction of the reflexive project of the self is rather a-political, where there is a focus on 'self-actualisation' and 'self-realisation.'" Giddens claimed that the individual's first responsibility was to

themselves (Giddens, 1991). This ran contrary to the ideas of inclusion and political participation that were central to Bernstein's democratic education. It also had some tensions with Ricoeur's (1994) assertion that to be an individual one must also be in a relationship with another.

Chase (in Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.65) described the range of approaches that used narrative. Chase (2005) stated there were five approaches. Firstly, he described narrative psychologists who examined how stories influenced people's lives. Secondly, he explained how narrative sociologists who were interested in the role of narrative as a means of constructing the self. Thirdly, those sociologists who use interviewing to see how people construct meaning from language use narrative. Fourthly, Chase (2005 in Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.65) identified anthropologists who constructed ethnographic accounts and narratives to explain their engagement with individuals or small groups. Fifthly, there were auto-ethnographers who used narrative dialogue and memory to study their own experiences. Butler-Kisber (2010, p.65) added another strand of professional researchers who used narrative. This was the work done in education by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who used narrative to explore experience. They drew upon Dewey's (1933) pragmatics and the belief that experience/thought came from continuous interaction with the environment.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.18) said that for them education was a form of experience and that narrative was the best way of representing and understanding it. They went onto say that narrative was both the phenomenon and method of the social sciences. Characteristics of narrative inquiry were that it was a way of understanding experience. It was also a collaboration between



researcher and participants over time and in social interaction with the milieu. The terms of narrative inquiry were based on Dewey's concept of situation, continuity and interaction. They were personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity) and place (situation). This meant that a three dimensional narrative inquiry space was constructed (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.50). This approach was appropriate when finding out about the experiences of students through three years of their course within a particular institutional context.

### **Narrative as part of the case study approach**

Stenhouse (1984, in Ruddock and Hopkins, 1985, pp. 52-55) described the case study approach as being different to research conducted using samples from which generalisations were made. This was because case studies depended on descriptive verisimilitude or close interpretation of complex relationships between subjects and contexts. Stenhouse emphasised how judgements made about cases led to 'prudence' which he related to practical wisdom and discretion. As has been previously discussed prudence, was one of the cardinal virtues which was along with justice, fortitude and temperance, originally discussed by Plato in his Socratic dialogue, *The Republic* and by Aristotle in book six of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle explained that prudence was the wisdom that enabled people to make good decisions.

An interrogation of prudence based on the scholastic tradition which sought to harmonise the classical philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero with Christianity can be found in part two of *Summa Theological* by Thomas Aquinas.

This has been discussed in *Chapter Four* in relation to the practical wisdom practiced by post-Access students, but it also was relevant to the rationale underpinning narrative inquiry and educational case studies.

Korthagan et al. (2001, p.30) drew upon the work of Plato and Aristotle in order to distinguish between two types of knowledge, episteme and phronesis.

Episteme was defined as abstract, objective knowledge which was derived by generalising about many situations. Phronesis was the practical wisdom derived from the perception of a circumstance. Korthagan et al. (2001, p.31) argued that, "It is the eye that one develops for a typical case, based on the perception of particulars." They pointed out that a person could only gain practical wisdom with much experience of perceiving, assessing situations, choosing courses of action and evaluating the consequences of action (Korthagen et al., 2001, p.27). Practical wisdom could not be gained through learning universal laws or conceptual principles; however, these may act as a guide to inform deliberations about future actions.

Elliott and Norris (2012, p.148) described Stenhouse's critique of the dualism between theory and practice and his conceptualisation of practitioner research as corresponding to Aristotle's phronesis which was about considering the best course of action in a particular situation for the common good. An accumulation of cases can inform phronesis or practical wisdom. He went on to say that studying one's case as one lives it could be based on the case study tradition where, "the objectives of education and the study of education can be fused in action," (Stenhouse, in Ruddock and Hopkins, 1984, p.55).

The use of case studies when looking at the experiences of post-Access students was appropriate because as has been argued previously they were a very diverse group of people, often being in a minority within a studio/classroom of younger students. Their age was mediated by their class, gender and race. So research that led to abstract generalisations based on samples would not suitably account for minority non-traditional students' experiences. It could even be detrimental to the student experience where research carried out on large populations of traditional students provides outcomes that did not match the experiences of these non-traditional students. Biesta (2007) discussed at length how previous research findings needed to be used carefully with wisdom in an educational setting due to the diversity of context and student body.

The methodology for this study was based on the case study approach. Bassey (1999) also argued that this approach was very suitable for research in educational settings due to the complex nature of the context and interactions of people within the educational process. He stressed the importance of constructing a case study method that was underpinned by trustworthiness and respect of the person. The outcomes of case study research could be described as 'fuzzy' generalisations' in that rather than seeking to find an absolute truth or law, the research aimed to say this happened within this context and it could happen within another one. In other words, claims derived from case study research referred to what was possible, likely or unlikely (Bassey, 1999, p.12). The constructing of a detailed and rich description of the context was important, (Bassey, 1999, p.88) as was providing a coherent and chronological narrative

account, (Bassey, 1999, p.33). Bassey's description of the case study worked in sympathy with Aristotle's concept of prudence:

Observe, too, prudence is something more than a knowledge of general principles. It must acquire familiarity with particulars also, for conduct deals with particular circumstances, and prudence is a matter of conduct. (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.180)

The conduct of the researcher within this study required that they were familiar with the particulars of each participant's case as well as general knowledge relating to the teaching of adults in art and design.

Bassey described case studies as: theory-seeking or theory-testing; story-telling and picture drawing; and evaluative, (Bassey, 1999 p12). The student's stories about their experiences in HE formed the basis of each case study.

## **Ethical statement**

The ethical guidelines published by the British Education Research Association (BERA) 2014, have been followed in relation to this project and the research carried out with students as participants. The students were over the age of 21 and were not vulnerable adults so could decide for themselves whether or not to opt in or opt out of the research process. The project design acknowledged the need for contributors to be informed about the aims and objectives of the project; the need for privacy and confidentiality and the need for people to be included and acknowledged for their work.

At first it was seen that there could be some tensions between the right to confidentiality and the right to be acknowledged, this was solved by discussion with the students about how their stories would be represented in various contexts. An introductory letter was sent to people who were told about the research interests of the project and asked if they wished to participate. It was made clear that this was an opt-in activity and there was no compulsion to take part and people were free to drop out at any time.

The participants were students undertaking their degrees in a specialist art college and local HEI so in the interests of privacy and confidentiality their identities were anonymised in the narrative accounts. They chose their own 'code' names at the first meeting of the project. This protected the institution, individual members of staff and participants.

As with any research method there were benefits and risks in using narrative inquiry with participants. Whilst the data gained could be rich, fluid, tentative, contingent, complex and reflexive, it also linked small stories to political and societal stories. However, the power relationships were unequal and fragile between researchers and participants (Ricoeur, 1994, pp. 184-189; Bernstein, 2003, p.197). Therefore the researcher needed to be mindful of their responsibility towards the participant's wellbeing, and although the students were at the start of the project deemed not to be vulnerable, there was always the possibility that unexpected events could mean that a student could become vulnerable during the research process.

In addition the students may at any point disclose sensitive material to the researcher which on reflection they would not want to be in the public arena. So in this case I was constantly reviewing the research from an ethical point of view and considering the consequences of my actions on the participants and other connected parties. The boundaries between the researcher and the participants needed to be carefully maintained so I did not abuse any privileged information I gained from the research process. Thus informed consent was a continuous concept. Indeed, I needed to think narratively and with prudence in order to act well as a researcher. Returning to Bassey (1999) it could be seen that an ethical approach to case study demands that it was integrated into the design of the research project and not seen as a process that was external to it. So mechanisms were designed to ensure that the findings of the project were verified by the participants. This was done by feedback to them individually, but also by having a particular exist strategy.

All the participants were invited to a celebratory lunch at the formal end of the project where they also took part in a focus group. Themes that came out of the narratives were discussed by the students and me. This acted as verification and it further explored some of the issues. The discussion was captured through some minutes where the students were still referred to by their 'code' names.

Each student then filled in a consent form so that I could use images of their art work at certain points in the thesis and dissemination presentations. Students were also asked if they wanted to stay in contact to be informed of further developments in the future. The data collected from the work was to be used for

the purposes of the stated project; any different application of the collected data would entail me getting additional consent.

## **Ongoing ethical dilemmas**

It could be argued that narrative inquiry was an inherently ethical and moral activity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Clandinin et al., 2009; Caine et al., 2013). Reflexivity was seen as essential for both the participants learning about themselves and the researchers' project to act ethically. Giddens wrote: 'In so far as it is dominated by the core perspectives of modernity, the project of the self remains one of control, guided only by morality of "authenticity"' (1991, p.225). Giddens showed the importance of being true to one's self through reflexive thought. The notion of authenticity was an important aspect of narrative inquiry; it needed to be balanced with other moral and ethical concerns.

There were considerable ethical considerations for social science and education scholars when using narrative inquiry to research into the experiences of other people (Nichols, 2016). These were divided into the procedural dimension (informed consent, assessment of risk, participant confidentiality) and the practical dimension (the day-to-day dilemmas which arose as and when the research was happening and was to some extent unpredictable) (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Examples of these ethical dilemmas could be: the telling of emotionally charged stories that affected the well-being of the participant and the researcher; the sharing information about a third party who had not agreed to be part of the study or the passing on of knowledge that could influence a

student's achievement. Another description of practical dimension could be relational ethics. This concept acknowledged the situational and contextual aspects of narrative inquiry where subtle and unpredictable moments could come up when conducting research. Such dilemmas required the researcher to ask oneself 'what should I do now?' rather than responding to a prescribed 'This is what you should do now' statement (Ellis, 2007; Nichols, 2016). Clandinin et al. (2009) stressed the need for relational ethics that were considered over time throughout the research and beyond, where careful attention needed to be given to the potential future impact of narratives on the lives of others. Nichols (2016) argued that practitioner research should be done 'in anguish' where internal questions about what the best way to proceed should be asked so that participants were protected and their stories were told to improve practice for others.

Narratives were co-constructed between at least two people within a particular context (Carter, 2008). The researcher was identified as having a privileged position within narrative inquiry in that they simple did not relay the stories of others but re-presented and interpreted them (Crocket, 2014). A commitment to academic integrity entailed a responsibility in telling the participants' story whilst acknowledging the positionality of the researcher. The approach taken in this thesis was to acknowledge that there was no one authentic story; all stories were mediated through the telling and retelling. Greenhalgh & Wengraf (2008, p.245) argued that,

Story telling is a communicative act, involving inter-subjectivity (i.e. an overlap in 2 people's individual understandings of something held in common) in story-eliciting research , the



intersubjective role of the researcher should be acknowledged and commented upon, usually as part of a more general statement of reflexivity.

The representation of other people's experiences was also a cause for ethical consideration (Caine et al., 2013). Carter (2008) argued that narrative researchers who deliberately set out to tell 'shock and awe' stories, that was choosing narratives for their dramatic affect rather than those which made us 'pause and think' were not presenting a balanced picture. Carter (2008) saw the function of narrative inquiry was to disseminate good and moral stories where practitioners had got it right as well as those which may be labelled as bad/horror stories. Carter (2008) talked about thinking reflexively about the researcher's position when eliciting, interpreting and re-telling stories. A reflexive awareness meant that the researcher could focus on being ethically and methodologically robust. The researcher's practitioner past /present was part of the positionality of the researcher and allowed them to see both the student's side and the tutor's side. Carter (2008) claimed it was the narrative inquirer's moral obligation to search for decisive moments and moralisation stories that confronted the audience positively and show them better ways of being with others (students or patients for example). This was similar to the points made by Clandinin et al. (2009) when they were carefully attending to those moments of tension when the participants' lives 'crashed into one another' or into the social narratives that surrounded them so that they could learn from them. The function of narrative inquiry was to discover new knowledge and meaning about experience rather than to tell an engaging story at the expense of others or to present stories which 'smoothly' confirm common sense beliefs. Caine et al. (2013) argued that by entering into a narrative relationship with the

participant they became the first responsibility. Importantly what was told by the participant should be accepted rather than the researcher taking an overly sceptical stance.

The relationship between participant and researcher in narrative inquiry created the data; researchers could not stand outside the research (Clandinin et al., 2009). Narrative inquiry was research but it is also the relationship between two people which made ethical questions of how to act well with others central to the inquiry (Caine et al., 2013). The tensions in this relationship needed to be acknowledged and seen as a source of ethical reflection (Clandinin et al., 2009; Caine et al., 2013). For example the associated dangers for both parties needed to be considered when telling narratives that ran counter to the dominant institutional ones that shaped the research context (Clandinin et al., 2009). Researchers should be mindful that their words could have an unsettling impact once they are shared with others (Caine et al., 2013).

Ethical considerations were central to the decision to tell the stories that were told in this study. The dignity of the participants was preserved and the long term impact of the stories was considered. I chose case studies and critical incidents that reflected both positive and not so positive experiences. Where participants had chosen to share sensitive material with me I used it respectfully and only if it was pertinent to the research that was being addressed. A thoughtful balance was struck between the ideals of authenticity and well-being. Even though I did not teach or assess my participants I had to be mindful not to use my privileged knowledge about them unfairly within the institutional context. I had to be constantly aware that I was in danger of harming the participant

indirectly, if I shared any information about the participants inappropriately (for example in staff meetings or at examination boards).

## **Description of research process**

Students who had completed an Access to HE course at a specialist art college and had graduated in June 2011, before they were due to start their degrees in art and design, were contacted by the course administrator through their college emails to ask if they wanted to take part in a longitudinal study about the experience of post-Access students during their degrees. Those who responded were sent a letter (see appendix 1) explaining about the project. The aim was to meet and listen to the students' stories at six points during the three years of their degrees. This approach needed a degree of flexibility to it because of the changing modes of participation and life events that the students experienced, so some students who for example needed more than three years to complete their degree were seen more times.

## **The participants**

This was a small scale-study in terms of the number of people taking part. This was a qualitative study that sought to collect data that was text-based rather than numerical. There were at least forty eight interviews undertaken over a period of three years where students were revisited to see how their experiences changed through time.

Nine participants responded. Of the nine one student dropped out of her course in millinery after the first interview. She could not be contacted and after various attempts, it was assumed that she no longer wished her contribution to be part of the study. Of the remaining sample; five participants had chosen to study at the art college full-time, these were two women and three men. Their ages ranged from late 20s to mid-50s. Three students had chosen to study at a local Higher Education Institute (HEI) these were all women in their late 40s to early 50s. Two had decided to study part-time and one full-time. One of the part-time students was the only none-white student in the sample.

All students had achieved the *Access to HE* diploma at level three, but the students also had various other qualifications, such as A levels, Vocational/professional qualifications and one student had a postgraduate qualification. This previous engagement with education was found by Bowl (2001, p154) where she said that the educational experiences of non-traditional students were not based on non-engagement but frustrated participation. Two students had joined the *Access to HE* course with no qualifications at all. The students were studying degrees in textiles, fine art, interdisciplinary art and design and visual communications. All the men were studying on the interdisciplinary art and design course.

### **The art and design Access to HE course from which the participants progressed**

The study was carried out on *Access to HE* students who had gained their qualification from a specialist art college. They all had aspirations to gain a higher qualification in art and design. I had come from a background of teaching

and managing *Access to HE* art and design course within a specialist art college. The aims of the course were to work with mature students; to enable them to achieve a level three qualification in art and design and to prepare a portfolio of art and design work that they could use to help them progress onto an appropriate art and design degree.

The *Access to HE* diploma was a diagnostic course in that the student undertook many aspects of art and design in order to discover which area they wished to focus upon when they went on to study later in higher education. The students studied subjects such as visual studies, contextual studies, studio practice and workshops such as photography, digital media, ceramics, printmaking and textiles. The model of delivery was based on a period of time where students experimented with a wide range of skills, media and materials. There was then a second phase where students specialised in an area that would usually enable them to continue that study in their HE programme.

There were two *Access to HE* courses in the scope of this study one was offered in the day time and took one year; the other was offered in the evenings and took two years to complete

The *Access to HE* course was aimed at mature students who had not been in conventional education for at least a year. What constituted a mature student had become more vague; students could be as young as nineteen but may have found the pace of an Access course more suitable to their needs than a Pre-BA Foundation course or A levels, which were seen as the more traditional route to degrees (Hudson, 2009, p25). However, there was usually considerable

variety in the ages of students ranging from ages twenty to seventy upwards; often they had a diverse set of experiences and backgrounds. The aim of the *Access to HE* course was to get students onto a degree or foundation degree of their choice in the art and design sector. Not only was this done by accreditation at level three but also by the preparation of a portfolio of work which was used at an interview as part of the application process.

The students were also supported in preparing their HE application through advice in portfolio preparation and interview practice. Both Access courses were successful in enabling people to progress onto the higher education course of their choice. Progression was not just restricted to local Higher Education Institutions and universities, but includes many types of art and design courses all over the country. About ten to eighteen students progressed internally each year. Students who were successful in achieving a place generally took that place up in the following September.

Many post-Access students progressed within the same institution in order to study their chosen degrees. This was because they might not be free to move to universities in different geographic locations due to having work and family responsibilities. However, the College did not provide opportunities to study part-time so for some students a local HEI that had part-time degree courses was an attractive option. Within this study six students stayed with the same college where they studied their *Access to HE* course and three others chose the HEI; two because they wanted to study part-time.

## The Institutions

The post-Access students progressed either internally to study their degree at a specialist college of art, referred to as the 'College' in this account, or they went to a HEI in another local city.

Over the last 160 years, the College of Art has contributed significantly to the development of art education in Britain; having pioneered new ways to teach and to structure qualifications. From the 1950s to the 1970s, there was a reappraisal of art education, largely based on ideas developed at the College, where a *Basic Design Course* was set up based on the ideas from the Bauhaus (Broadhead, 2008). In 1960, the College had begun to offer courses which encouraged an open-ended, creative and flexible approach, leading to a new system of art education nationwide.

In recent times, the College had two main campuses. It ran a range of specialist and general art and design FE Courses at one site that was mostly self-contained and separate from the other site, where a range of specialist degree and foundation degrees were offered. The majority of staff worked solely on one site or another, perhaps meeting all together a couple of times a year during staff development weeks. Appendix 3 is a copy of the College's mission statement. It revealed through a series of words the institution's projected values and perception of what art and design education should be about.

The second institution referred to as the HEI was in a local city and was not a subject specialist institution, but offered a range of provision. The HEI did offer part-time degrees which the College did not do. Appendix 4 is an anonymised version of their mission statement. The HEI had been delivering quality education and training for over 180 years. They had about 23,000 learners globally each year, so were much larger than the College, being the largest provider of higher education outside of the university sector in England. As a result this institution offered prospective students choice in the types of courses they could study.

### **The place where narratives were told**

Participating students were contacted using their college email and asked if they would like to meet and discuss their progress during the course. As students were very busy the researcher had to be very flexible as to where these meetings took place. The students often were managing family and work commitments as well as their education, so places were selected that made the meetings more viable. The range of meeting places were: seminar rooms; studio spaces; library tutorial rooms; the local art gallery; the local coffee shop. The criteria for choosing an interview space were that it was secure and private. Mostly the spaces allowed recordings to be made but occasionally the acoustics of the space meant one or two recordings were muffled. Once a student had become accustomed to a particular meeting place it seemed to suit them to maintain consistency through meeting in the same place.



## **Collection and analysis of data**

At six points during the three years the students took part with open semi-structured interviews. The conversations were taped digitally but on a couple of occasions only written notes were taken due to technical failure. The taped conversations were transcribed and saved in protected files under the participants' code names. Themes within the data were identified in relation to the past, present and future. These were then interpreted in relation to the ideas of Bernstein's ideas about democratic education; horizontal and vertical discourses; visible and invisible pedagogies and Aristotle's phronesis.

The wider local and national educational context, as well other literature about Access and mature students, was also considered where appropriate. Tedder and Biesta (in Field et al., 2009, p.78) talked about the differences between narrative and story; they said that narratives had a particular plot or plots that were constructed by the narrator. These plots could be fixed or may have a degree of flexibility in them.

Later on they talked about narrative intensity where most learning could come from narratives that were detailed, long, deep and evaluative and reflexive, (Tedder and Biesta in Field et al., 2009, p.79). The narrator in this case was the researcher who was re-presenting the stories of others into the research narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, pp. 181-182) drew attention to the risks of narrative inquiry that if the constructed text was overly personal there

were the risks of narcissism and solipsism. Also the Hollywood plot could influence the writing where narratives always come out well in the end; they were neither conditional nor tentative. Spence (1986 in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.181) called this narrative smoothing. There was a need to proceed with wakefulness that was to be aware of the dangers of imposing prescribed meanings rather than offering alternative interpretations of the narratives.

Of the eight participants who took part in the study only four were selected to have their accounts turned into case studies. They were chosen as they represented the range of diverse people who undertake an *Access to HE* course and then choose to study a degree in art and design. Thus, Chad was chosen as she was a white woman and mother with extensive caring responsibilities who aspired to be a textiles designer; Bob was a white working-class man in his 50s who dreamed of studying at Art school; Eliza was a middle-aged, well-educated black woman who loved learning for its own sake, but also saw a possible future of being in a more creative career and finally Jane a middle-class woman in her 50s who wanted to take part in education for her own sense of achievement now that her children were grown up and flourishing. Bernstein's (1958, pp.160-161) definition of class was used to describe students; the middle-classes were defined by educational achievement and employment in skilled or non-manual work alongside a particular attitude towards the achievement of long-term goals.

By using these criteria, Eliza could be described as middle-class because she had achieved educationally and also had a professional career. Bob had worked within industry and had had a history of frustrated educational participation,

beginning with not being able to go to art school. This was because gaining stable work was seen as more important by him and his family when he had to make the choice of what to do after he left school.

Bob's history and outlook on life seemed to indicate he was working-class. Chad and Jane's class identity appeared to be more ambivalent as they had not enjoyed the education's success of Eliza. Jane dropped out of her A levels, feeling she was not an academic person, after a short time in employment she had got married and had children. Chad had done an A level but this was only to fill in time whilst she could join the Navy. Both women had an attitude that they could meet their long term goals through hard work and resilience which would suggest a more middle-class-background.

## **Conclusion to methodology chapter**

This chapter has provided a contextual rationale for the research methods employed by the research project. It has explained my position as researcher within the project and how the outcomes of the research could have an impact on practices within courses that deal with mature students. It has explained the role of students as research participants and why for democratic reasons it was important to look at the educational process from the students' point of view.

The main approaches used to collect and interpret data were based on narrative inquiry and these stories were then represented as case studies. The ethical treatment of everyone involved with the process has also been discussed. Finally a description of the research process has been provided.

The complexities inherent in narrative inquiry and the case study approach

could be represented by seeing the researcher as partly an insider as I work within art and design higher education and have also been an Access to HE teacher. However, I have not been an *Access to HE* student so do not share this experience with the participants.

## **Chapter seven: Chad's story about her various practices of prudence as an undergraduate in surface pattern**

This chapter analyses the narratives constructed by and between Chad, a post-Access student, and myself, an educational researcher that represent some of her experiences during her degree. It draws upon some of the notions concerned with phronesis that were explored earlier in chapter four. Aristotle claimed that only a person of experience could acquire and practice practical wisdom and a young person was unlikely to have extensive life experience (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapter 8, p.182). However, did this necessarily mean that an older person always thought about a situation clearly, did they always learn from experience? Or, do mature adults sometimes continue to make poor decisions and to act in ways that continue their sufferings because they do not exercise their potential to act with prudence, (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.177)? This discussion recounts some of elements of Chad's story that I have noticed link to phronesis or at some points to the absence of it.

This was an account of the experiences of Chad, a post-Access student. During her time on a *BA Surface Pattern* degree course she studied both her FE and HE courses in the same college. Surface pattern designers are concerned with designing for surfaces and embellishments which could include wallpapers, fabrics, flooring, and packaging; in contemporary design pattern could also be applied to a variety of products like ceramics, mobile phones and even the façades of buildings. Often a surface pattern designer would employ research skills to discover historical styles and technical processes or to identify current

trends that could inform their practice. Other skills such a designer could draw upon were drawing, dyeing, screen printing, block printing, digital print and computer-aided design (CAD).

Although the story was written chronologically as the events were told to me, Chad's narrative recounted experiences from her past and jumped forward to an imagined future, so sometimes the sense of linear time in Chad's story broke down. The story had been re-represented by me through the process of transcription then the critical points in her narrative were selected. These critical points were those that seemed significant to me in relation to how Chad navigated through the challenges of her educational experiences.

Chad was a mature student in her early 40s. She was studying on a very prestigious course (with a yearly intake of 70plus students). She was the first and only post-Access student to achieve a place in five years. In order to be accepted onto the course Chad had to successfully pass an interview with her portfolio; one of the functions of the *Access to HE* course was to prepare her for this interview (Broadhead and Garland, 2013). She previously had had a varied career in the Navy and as a flight attendant on a commercial airline. Through her work she had had an opportunity to visit many cities and she has gained a knowledge and appreciation of modernist design and architecture especially of the post-war period which had inspired her to want to become a designer herself, this style could be seen in her Access work (Image 3 and Image 4) which helped her get a place on the degree:



Image 3 and 4: Chad's textile work made on *Access to HE* Course

### **The curriculum structure for the BA (Hons) Surface Pattern**

The first year (level four) was normally one of experimentation with materials and processes in order to develop various skills that would inform the work done at levels five and six. Year two (level five) was where students developed their critical skills as well beginning to aim their work at a particular client group or audience. The final year (level six) involved more substantial and self-directed bodies of work that would form the basis of the students' end of year show, that was an opportunity to showcase their achievements to potential employers or clients.

The two modules which Chad made direct reference to in her accounts were ones which ran throughout the three years and levels. Personal Professional Planning (PPP) was where students demonstrated their employability through producing business plans, curriculum vitae, professional profiles, work placement reports and market/trend analysis. Context of Practice (COP) was where the theory of design was synthesised with practice, this led to a

dissertation and related body of work done at level six. Alongside the curriculum students were expected to take part in industry competitions and trade shows.

There were aspects of *techne* (craft skills) *poiesis* (aesthetics and innovation) and *praxis* (practice informed by theory) in the curriculum (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 4, p.175-176; Skilleas, 2006, p.267).

The learning took part in a large semi open-plan studio where each student had a desk and wall space (see Image 5). As has been argued in chapter one, the open plan space supported an invisible pedagogy (Bernstein, 2003, p.203), where the responsibility for learning mostly laid with the student who was encouraged to be creative and spontaneous.

## **Year One – Belonging and success, first meeting**

Chad and I met in a seminar room in order to discuss her first term on the course. She explained that she had previously achieved one A level in art while she was waiting to join the Navy when she was 18 years old in 1989. She had begun her two year Access course in 2007. After the first year she had taken some time off to have her first child a little girl. In 2010 she had returned to finish her Access course and then had started her surface pattern degree course in 2011. The first meeting was taken up with a narrative that expressed her relief that she was proving herself to be on the right degree course, although she still had slight anxieties for the future. She informed me that at the end of the first term she had just received her marks for the first brief and was the only student to get a first.



*C: And I put that down to Access! To me it was just like an extension of what Sue and Adam [Access to HE art and design tutors] did. What they expected of you has set the benchmark. So because it's the same college I suppose the brief is exactly laid out the same and what they expected; the variety and the amount of preparation work was exactly the same. So if it hadn't been for Access then I would probably... because I could draw anyway, that was established a long time ago when I did my A levels. But it's about being able to produce evidence of your work and building up things and I think – Access - that's what we did and that seems like an extension almost. But it does help that it's a subject I really, really enjoy. And the pressure is off, almost, because the whole two years of Access was preparing me – I was desperately trying to get on to this course and now I'm certain it pre-occupies you a little bit. It sounds like a race to get onto that course. Now the pressures off now and it's a lot less stressful, it's really enjoyable and now I can relax and I don't mean not work hard. I mean concentrate on the subject you enjoy. It just takes the pressure off. It's almost like a hobby, what I do at home, if you know what I mean? That's the way I see it now. My interest is actually ... and I have been allowed to do my interests now without having to - I don't know - litter the kitchen table. (Chad, November 2011)*

Due to the Access course being so intense and Chad having previously studied this three days a week, the first term of her degree had seemed to be less pressured as she was now in college full-time and she tried managing all the work within college hours. Here Chad made a link between her success and her previous experience where she had developed an eye for perceiving the problems of managing her learning alongside her home life (Korthagen et al., 2001, p.27). Aristotle described a person of practical wisdom as having the power of seeing what was good for themselves and others, (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.177). Furthermore, that this capacity was developed through experience gained by people who had a certain amount of maturity, (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 11, p.187).

At this point in Chad's story she seemed to have a certain amount of confidence in her drawing and designing ability. The motivation of the passions, for example, desire, was mentioned here along with the *love* of the subject. Doing the design practice in a formal educational setting meant it did not impinge on the home life. Aiming to have clear boundaries between professional and home life seemed to be a means of the relieving stress associated with balancing academic and domestic activities. Emotions that were in balance with rational thought drove the need to act well in order to gain a good life for Chad and her family (Nussbaum, 2001, p.308). Chad at this point seemed to want to temper her desire to be a designer with the need for order at home.

*C: The subject we are doing now is digital. There are students who are on my course who are phenomenal on computers. I am absolutely atrocious on the computer, it's not that I am unwilling to learn, it's just it's something you need to be doing all the time to get the practice up and you know that it's one of those things I am going to have to make time to have a go on it. I bought a package at home on my computer so I'm able to start practising with that. There are a lot more people who are stronger in different ways and their time will come - if you know what I mean -and mine - this won't be my strength and I'm not bothered by that. I'm quite realistic about that I'm just glad. The reason why I'm happy is that I have set the standard for myself because I have just justified being on the course. I have managed to justify being on the course in this term and that's what it's about. (Chad, November 2011)*

Chad repeated the word 'justify' and this gave it a particular emphasis; that she had to prove herself; as if her belonging on the course was initially in doubt.

Chad had perceived a possible problem in her design education, the first requirement of acting with prudence was to be able to 'size up' a situation and

to recognise a need for appropriate action, Aquinas called this *Solertia*, or quick-wittedness (Nussbaum, 2001, p.300; Ricoeur, 1994).

She imagined that the young people on the course were skilful using computer aided design. Chad constantly compared and evaluated herself in relation to others. Holdsworth and Morgan (2007, p.414) described how significant others such as family or 'generalised others' which could be friends or members of a community or even 'people in general' were used as a means of self-evaluation. This was because 'others' could be used as constructions of what was the 'norm'.

She was motivated by a sense of *fear* of not being good enough in comparison to other students in the area of computer skills and had *recognised* the need to practice. She was trying to *moderate* this fear by acknowledging her strengths in other areas that indicated she belonged on the course. It was interesting that she felt she had to justify this that she had made the right decision and she was good enough to take up a place on this popular course. She decided to act and bought a computer programme so she could practice the skills that she saw as being necessary in digital design.

Chad's education was mostly, although not exclusively, through an invisible pedagogy which was about submerging one's self within a studio culture. Bernstein (2003, p.209) pointed out that this was an expensive way to learn, as it drew upon the resources of time, and space. Learning a craft or developing Aristotle's notion of *techne* also took time and resources. Sennett (2008) has claimed that to master a craft involves an investment of 10000 hours of practice.

So it could be seen that Chad's lack of confidence in her computer skills would involve additional time, equipment and space to rectify, even if she did not aim to master these skills absolutely.

At this stage in Chad's narrative it appeared that she was acting with phronesis, as she was planning for the time and space to develop her IT skills. It could be questioned as to whether her fears were founded in reality or in her perceptions; were all younger students skilful and would this actually be a barrier to her own creative development? What seemed to be an indicator of practical wisdom was Chad's ability to look at the bigger picture, to be more circumspect (Aquinas *Summa Theological* part 2, question 48) and consider good marks as an indicator of her other strengths as a means to temper her fear of not being good enough.

Temperance was a significant virtue when acting prudently so that emotions did not become inappropriate and out of balance with rational thought (Nussbaum, 2001, p.308). Chad did seem to act in a sensible way in buying a package she could practice with at home, however this seemed to run contrary to her initial wish to keep her studies and domestic life separate. Chad's story seemed to illustrate the sacrifices and accommodations some students continuously need to make in order to study and manage a young family and perhaps the true costs and rewards of education were being underestimated, by the HEI and perhaps some of the teaching staff.

## Second meeting at the end of year one

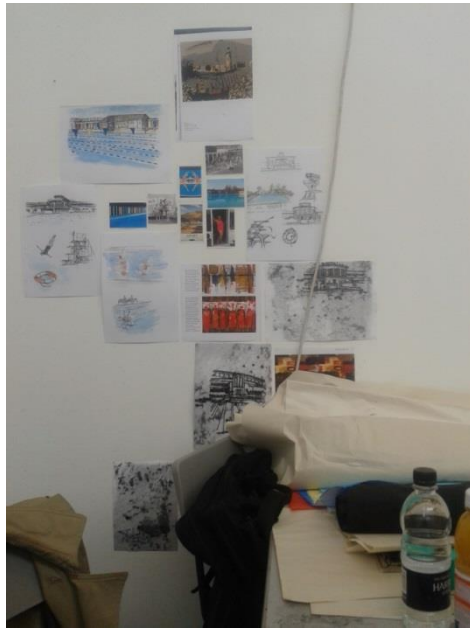


Image 5: Chad's work space in the studio

During the second meeting of the year, Chad and I met in the design studio in her work space where sketches inspired by the 1950s were on the wall which was part of her workspace, she looked very tired and was a little wider around her middle:

*C: At the start of the year I was full of energy and really, really looking forward to starting and actually it didn't disappoint. This first term was excellent - I enjoyed it in fact, I enjoyed the whole year - but obviously I'm expecting! I found this last term physically and mentally tiring because I've got a lot on at home with my daughter - my husband works away - there's a lot of domestic ... you know - when I get home - don't have time to work. So I found it quite difficult thinking about college while I'm at home so this particular last project - it's not my finest - or because I've not been able to have some time just to think about what I'm going to do the pressure's on to produce some work before the end of term. I'm six months pregnant now so at my age I'm feeling it - really feeling it - but the whole year has been ... I've really enjoyed it - absolutely enjoyed it. It's been fantastic. (Chad, June 2012)*

It remained unclear as to whether the decision to become pregnant was planned or unexpected. Nussbaum (2001, p.305) has said that the phronimos should be open to life's surprises and be open and flexible in changing a course of action in order to act well in response to an unexpected situation. The question was now how would Chad deal with motherhood, pregnancy and a demanding course. Would she be motivated enough to remain at the College or would this be an extra burden that meant her dream to be a textile design was untenable? She told me she intended to take a year out, but was already planning how to turn this unexpected break in her studies into an opportunity to improve her own skills and abilities:

*S: So do you intend to keep working on your art practice even though you're not here for this next year?*

*C: Two things I need to do is - I won't be producing any work but I will be collecting visual imagery on projects- future projects - getting some sketch ideas together to basically give myself more, more of a springboard for the second year so I've got more. I don't have to think too much about the projects because I'll have a . . . I'd like to have a collection of work for me to start the print-making projects. That's my first thing the second one is to learn Illustrator and Photoshop.*

*S: Have you got those packages?*

*C: Yeah I've got those packages, I just haven't had the time to . . . I'll try and do as much as I can when the baby comes along it's going to be difficult that's why I'm taking a year off because they just take over - babies take over. I said this between Access year one and two that you could do it and you can't do it. I have to take the time out- it's just not possible - you're not ready to - you can't work and juggle that at the same time.*

*S: No.*

*C: Absolutely impossible; you're deprived of sleep and you can't think. You just shelve it - you don't think about work - so hopefully by the time it happens - the baby - when I come back the baby will be one year old and I'll be running again with hopefully a bit more energy this time.*

*S: Will you have help with the baby?*

*C: No, I don't have help, the baby goes to pre-school, sorry to nursery anyway, my daughter goes to nursery in fact when I come back she'll be in school.*

*S: Gosh you've done well with no help then, haven't you?*

*C: Well my parents live in Hull, my father is at sea and Mum doesn't drive so she doesn't come very often. I have to go over there and my mother-in-law lives up near the airport, she works you see, it's quite difficult. (Sam and Chad, June 2012)*

Chad dealt with this new occurrence by employing her practical wisdom. She planned two activities that would be achievable in the time constraints she had, one activity she enjoyed was undertaking visual research and another activity (digital design) which she recognised was important to later success on the course. She was able to deal with the consequences of pregnancy whilst still keeping her eye on her long term goal. Here her desire to be a textile designer and her desire to be a mother were woven together in order to ultimately live a good life.

During Chad's deliberations she used her past experiences of caring for a new baby to limit her expectations of what she could achieve during the year away from college. She had gained an insight into her physical capabilities and knew it was prudent to take a year out even though she said later on she was afraid of starting again with a new group whom she did not know nor had not bonded

with. As Ricoeur (1994) has argued phronesis involved thinking narratively about a situation.

Gee (2004, p.75) supported this where he said narratives helped us to plan and prepare for future actions, by allowing us to test out or simulate the consequences of our decisions before we acted. Chad had thought through her future actions and this was done through recounting her past experiences of being pregnant on her *Access to HE* course as well as thinking about how to manage an extra child whilst using her time effectively; she had done this by constructing all these elements into a narrative unity (Simms, 2003, p.103).

*S: You don't have to start again at Year one?*

*C: You do in a way with new people, I'll start the second year with completely new group and they'll have established themselves as a group. So it'll be more difficult for me to fit into that year. But my classmates in this particular year will be in third year and be next door. It won't be so bad, my friends will be around so... (Sam and Chad, June 2012)*

Chad demonstrated foresight (*Providentia*) in how she imagined her return to education after a year at home; showing a concern for possibly feeling isolated. She recognised the importance of the social aspects of the studio culture. Indeed this first year had been about establishing that she belonged on the course both academically and socially. She now felt she belonged; Vallerand, (1997, p. 300) has defined a sense of belonging as being connected to the institution and feeling that one is accepted as part of the social milieu. Being included was also a significant prerequisite of a democratic education, (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxi). As the only mature or 'non-traditional' student in this cohort there was a danger of not feeling a subjective sense of belonging (Thomas, 2012), so



Chad had been successful not just academically but in establishing a body of friends.

She tried to moderate her fear of future isolation by seeing that she could position herself next to her old friends in the studio. Again Ricoeur (1994) would say that the ability to think narratively enabled Chad to weave the imagined future with the experienced past into a narrative unity, (Simms, 2003, p.103). Chad has been able to make friends during her first year and has recognised their importance in contributing to her successful new year. However, she did not seem to have confidence that as she had already made friends with younger students this year, she would be able to bond with a new body of students again in a year's time. And whilst she has seen herself as part of a group she still at the same time presented herself as different in that, as she was an older student, she did not have the mastery of the computer skills she imagined the other students had.

Chad has internalised the 'symbolic violence' described by Duckworth (2013) where people were categorised by being different to the majority, for example as being a mature student, and this made them feel lesser or inadequate. An imagined normative and generalised other (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2007) has been constructed again by Chad by which she could judge herself and find herself lacking.

## **Year two – Out of college but still in education, third meeting**

The third meeting with Chad was undertaken with both her and the new baby, Leon, in the middle of December 2012. Even though she had not been in college for the current academic year she still agreed to continue with the project.

Chad had taken a year out from her course and she had given birth to her baby who was now three months old. She came into college to catch up with her classmates in the canteen, but had slipped away to do an interview with me in a library tutorial room. She reflected back on the previous year's achievements, she had got a first across the board. She said she was particularly proud of her essay which had got her highest mark of 75%. Chad said she felt that theory was her weakest area, not because she did not know facts, but because she struggled to put her ideas on paper. It seemed that her own perceived lack of computer skills had not impacted on her grades.

*S: Good, so last time I saw you, you said you were going to spend loads of time sorting out files and everything, did you do that?*

*C: No, I have got them - they are continuous - they are not something that I've put on the side-line. The files are there but he has to go to nursery, as soon as we get Christmas over and done with I'm doing them on an evening as soon as he's going to nursery. He goes in June for the odd day, till he gets to full-time in September - then I'll get back on to PPP [Personal Professional Planning] and all the rest but I've got loads of stuff in the pipeline especially with my friends. Still I got lots of friends off this course that have just left and they're keeping me up to date with what's going on and what's needed for the next year, which is lovely and it gives me... I won't feel so bad about going back - I won't feel as rusty because I've already got a*

*couple of projects in mind for things like we have to do for the Priceless and Worthless competition, I've already got something in mind for that. You know, I kind of like getting my head round going back already. I have to do that though, otherwise I ... I can't leave it to the last minute, my files are all part of that, get them once Christmas cards are written. (Chad, December 2012)*

Chad was still planning and thinking about her education. She was planning the next few months in advance with a view to returning the next September. She wove her research with her domestic tasks, for example, the writing of Christmas cards. Her original wish to separate her design work from her home life had not been possible; in fact it was the combining of her design work with her home life that has enabled her to maintain her desire to eventually return to her degree studies.

It was interesting that Chad drew upon the experience of others in order to plan for her future projects. It was the stories her friends told her about their own experiences on the second year that allowed Chad to imagine what would be expected from her when she began her education again. By staying connected with her friends Chad continued her sense of belonging and they provided her with a vicarious learning experience. Her planning in the short term involved continued planning with her friends who had kept her in the loop about what was going on at college. The person of practical wisdom could draw upon the stories of others based on their actual experiences because they could empathise with people and could gain an insight into their motivations (Skilleas, 2006, p.268). It was an indication of how well she had established herself on the degree during the first year that her friends were so supportive.

In Chad's previous careers (Navy and commercial airways) she had been part of a team, working closely together in highly regulated situations, these past experiences may have given her good social skills. Inherent in her narrative was the importance of being well-prepared when she returned as she was not sure how she would manage her course and two young children. Chad continued to acknowledge how important her friends had been:

*C: They text me all the time. I was really busy at one point and I didn't ... I wasn't in touch with them for a couple of weeks and they were worried. They kept sending me a succession of text messages - all of them - Lorraine, Vicky, Ryan, Sophie, Eleanor - all of them. "What's the matter, are you alright?" So I missed them more than anything. I missed the class more than anything and I'm kind of apprehensive about going back because again I'm starting from scratch. (Chad December 2012)*

For Ricoeur, (1994, p.180) phronesis aimed at the ethical intention of, 'the good life with and for others in just institutions', where people of practical wisdom were of good character and were concerned with friendship, justice, courage moderation and generosity. It could be seen that the practices of Chad's friends had been enacted by these virtues in determining the correct course of action, which was to support her through her year out (Nussbaum, 2001, p.306).

Ricoeur (1994, pp. 184-189) explored the possibility of mutual friendship between self and other, the relationship was seen as fragile. However at this point in time even though Chad thought of herself as different to the 'younger students' they had a bond that had stood the test of separation. Her friends had taken time out of a competitive and busy course and had shared their experiences with her which was a generous and moral thing to do. It also could be seen as a democratic act where those on the margins were included

(Bernstein, 2000, p.xx). Chad began to reflect on her own abilities and she compared herself with her husband where he was represented as being organised where as she was not as focused in achieving her tasks. Again she was comparing herself unfavourably with another, this time a significant other.

*S: When you have a child is it impossible to do anything practical in your design practice?*

*C: If you were an organised person - no. If you're like me whose a bit away with the fairies half the time and I'm completely disorganised and easily distracted - it's a very creative thing -very distracted, very disorganised, stop/start jobs -so it's harder for people like me than it is for somebody who ... My husband is a project manager and everything, his value in life is time and that's how he plans everything in time. I'm the opposite so we always clash on that. (Sam and Chad, December 2012)*

At this point Chad was using the story she was telling about her education to take stock and re-evaluate her 'life-plan', in this she included her husband. She was thinking about the investment of time in her education, and including her Access course, she would have spent many years pursuing her dream to be a designer. Narratives were used not only to tell about the past and future, but through telling and re-telling they could change as people and circumstances change (Linde, 1997, p.283).

*C: Two years to go so, I'll have been here 7 years, so I've decided what want to do. I'm going to have to freelance and we're getting an area at home that I can work from. And then Jonathan, being a project manager, wants to do a separate business because he's a contract manager for industry - for businesses - so he wants to have a little project to do and I've asked him to help me - to use me as a project. So I do the work and he does the management of the business, so I think that's a good way to go. He's very - he knows exactly how the*

*businesses work, I don't. It's lucky that my husband does that, you know, he's going to be a real task master.*

*S: So you wouldn't consider designing for another company?*

*C: Yeah, probably I'd like to have lots of jobs on the go, definitely. I'm not saying freelance as such - setting my own little business up and just designing my stuff. I'm on about getting as much work in a possible. I won't be able...I originally wanted to be full-time employed but won't be able to do that, it's just not possible. (Sam and Chad, December 2012)*

Chad's goals had been modified due to changing circumstances and now she was thinking about how she wanted to use her husband's skills; to include him in her plans. There was a merging and weaving together of the domestic and the professional life throughout Chad's story. Perhaps the experience of looking after two small children at home had made her view her hopes and dreams differently. Phronesis – doing the right thing to achieve a good life for self and others required an open and circumspect attitude to a particular situation as well as a considerable degree of care and generosity.

#### **Fourth meeting in summer of second year**

The next meeting was in July 2013 and Chad would be beginning the second year in two months' time.

*C: Well since I last saw you, can't remember now, I've been generally doing the family business bit - lot of... My daughter starts school in September and my son has started nursery. So it's been a lot of getting used to the kids' school and organising that kind of basic thing and also sorting out childcare so I can come back in September because my son now has to go up to full-time nursery and though my daughter will be full-time at school it's less flexible for me because she finishes at half-past*

*three as opposed to when she was at nursery she used to finish at six. So to be able for me to finish college or even have extra time at the end of the session I've had to put her into breakfast club and evening junior club at nursery because I don't have that because my husband works late. I don't have that flexibility on hours so that financially the second year is going to be difficult. Been trying to work out the last few months - trying to work out the best situation me and my family - to get back to college that's what I've been doing really. (Chad, July 2013)*

The amount of pre-planning and juggling necessary with two young children that Chad had to do in order to continue her studies was astounding. She was able to consider all the aspects of her situation and imagine the financial implications for the family. She was also considering the best for others as well as herself.

*C: I haven't done any work sketch-wise. Research, have been writing notes down and thinking about what to get into when I go back. Friends have helped me a lot, the guys that have just left and they're going back to 3<sup>rd</sup> year they've been fantastic. They've been so encouraging and I see them all the time so they come to the house. It's nice to have that contact I know they're in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year now; because I've had to take a year out it's almost like starting from scratch yet again. So this is about the 3<sup>rd</sup> break I've had. So it's been like from what a normal person would take to do a degree in 3 years, it's taken me 7 or 8 years to finally get to the end of it. (Chad, July, 2013)*

Even though Chad felt she had not done much work she had actually done quite a lot and had managed to keep an eye on the long term goal of achieving her degree and becoming a designer. The importance of her friends seemed to be a significant contribution to her motivation to come back to study. Their continued support had meant that she had not become isolated from the studio culture. There was definitely a fear of losing this contact with her peer group because she would be in a different year, although physically they would still be in the same studio.

The notions of 'generalised others' were at the same time positive and negative. Firstly, 'others' in terms of Chad's friends had been key to Chad's continued engagement with the course. However a more abstract and generalised 'other' that represented normalcy was used to re-enforce Chad's difference. The way that Chad perceived herself not to be normal; that is different from other students; this perception was linked to time - she was taking longer to achieve her educational goals than 'other people'. Underpinning this was a belief in the notion that the pacing and sequencing of a curriculum should be standard or fixed and that those who did not complete work at a particular rate were somehow lacking (Bernstein, 1975, 2003).

Chad spent a lot of time planning for the future but also on 'taking stock' she calculated the amount time she has taken to get this point and it was this that may also have been a motivation to keep on going. The amount of investment Chad had already made (in terms of years) in her education meant it became more difficult for her to give up her goal as time went on. It was not surprising that she thought of herself as not normal when she was the only mature student in her cohort.

*C: I'm still not very, very not the greatest digital person on Photoshop. So for me, between now and September, is to practise. Probably Photoshop - because I want to use my original prints but I also want to play with scale and just change - bring it up a gear. I don't want my lino prints to seem traditional. To be a little bit mixed up and a little bit more modern and it's kind of like ... more of a focus. I found my first year I was busy worrying about my weaknesses. In my first year I concentrated on picking something that I was happy with, if you see what I mean? First year is all about experimentation and trying out different things but it's now time to start being more grown up about it and start thinking about where you want to go, if you see what I mean? In the future how my work is*



*produced and I think I want to take lino cutting and use that as my tool for design.* (Chad, July 2013)

Chad reflected on her first year and used that as a spring board for thinking about her future practice. Lino cut was a technique she had used on her Access course with some success. So she was returning to something familiar that she could have confidence in and this was in contrast to her fear about using digitally-aided design. She recognised the importance of using this technology and was open to its possibilities for developing her design practice. There was a pre-occupation in the narrative accounts with technology and more specifically with the IT technical skills she felt she did not have. She also had a plan to improve her skills, but was this a viable plan when she had other considerations such as a growing family?

### **Year three – One step behind, fifth interview**

In January 2014 after Chad had been back at college and had successfully engaged with year two of her course. Having now one baby, one pre-school child and a husband who had a demanding job meant that Chad had many things to consider as well as her education. I was impressed that she had returned to complete her degree. She still seemed to be fully committing to the course and at the same time demonstrated courage, tenacity and perseverance. However, her wrists were covered with bandages, which alarmed me a little. I found this was because life had thrown up another unforeseen circumstance:

*C: I need the time to practise but it takes a long time and I don't have the time. Hours to do that ... so because of this carpal tunnel I got over the Christmas period I'm not allowed to do a lot of practical. I've been advised not to do a lot of practical methods of designing so there's no lino-cutting, there's no screen printing or anything like that. I'm not allowed to do that now. So I have to fight the demons and have to do the CAD thing. It's almost like a weird fated thing that I've been given this injury. So like, it's slowed me down and I concentrate on only one area at a time instead of trying ... what is it? - 'Jack of all trades master of none.' So maybe that's the sign; maybe that's like you've got no motion in your hand you've got to do something else. So I've brought my computer in and it's almost like, like feel the fear and that kind of business ... (Chad, January 2014)*

The symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) are caused by compression (squashing) of the median nerve at the wrist which leads to a paralysis or numbing of the fingers. Pregnancy and manual labour are triggers for CTS (NHS Choices, 2014).

Unfortunately for Chad, she not only had been pregnant but also had been undertaking a highly demanding print technique that involved repetitive, strenuous cutting with a hand tool. This would have put pressure on the wrists. It now seemed that what had originally seemed like a well-reasoned strategy - to use lino-cutting as a tool for design - actually could have led to Chad hurting herself. The fragility of the body or the physical effects of pregnancy were not foreseen by Chad as this was the first time she had had CTS. Chad's story demonstrated the fluid nature of phronesis where a situation was constantly changing and the person of practical wisdom needed to be responsive to the unexpected. Although this was in one sense one of life's surprises it could also be seen that Chad may not have fully considered her physical constraints

when making decisions and this was seen in the way she drove herself forward in order to be a high achiever.

But it was not her injury that took center stage within her narrative; the fear and difficulty she had over the Computer Aided Design (CAD) dominated the conversation. Lino cutting and screen printing were very physical activities that would put a lot of pressure on the wrists so it was ironic that her previously planned had been thwarted so that she could not work on the skills she enjoyed and by default she was forced to use IT. Chad recognised her own fear of computers but seemed to have a resistance about using them. It was her fear of computers and her imagined 'lack' that appeared to cause her suffering rather than the actual physical condition she had.

It could be argued that her actions were really been guided by fear rather than phronesis; when a person acted only according to their passions and not with prudence or common sense then this could lead to a life of suffering (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, and Chapter 5 p.177). Chad made references to fate and this introduced a feeling of not being an agent with control over actions but someone who was subject to unseen forces. Bernstein (2000, p.xxi) described a democratic education being one where students had a certain amount of agency over their education through inclusion and participation. However, he also talked about how aspects of the curriculum may have appeared to be constructed by the student but were in fact implicitly controlled by the tutors; this was an aspect of the 'invisible pedagogy' of art and design studio practice (Bernstein, 2003; Broadhead, 2015). Chad's feelings could be in

part due to the ambiguity of the student/tutor relationship within her particular learning context.

*S: Where do you think it comes from; this fear?*

*C: The frustration of not getting it right, the frustration of because ... the worst thing is I know that if I could do that I'd be on a winner in the sense that I would be able to produce and produce and you know and I'd be a lot... I'm not confident as a designer because of it. It is a big confidence thing, it's the last tool in the box that I haven't mastered do you see what I'm saying? And it's like I don't have the full tool kit. I'm sat there with whatever I can present to you but I can't there's one like key item that I haven't yet... (Sam and Chad, January 2014)*

The lack of confidence in this area seemed to be a stumbling block even though Chad appeared to be getting good marks in her design work CAD had become her 'bête noir.' Aristotle said that rational thought and emotion needed to be in balance in order to act well. Within Chad's narrative it seemed that fear had become the dominating force in Chad's decision-making and perhaps this meant she was unable to see clearly, that not everyone was skilful using CAD and that she had achieved success in spite of her perceived lack of skills.

*C: Hate it.*

*S: You've got to make it your friend.*

*C: I hate it. I hate it cos it's there's no...if there was a book, step by step how to book. Step one - press this - step two - press this! I'd be away but there isn't. I've see that many tutorials, I've bought that many books on it, 'Photoshop CS6' whatever 'Creative Suit For Dummies', that doesn't even read well because it... there again there all for different levels of people and their different take on computer s - you there's no 'press this' 'move to this like' a flow chart or anything like that . It's not like that it so ... like it confuses me just to find the*

*source information to find out how to do it initially. Stresses me out. (Sam and Chad, January 2014)*

What Chad was calling for was to be taught differently; the dominant mode of Chad's education was through an invisible pedagogy but this approach did not work effectively when there was a particular and specific technical skill to be learned (Bernstein, 2003; 1975).

The books she cited were not at the correct level for her. She needed a coaching method; a visible pedagogy that made the learning explicit, visible and prescriptive. The pacing and sequencing of the teaching would need to be designed for someone who was not very computer literate (although it was possible Chad was misjudging her skill level and was actually more able than she realised). It seemed that Chad had taken on the responsibility to learn herself and was doing everything she could to learn a new skill, but perhaps this was where the institution ought to have intervened to help those with poor IT literacy by providing extra coaching lessons or utilise friendship pairings as a means of improving her confidence with IT. This would be akin to what Bernstein (2003) called a repair system.

However, Chad would have to fit this into her already full life. It was interesting that she managed a young family with little help from her extended family due to geography; she worked well with her husband and got good marks during her degree yet what seemed to threaten her sense of success was the learning of a particular skill - *techne*. The problem had become that of the individual student rather than a structural problem of the curriculum.

*C: I'll do anything that has to be done other than the job that needs to be done as long as I've enjoyed it. So all the jobs you have to do on your list of things - if there's one on there that looks /appeals to me I'll probably do that regardless of whether it's a priority. That's just the way I am if it's just creative -if it's anything like ... I mean like even stupid things. Like I got a new book -arrived yesterday -I still had my coat on in the kitchen (supposed to be cooking the kids' tea) and what was I doing? Having a look at the index at the back to see if there's a certain artist in the book that I was looking at -you know that*

*kind of business. Ten minutes later I've got two children that want some food and I'm still looking at the Alfred Barr book. So that's my problem, I'm easily distracted, definitely easily distracted and then I'll put things off so this is a lot to do with the CAD. (Chad, January, 2014)*

Chad was reflecting on her actions and blamed herself for not tackling the problem she had with CAD. Here she said that it was her love of other activities that distracted her from her engagement with CAD rather than a fear of failure. Chad was confident in scholarly activity when it was focused on art and design history. She also received an amount of pleasure from this pursuit. These books would be quite complex and sophisticated, not the basic guides she called for when learning about IT. Even though, for the most part Chad's decision making seemed sound, her inability to act was due to the fear and lack of positive feelings she had about computers.

Coffield (2006, p26) described an upward virtuous spiral as a means of describing the relationship between tutors and students based on mutual trust and respect, where the feedback from tutors which was acted on by students led to success learning. This was what seems to be absent from Chad's account as she was trying to tackle this herself as an independent learner. Why did she not ask for help from her tutors or her friends? Would the learning need she had have established her as being different from her peer group in a negative way?

## Sixth meeting at the end of the third year

The next interview with Chad was in May 2014 at the end of her second year. She looked drawn in her face and seemed to have lost weight. She had lost a little of her sparkle. The tone of the meeting seemed so much darker than the meeting at the end of the first year.

*C: I am determined and enjoy designing but it is impossible to weave it into the rest of your life. I should be enjoying it but its deadline after deadline after deadline. I am not 20 years old – I would never take on five or six deadlines at once – you have to be discerning. It's not as bad for the young ones. (Chad, May 2014)*

Chad made the point that through her experience of life she knew what she could manage and if she was in control she would not have set herself so any concurrent deadlines. The course was a very competitive one that made no allowances for people's circumstances as the cohort's norm was a student with no other commitments. The ethos was that the students were being toughened up for a future working in industry. The last statement with was reminiscent of Chad's perception of young students and it was that they were better situated to deal with lots of deadlines. *It's not as bad for the young ones* could be seen as a misconception they too may have been finding the culture of the course difficult. But also there was a message that Chad was being treated unfairly, the course was not a level playing field because it did not take into account her particular learning needs in other words it was not just.

*C: They are happy to keep me up at night. We get given deadline dates well in advance which is fine. But then they give us loads of other tasks. Like the Context of Practice 3000*

*word essay I finished at 3.30am the night before. I am sure the neighbours think there is something strange going on at our house as the spare bedroom light is always on until the small hours all the time. I creep to bed so I don't wake my husband he is tired and has to get up early. This is driving him mad. There is no point talking to the tutors because I will only cry and the work still has to be done, I don't want an extension and I don't want to lose marks.*

*Nana's in hospital – broken her hip – and I 'm the only relative in the area so I visit her and watch the kids as well – What the hell! (Chad, May 2014)*

The degree tutors were mentioned for the first time in the script, implicitly at first as 'they' and then later on explicitly as 'tutors'. The only previous time Chad had mentioned tutors was when she was fondly remembering her Access tutors who were actually named. At this point the tutors on Chad's degree were more abstract and generalised. Chad did not see that the tutors could help her.

Whereas Chad celebrated the support she had got from other students, within her account, help from the tutors seemed to be strangely absent. They seemed almost to be resented. The fear of seeming to be different, lacking or weaker than other students seemed to underpin Chad's resolve not to ask for help, this could also have been an aspect of her fear of IT. The pressure of work was affecting her family life. When another of life's unexpected events happened (her Nana suffered an injury) I wondered how long Chad could keep refusing to ask for help.

*C: I have to put my all into it because I made a big decision to come here. I have chosen to have a family and come here. I just hope I get a job at the end of it. I worry about committing to a company nine to five in a design studio. I would be bored, I need variety. I want to work freelance, part-time work. I wonder who will take me on. I worry because the course leader favours those who want to move to London and abroad - we get lectures about New Designers where he says you*



*have to be prepared to move far away as a designer. (Chad, May 2014)*

Chad rehearsed the reasons why she must succeed she was mindful of the difficult path she had chosen and kept reminding herself it was her decision to do this. She was tempering her desire to 'have it all' by making realistic compromises. She was also worried that she did not fit in with the course leader's expectations which were aimed at younger people with no families. At this point Chad appeared to be on the point of thinking she had made the wrong decision because there was the chance she would not be able to be employed in way she had dreamed of at the beginning of the course. The course leader was telling a canonical story within art and design; that those who want to work in the arts must move to London. Moving away would be difficult for Chad and her family. London was where all the opportunities were for creative people. However, was this now the case when there were now online technologies that allowed people to work from home? I was told to move to London on my Foundation Course if I wanted to succeed, yet I have worked in the art and design sector for twenty five years in Northern England. The impact of this canonical story was to make Chad feel even more 'othered' by being the only mature student on the course, which shook her confidence and resolve. Exceptions to canonical stories needed to be shared and acknowledged by staff and students. As educators it was easy to repeat stories that were told to us when we were learning without reflecting on the validity and currency of them. It was important to reflect on our own assumptions and beliefs we had about success and how to achieve it.

*C: The work I have produced is ok. The lowest mark I got is 65 and also 70, 71 and 72.50 but it is taking it out of me. This is the only thing I can control, the only thing I can do well. The dissertation is already started – I need to fine tune the title. I enjoy that bit I wish I had more time. (Chad, May 2014)*

In spite of getting excellent marks Chad still seemed to be suffering from a feeling of not being good enough. The marks did not seem to give her confidence in her future actions; perhaps this showed the limitations of marks as an indicator of success. Even if Chad left with a first but still did not feel confident in herself as a designer then she would not have achieved her goal. The last interview echoed issues to with choice and control. She enjoyed her academic work and even though she said she was being pushed for time she had already started her dissertation. She really enjoyed this aspect of the course but this was in contrast to *Personal Professional Practice*.

*C: Personal Professional Practice is the bane of my life – not enjoyed it at all. It's useless. I know what I like - why can't they use my Pinterest account? I find all this copying and pasting of research on a computer very slow. On the Pinterest account everything is there. I make catalogues like 1960s doors. PowerPoint presentations have to be done. I haven't time to design my CV – no logo – no time to do it well. It's got to be perfect for me. I found it frustrating. I enjoyed Context of Practice and practical work. I enjoyed writing about what I found interesting. I am a great researcher but research for Personal Professional Practice is a pain, I don't feel there is a use for it. It's about a good interview and portfolio. I might go to the graphic design students to get my CV done. It needs to be slick. Personal Professional Practice is a bit rushed; lots of silly little tasks. It's too much amongst other tasks more add-ons, keeping you on your toes. (Chad, May 2014)*

Chad had had many jobs previously so there were aspects of PPP that she found facile; this point had been made by other participants in this study. That Chad could not see a use for the module; that the way it was delivered was by

increasing the amount of deadlines and that it entailed using IT meant that this module did not seem like a worthwhile activity to her. It was interesting that Chad solved the problem by hoping to get her CV done by someone who had the appropriate typography skills. It was here that Chad was able to think outside the box. It was part of art and design culture that people collaborated with each other and Chad once again thought of a solution for her problem by drawing upon the expertise of others. This academic year seemed to have very hard for her but she did not give up.

*C: I am not giving up. This is my path - something is making me stay and not give up. At the moment it's not easy it's hard on Access students. It completely prepares you but it is hard for 21 year olds and a lot harder for adult students. When you get older the difficulties are your choice, when you are younger they are imposed on you. Older people make choices but you can't make a choice on this course you just have to do it. (Chad, May 2014)*

The last comment that Chad made raised some pertinent questions. What was it that kept her on course? Was it due to her own personal capacities for resilience; the personal investment she had made in terms of time and also lost time with her family; was it a strong desire to achieve and be a designer? The demands of the course were seen as inflexible - 'you just have to do it' - and this seemed to take away her adulthood; her ability to make choices. It was also interesting that she still defined herself as an Access person as if that identity was still with her; she still viewed herself as being different from the non-Access students.

## Discussion

Looking at Chad's story overall it seemed at first that Chad was adept at practical wisdom. She identified the need to balance her education with her home life. She was able to identify the skills she needed and devise a plan of action to educate herself. Chad wanted to live a good life and part of that for her was to be a professional designer. Chad was able to recognise her fears about, firstly, being bad at IT and secondly about not fitting in with a new cohort of students. But she was able to temper those fears by recognising her strengths or she was able to plan strategies for overcoming future problems. Chad had to consider others like her children, her husband and her Nana when she made decisions. She seemed to have used the experiences she had had on *Access to HE* to help her settle in her course. She also drew upon her previous experiences of being pregnant in order to understand she needed to take a year out when she got pregnant again. Throughout Chad's learning journey she had had to deal with unexpected events like having a baby at the end of the first year and getting Carpel Tunnel Syndrome in the second. Even towards the end of the second year when her Nana broke her hip Chad was able to organise her time to help her.

The practical wisdom of the other students, her friends, was also shown by her accounts especially when Chad took a year out. They showed an active concern for Chad's wellbeing and seemed to have contributed to her feeling of being a part of the College even when she was not physically there. They demonstrated a capacity for kindness and generosity which seemed to be a

contrast to the competitive and demanding culture of the course at the end of Chad's second year. It may be that the culture of the course changed from year to year depending on the people it had recruited and what they brought to it, or that the course became progressively more challenging during the second year.

The experiences Chad had previously during her past employment, her motherhood and her learning on her Access course had all helped her on her degree. However, as time went on it became apparent that the issue of feeling inadequate in the realm of computer aided design did not seem to be resolved. Chad talked about designing and researching in positive terms using words like love and enjoy. When she began to talk about IT she used emotional words like 'demons', 'hate', 'fear' and 'frustration'. Bauman (2013, p.94) said that,

We fear what we can't manage. We call that inability to manage something 'incomprehension'; what we call 'comprehension' of something is our know-how for tacking it...Comprehension is born of the ability to manage. What we are not able manage is 'unknown' to us; and the 'unknown' is frightening. Fear is another name we give to our defencelessness. (Bauman, 2013, p.94-95)

Chad had been unable to manage her learning of computer aided design, perhaps this was partly due to her busy schedule that she could not give enough time and space to it. She continued not to comprehend digital technology fully and so felt defenceless and fearful of it. Her dislike of IT seemed to be spiralling out of control. The decision to base her work on lino-cut could well have been based on her fear of IT rather than thinking rationally about the restrictions lino-cut had. It was a time-consuming, labour-intensive process that could be physically demanding. There was no evidence that this

led to injuring herself as CTS was also associated with pregnancy. But it meant that when she did hurt her wrists she could not sustain the technique. It could be argued that Chad's feelings of inadequacy did not improve even when she was achieving high marks as she was always afraid of future failure. In a sense she was continuing to suffer because her emotions were not letting her see her situation clearly; that she was actually doing really well but did not take any pleasure in this.

Chad did not seem to enjoy the same relationship with the tutors as with her friends and when the tutors were mentioned it was usually in relation to Chad's self-doubt. She refused to ask for help when she was struggling as if that would show weakness. In a way she seemed determined to represent herself to the tutors as being able to cope like all the other students. She seemed to imagine that the younger students had an easier time on the course because they, unlike her, belonged there. A constructed notion of a generalised other (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2007) was used throughout Chad's narrative as a representation of normalcy that she could judge or evaluate her own experiences against. This imagined group of 'normal' students were described often as being younger as opposed to her maturity. She imagined that they were more computer literate, had more free time and were coping with the stress of the course more effectively.

When comparing the last interview of year one with the last interview of year two a stark difference in attitude could be seen. Chad was not disappointed with her first year she enjoyed it, had made friends and was happy. By the end of the second year she seemed to be staying on the course through pure

determination. The investment and sacrifice Chad and her family had made meant that even though Chad was not living the good life at that particular moment in time it was best to stay on course in the hope of future success. Chad had at various points used narrative phronesis to take stock and fine-tune her aspirations in light of her experiences on the course. She constantly thought about what she had already achieved and how much time she had invested in her education. This seemed to give Chad some comfort and agency over her life.

The last meeting was very telling when Chad talked about having to accept the difficulties that the course threw at her. She had felt that her choices had been taken away and she just had to comply with what was demanded of her. The culture of the course was not explicit in Chad's account, but it seemed to be very challenging: 'keeping students on their toes'. But was this appropriate for a mature student and mother? For Ricoeur (1994, p.180) phronesis aimed at the ethical intention of, 'the good life with and for others in just institutions.'

The demands that were made of Chad did not seem just in the second year. She did not mention her friends after her return and this made me wonder how the supportive group ethos of the cohort could be maintained within an individualistic, competitive course culture? Did the institution disable Chad's (and other students') sense of agency and ability to be a person of practical wisdom? During the final focus group with ex-Access students who had taken part of this study it was discussed that participants often used the metaphor of a 'rollercoaster' to describe their educational experiences. This was considered by the group and it was thought that the process was very emotional, for example,

a comment from a peer could be 'very positive whereas a bad studio critique could be devastating'. The emotions of an individual if not in balance could impede rational thought and phronesis.



## Chapter eight: Bob's story and horizontal discourse

This chapter compares the narratives of another post-Access student, Bob, with those of Chad in order to identify similar and different aspects of their recounted experiences. As well as drawing upon notions of phronesis this chapter considers how day-to-day discussions in the art and design studio were retold by Bob and how he internalised his own 'otherness'. The importance of what Bernstein called horizontal discourse in the construction of horizontal solidarities, vertical and horizontal knowledge has been discussed previously in Chapter One (Bernstein, 1999, pp.159-160).

Bob was studying for his BA Interdisciplinary Art and Design and like Chad he had chosen to continue his studies in the same college where he had achieved his *Access to HE* Diploma. Interdisciplinary art and design was a programme of study where students were not 'pigeon-holed' by material or approach. Artists and designers were conceived of as being flexible and responsive individuals, shifting between different patterns of work. The course projects used art and design in order to respond to the spaces, objects and communities in everyday life. This was a course about making; making objects, and making things happen.

Students gained experience in collaboration, communication, creative enterprise, design, digital media, image-making, installation, interactivity, materials innovation, metals, new technologies, object-making, plastics, print, professional practice, public art, silicon-casting and video.

## **Curriculum structure of BA (Hons) Interdisciplinary Art and Design**

The curriculum for this degree began at level four where students developed a range of technical and making skills which were learned through studio practice and in the workshops. Also students were introduced to working in and on particular sites or contexts and in collaboration with others. The course philosophy was about breaking down the traditional divisions between art and design disciplines and so the invisible pedagogy of the studio was seen as an appropriate means of learning.

Level five, year two, required the students to be less reliant on teaching staff, where they learn collaboratively through tutorials, peer support and studio critiques. Students were expected to undertake and manage projects that are external to the institution. The course philosophy at this point seemed to be based on situated learning where students gained understanding from 'real life' professional situations.

During the final year, level six, as well as writing a substantial reflective account in Context of Practice three(COP3), the student should have begun to see themselves as a professional artist or designer. They operated with high levels of independence producing ambitious public-facing creative work. Students were expected to synthesise all they have previously learnt about materials and processes, methodologies, audiences and contexts in order to produce well-managed projects.

## First meeting with Bob at the beginning of his first year

Bob was in his 50s and has left a 30 year career in the refrigeration industry to follow his life-long dream to go to art school. Earlier in his life he had been discouraged to study art by his parents; they had wanted him to get a trade that would give him financial security. So after school Bob went to Technical College on block release to gain his *City and Guilds Refrigeration and Air Conditioning*, which he has had to update throughout his career. Bob also told me about his attempts to broaden his education during his time in employment.

*B: I did O level Psychology but I didn't take the final exam. I just, I don't know, I felt my writing skills weren't up to it really. I thought I'd fail, I felt that so I really tried to do the course...as much as I've enjoyed doing this really. It's the doing of it rather than the academic side that I enjoy really, you know.  
(Bob, November 2011)*

As well as completing his *Access to HE* diploma, later in life, Bob had previously studied jewellery-making on an evening course. The next sections were based on six meetings carried out with the researcher and Bob during the three years of his degree during which his reflections on his academic progress were recorded and transcribed.

During the first meeting at the end of the first semester Bob seemed to still have a fear of not fulfilling his dream to go to art school and was wary of being seduced back to his work.

*B: It's been like a rollercoaster really - I don't think I'll be fully settled until after Christmas to be honest with you. There's a few financial worries I have, in I'd like a part-time job and it's*

*quite difficult to find work now really of any kind. Before I left my full-time employment, my employer said he'd employ me again if needed and if I wanted... Well, wanted to do some part-time work but I've not really rung him yet. Primarily because I think I'd really like to get something outside of what I used to do. I'd like to cut the ties totally. I'd hate to fall back into the trap of going back to 'cos it would be so easy to. Like if I find myself in... because I'll go through periods here where I'll find it difficult. It would be tempting to... I'll go back into what I used to do and I'm trying to not to be tempted. (Bob, November 2011)*

Bob was remembering his earlier decision to give up his dream for financial security which he had regretted and was determined not to make the same 'mistake' again. In order to live a good life Bob had made a courageous decision to give up his career and to take a risk on pursuing a career as an artist. The riskiness or 'precarity' of the creative industries has been discussed at length (Elzenbaumer, 2014). Precarity was defined as employment was not constant or dependable and this meant that sustaining a financially and emotionally secure lifestyle could be difficult. Bob's attitude to risk was interesting because he had taken a massive financial risk in giving up a stable job which he had done for over 30 years in order to become an artist. However, he was not always comfortable with his own decisions. Prudence was often seen as playing it safe; however, sometimes it was appropriate to take a risk in order to fulfil one's hopes and dreams. In this he was similar to Chad as both imagined a better way of life in the future by becoming artists or designers, even though such a route might not seem secure or certain.

While marked by precarity, for many artists, and for increasingly more of those working in HE, these types of creative labour offered a fair amount of interest, diversion, autonomy and creativity. The relative absence of the pain and

boredom that was characteristic for the experience of subsumed labour (Helms, 2011).

Living a good life was not only connected to financial and material security; although these were important to Chad and Bob, they needed to make a judgment about living with a sense of precariousness and future uncertainty in order to be fulfilled and creative. These decisions were not easily made and this was shown by Bob's concern that he might be 'tempted' back to his old but dependable way of life.

Bob, like Chad, positioned himself as different to the other people on the course; he seemed to make more explicit comparisons with his own position and that of younger students. He suggested that maybe the younger students were making fun of him although he aimed to make light of it.

*B: The dynamic between other people has been very interesting - a lot of the things I'd heard before from other people and are a bit true like the age thing - it does hit you - it changes as times gone on. The young people start to accept you. You get odd comments and things but then you just brush it off as a laugh kind-of-thing. They do the same so you don't take it seriously.*

*There have been times when I still struggle with my academic stuff. I'd like to be a lot better and I'm making a determined effort to do that. Because once the creative side of, yeah, that - you need to be fully relaxed and dreamlike to come up with ideas - you are kind of balanced with that. Then there's another side, the academic side I struggle with that, with structuring of essays, with spelling and the grammar anything on that side. (Bob, November 2011)*

Self-worth and esteem were very much tied up in outward appearance (Duckworth, 2014). This was said in the context of schools, but older or mature students would also look very different to younger students. This linked to a sense of personal shame felt by those who perceived that they had not completed their education in age appropriate times (Duckworth, 2014, p.182). Bob was aware of his 'difference' and this seemed to prey on his mind. It was also apparent that his age was part of the horizontal discourse; part of the day-to-day talk he shared with others in his class. It was interesting that he viewed being creative as relaxing, yet attempting to be academic led to a feeling of anxiety.

Bob did not have the condition of confidence that Bernstein (2000) thought was an important pedagogic right. A good education should enhance a feeling of confidence. Part of this was due to Bob seeing himself as weak in the theoretical part of his studies. This could be seen as a result of the education he had previously received where thinking and doing were represented as separate and therefore a choice had to be made between academic and vocational educational routes. Bernstein (2003) said that vocationalism appeared to provide an appropriate education for the working-classes but it actually closed down future possibilities for students. It could be argued that Bob had internalised the message from his earlier educational experiences that he was a 'doer' rather than a 'thinker'.

## Second meeting at the end of the first year

Bob was very positive about the first year, he talked at length about a project he was involved with that sprung from the Personal, Professional Practice module (PPP). He seemed enthusiastic and confident in this module.

*B: Well, yes, I was helping the families set up dens and things like that. The whole idea is to get the families to interact; get kids more interested in 'doing' rather than playing computer games and that kind of thing. It's to get dads and mums involved with their kids. It's kind of back-to-basics. Kind of thing we used to do when we were kids, playing in the street, all those things are getting lost really and I found the project interesting to be honest with you. This weekend has promoted what he [professional community artist who Bob worked with] does to educate people. We had lots of people coming by from schools - teachers wanting his card - for him to do this kind of work in schools and which he would get paid for and that's his business, that's how it works. I just thought it was brilliant, I would love to come up with an idea like that and get it up and running. It can pay money, that's an example of it, you know.*

*S: Do you think you could do that in the future?*

*B: Yes, no hesitation because of my background in engineering and going round chatting to people, making connections, networking I quite like all that, yeah, yeah, I could see something like that happening. (Bob, June 2012)*

Bob saw the value of his previous experience and how it could be used in a possible creative career. But he also had gleaned important information from another artist's experiences that enabled him to imagine the future after college. He could see himself in the role and his previous experiences had fed his confidence. At this point he seemed in a positive frame of mind unlike Chad who

had begun to have anxieties about her future career. Imagination could be seen as an important element when thinking about one's future, Wenger's definition was useful:

*My use of the concept of imagination refers to a process of expanding ourselves by expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple and seeing a tree... (Wenger, 1998, p.176)*

Imagining the future was connected to remembering the past. Here Bob continued to discuss his age and his regrets about not studying art earlier in his life with younger students. He was being offered a strategy by the younger student; to live in the moment rather than thinking about the past.

*B: There is difficulty, from the point of view of young and old, the age gap. We've said this before, we're probably heard other people talk about it. 'I wish I done this years ago' and that kind of thing but then again had I have done this years ago I wouldn't perhaps have this perspective I'm talking about now to you. I'd have just been going out having a drink on a night and trying to pull girls and that's it. There's two ways of looking at it really - maybe I would have, maybe I've got to a point where I get more out of it now than I would have when I was younger I don't know, it's one of those, would I, could I, should I? It's a bit silly talking like that now in fact. I had this conversation with one of the younger guys and he said - Andrew it was - and really out of the mouths of babes, - he says, "Well you keep going on about that you wish you'd done that years ago. You're doing it now and really that's it, you know, time starts now." So I've got that in my head now, that's it, I'm not going to talk about all that wish I'd done it years ago, yeah. (Bob, June 2012)*

Similar themes continued to appear in Bob's account at the end of the first year of his degree. Bob chose to recount the conversations he had with younger people on the course where he was concerned by differences in age.



Bernstein's comments about the ways in which social relationships constructed consciousness seemed relevant here. Bob was both exploring and reinforcing his difference in relation to the younger students in the class through the day-to-day discourse in the studio. This also showed how Bob had internalised the belief that there were age appropriate stages within education and it was this that caused him to feel out of step with his peer group.

Bob's discussions in some ways disrupted the mythical horizontal group solidarity that the institution sought to construct in the studio/classroom (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiv). Bob did pose the view that his life experience would actually enhance his educational journey, meaning he would get more out of it. The younger students' advice was interesting in that it was clearly intended to help Bob; to stop him dwelling in the past. As has been previously argued about phronesis, it was not enough to simply base ones judgements on past experiences they needed to be modified and re-contextualised within a new context with a view to acting better in the future (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, pp.265-266).

This conversation could be viewed caring and supportive in some ways. But it also assumed that it was possible to 'live in the moment' and cut oneself off from past experiences. This also sounded like another canonical story that in art and design education a student should 'forget' their previous understandings of the world and start with a 'blank canvas' (Hudson, 2009, pp.95-96; Robins in Addison and Buress, 2003, p.45).

### Third meeting half way through the second year

Bob's sense of being different from others was now connected with failure; he imagined that somehow the younger students were somehow better than him. This was an aspect of his story that could also be seen in Chad's belief that she was lacking in her IT skills. Imagination could be a positive thing when one had confidence, as when Bob saw himself in a future creative business. However, when formed by fear imagination could also be negative. Ricoeur (1994) argued that imagination was an important aspect of phronesis or practical wisdom but this fear, as has been argued in the case of Chad, needed to be tempered, so what was envisioned was not skewed. Bob perceived himself to be the 'other' in relation to those who were younger.

*B: I kind of compare myself to those who have just left school so they're used to writing loads of stuff, the essays and that kind of thing, yeah. I'm better organised than I was. I wished I'd done more writing stuff on my Access and I hated essays then.*

*What I can say - sometimes when I get reading about things I actually enjoy it, you know, but I hate this anxiety of deadlines, you know, I'm slow at that kind of thing. (Bob, November 2012)*

Bob continued not have the condition of confidence. He still constructed himself as a doer rather than a thinker. He did not conceive that his problems were to do with the way education was structured within society where people were encouraged to study either vocational/practical subjects or professional/academic ones. His lack of confidence meant it was difficult for Bob to act (Bernstein, 2000); it was hard for him to begin reading and writing. He ended in a more positive light; that there was potential for his enjoyment in

academic study. Bob seemed to be a long way from participating politically in order to change his education because he saw the difficulties he was having as being due to his own lack of ability.

Bob continued by talking about taking part in the College's *Erasmus* project where he could study abroad.

*B: I was thinking, about the Erasmus Exchange - doing that for one semester - but I don't know about that yet because you have to fund that yourself - the accommodation and everything. So I'll have to check out how much it'll cost, just that might put me off. I don't know - we have a choice of places to go. Adam's [another student] got a list, a lot of them, you can do it in Switzerland, you can do it in Paris, you can do it in...*

*S: You've a lot of choice.*

*B: Yeah, I'm beginning to think it might be happening, just depends which is cheapest to go to, to live, you know. Yes at Paris, a proper artist, how much does it cost for a week to go there? It costs a fortune. We went there for a weekend and it cost a fortune to go there to live for three months...*

*S: Oh, I know but*

*B: I could sell Big Issue or Eiffel Tower!*

*S: So how do you feel about your work and everything?*

*B: I don't know. I honestly don't know. There's times when, I don't know, I miss the money but I don't miss the old work or life style. But I used to earn, then again I've got to think all this money has to be paid back, you know, it's not an easy ride. (Sam and Bob, November, 2012)*

He dealt with his anxieties by using humour; this was similar to Chad where she made a joke of the neighbours watching her house late at night when she was working at 3am in the morning. Humour was a strategy used to temper fear and anxiety that seemed initially to be effective but finance for Bob was a big issue. The socio-economic status of students was a substantial factor in their decision-making as they weighed up their options or lack of them. Whereas Chad thought about her investment in terms of time, Bob thought about financial investment.

### **Fourth meeting at the end of the second year**

Concern over finances did not stop Bob going to the GIDE (Group for International Design Education) where students from different countries come together in a European city and work collaboratively on a design project.

*B: Yeah, well the GIDE experience was absolutely fantastic. I'm really glad I went. The accommodation was like ... terrible - I kicked off. I wasted about three hundred quid 'cos I wasn't going to stay where I was. I just pissed off into a hotel! It smelt of drains and all kind of things anyway it took me a while to get over that. (Laugh) But I did.*

*S: Did everybody feel like that?*

*B: Some did but nobody spoke up except me, they were all two-faced. Ironically it was them that were kicking off, about complaining about it, you know. 'What are we going to do in this café?' and when we got back they didn't complain - that was the annoying thing for me - they actually said it were terrible.*

*S: But the art was ok?*

*B: It was brilliant, it was fantastic I'm really glad I went on it. It was very good, very good. I mean I've made some friends from it, actually I've kept in contact with them through 'Linked In'. I was thinking of going for an Erasmus thing - I mentioned it to Cheryl [tutor] and she said well, (she's very good is Cheryl) and she said that because I was kind of struggling with my COP (Context of Practice) I wouldn't get the support if I went away on it. I think that was good advice really. What I should have done is done that Erasmus thing in my first year and perhaps GIDE in my second year ... but you don't know how it's going to go. (Sam and Bob, June 2013)*

Bob was able to use his courage to take part in the GIDE project even though he had concerns over his finances. Whilst there he was able to realise the living quarters were not suitable and had a sense of agency which enabled him to act by changing hotels, something his classmates in this instance were not able to do. They were clearly unhappy with the situation but were unable to even complain about it. Bob was to make a wise decision and act with prudence for his actions actually meant he enjoyed the project and got a lot out of it. Bob has also made a good decision with the help of his tutor by taking a range of factors into account: his finance; his openness to working internationally and his concerns over his Context of Practice work.

He has managed to experience working away without committing too much time and resource. It was also significant that he reflected on his planning and how he would do things differently if had had an understanding of how his learning would develop during the span of the three years. Educators could be mindful of how students need information about their future curricula on a course so that they could plan their learning alongside other aspects of their lives.

*B: I learnt a lot from Rose, [another post-Access student], who's in my group. She showed me how to do a blog first of all*

*and that helps me get everything structured so I could tick my boxes for the people who were marking my work. And at that point I realised that I don't think my art has changed it's the organisation of what I do and how I answered the questions that are being asked, do you know what I mean? (Bob, June 2013)*

Again this was a positive example of students helping each other out in the spirit of friendship and generosity. Being able to respond to art and design briefs by using a blog had helped Bob structure his work and this had led him to think about learning in a new way; it appeared as if it had been a bit of 'light bulb' moment for him. On the other hand he was organising his work to respond to the learning outcomes on the brief so he was thinking about how he will be assessed. The 'visible pedagogy' of explicit learning outcomes was helping Bob structure his work, but there was a danger that this could become a 'tick-box' exercise.

### **Fifth meeting at Christmas of third year**

Bob was beginning his final year and he would be spending it working on the large reflective project, *Context of Practice 3 (COP 3)*. As this involved a substantial amount of writing Bob was really concerned about this particular module.

*S: So what are you going to do then with your dissertation, how are you going to move forward with it?*

*B: I'll just get cracking and get something written down. I've got a bit of a structure-framework, which I can try and drop things into. Like I did when I was blogging before; I didn't know how to do a blog; Rose- I'll always be in debt to her for that. She showed me how to blog properly; that helped my work a*

*lot. And if you get a framework for doing these things it makes it a little bit easier from that point of view; you don't get too confused. You can put things into boxes. I hate saying that now and I used to say it a lot at one time in a cynical way. I realise that the course has helped to improve me as an artist but there's a little side of me that wants to say it has been detrimental. I want to say it's failed me but it hasn't really. (Bob and Sam, December 2013)*

Had Rose only taught him how to blog? Had she really taught Bob the rules of game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2002, p.76; Duckworth, 2014, pp.26-27)? Part of being on the degree programme and taking part in the studio culture was that it enabled horizontal discourse to occur where the rules of assessment could be learned (Bernstein, 1999; Broadhead, 2014). Bob also gained social capital through making links with people who shared their experiences with him. Bob seemed to have accepted that assessment, which he previously had viewed as a 'box-ticking' exercise, could help him as an artist. The way he structured his blogs seemed to put an order on the messiness of creative practice for the benefit of his assessors. Would this actually have made him a better artist? He may have got more marks but this was not the same as being more creative.

*S: Why do you want to say it's [the course] failed you?*

*B: I think it's probably because it's not what I expected but then why should it be?*

*S: What did you expect?*

*B: Less academic work, less writing and more like ... visions of how it was when Henry Moore and people like Barbara Hepworth and like that very studying. When you just come in and you were taught by a master how to do measuring and chiselling away at a piece of stone. Craft-based I would say. I anticipated it being more craft-based. It seems to only get any validity from this academic English writing, evidencing, looking*

*at a computer, blogging, IT bollocks bleep that out. (Laughs)  
(Bob and Sam, December 2013)*

Bob described similar arguments that were going on at the time he originally wanted to go the art school, when the place of art history and professional studies in the curriculum was being debated. The *National Advisory Council on Art Education* had aimed to change the art and design curriculum making it a 'more respectable structure for art education'. The Coldstream Report was published in 1960 and proposed a more broad liberal education rather than one based on a 19th century craft tradition. The impact of this on art and design education had continued today (Gregson et al., 2015). Unlike Chad, Bob had embraced his new use of IT and was confident in blogging; his cause for anxiety was writing. He continued to see writing as academic which, to him, was different to making and crafting. The conversation continued:

*S: Why do you think that is; why do you think it gets its validity from these other things?*

*B: I think it's because it's all part of the big ... part of the government It filters down like everything else in education art is no different from any other subject. Like I started my working life going into engineering and going to a technical college and it's not that much different from that in a way. From how you've got to evidence things and how you're graded and that kind of thing and I would have thought art might have been looked at differently. But then again art is subjective - what one person finds attractive another person finds not attractive - so they have to find some sort of common denominator that would eliminate that. (Bob and Sam, December 2013)*

Bob at this point thought that it was more just to mark writing than to mark art that has a subjective, aesthetic quality to it. Writing style and content could be also judged based on subjective taste, but Bob did not consider this because he



perceived writing in a particular way – as something that was in opposition to creativity. Within Bob’s dialogue the tensions and contradictions of being an artist with being an art student in a particular education system based on measuring success through marks and classifications were foregrounded. ‘They’ corresponded to Chad’s ‘they’ which seemed to signify those in power within the field of education and as such were a type of ‘generalised other’. Unlike Chad, Bob mentioned a named teacher in positive terms and seemed to have a respect for her advice. He recognised and acknowledged the support he has had from staff and students.

### **Final meeting after Bob’s end of year show**



Images 6 and 7: Bob’s photographs for Degree show

Bob had a successful end of year show, he had two spaces in which to exhibit his photography which was about his memory and the area he grew up in, and he called them hetroglossic spaces. He documented the sites he had an emotional connection to whilst wondering through the streets of his childhood town.

In the catalogue entry which was made to document this exhibition Bob said, 'The places of origin never truly free us from the hauntings of our past.' For Bob the past had great significance and this came through in both his narratives and his photographs. He reflected on his learning journey during the last three years.

*B: What drives you to make art? I think I didn't really realise that what my bias is; what my opinions and drivers were until I got to my third year. Then I found I'm kind of, they were there all the time but just needed to be tweaked out. (Laughs)*

*S: What are they, what are these drives?*

*B: I think it's about people getting - what can I say - hopes, dreams and the failures of them. Why people continued to fight for the dreams? Whatever they are and they don't get resolved unless you do something about it which is what happened with me really. A lot of this kind of thing - I wish I'd have done that, I wish I'd have done this other - all this kind of thing ... and now I've done it and it's good that I have . I'll keep that philosophy for other things -keep going on as long as I live. (Laughs)*

*S: So what is it that you've learnt?*

*B: To act, to act on it rather than say I wish I had; you try and you struggle through, you struggle through things. With me, my time at college has shown weaknesses -there's times where no one likes to be - to not in some ways - a lot of ways - but in some ways it's good. Weakness is exposed you try and do something about it 'cos sometimes you can hide your weaknesses or cover them up. We all do that but unless you face up to them you can't do anything about them. (Bob and Sam, June 2014)*

He had taken a risk in following his hopes and dreams to go to art school and practiced being an artist and it seemed to have paid off in terms of personal

fulfilment. Bob also seemed to believe he had worked on his own perceived weaknesses.

*B: Yes it's different to what I imagined I think it's more like any other technical college in some ways rather than what I was expecting. I thought I'd be taught more about specific things than I was. It's more down to yourself, that can be frustrating at times because you begin to realise that you've not got the full skills to get a lot of your ideas as you want them to be. But then again you could argue that it's not about that. It's about ideas and then your synthesis of those ideas with your practice and your theory. You're assessed mainly on that rather than on your skills of drawing, painting, your aesthetics of photography or whatever. But I thought it would be more about measuring, painting - like somebody showing you how to do things. It's almost... I don't know... I don't know maybe that could be a fault with how I've come into it, because if you go through the natural course of education with O level, A level, foundation that kind of thing by the time you get here in your first year, level 4, you would have been expected to have been proficient in one particular thing. Well, because of how I came into it I'd not got the... I've just been looking at Luke's work actually; one of our younger students. He's clearing his plan chest out I was looking at his old sketch books when he was on full-time Access... I don't know if it was Access or if he started as a full-time young student straight from secondary school onto the degree. You can see through his sketch books how he was almost being taught to think to how we are now. Do you follow what I'm trying to say and I kind of learnt that a bit late in a way - I learnt a bit of it through on my evening Access course, obviously - but not realised how and why it was going to connect. (Bob, June 2014)*

Bob was reflecting back on the educational journey he had undertaken during his degree; the experience had not been how he imagined it would be. He still considered himself to be lacking some of the skills that would enable him to create the quality work he wanted to make. With this perceived lack came a sense of frustration, there was also an echo of his earlier regrets where he still thought he had left it too late to pursue his education. The course for him seemed to have been more self-directed than he anticipated, where he said he

wanted to learn specific things, like how to paint. He seemed to be calling for another more explicit kind of pedagogy. This seemed to be similar to Chad wishing for a more direct means of teaching the skills in computer aided design that she imagined she did not have.

It was interesting that Bob used the phrase ‘through the natural course of education with O level, A level, foundation’ (within an art and design context a pre-BA foundation course was a conventional prerequisite for higher education).

As had already been mentioned Bob seemed to believe in the notion that there were particular stages of education that most people go through and the fact that Bob had not travelled along these more traditional routes meant he could use this as an explanation as to why he did not have the skills he believed he needed. Besides the writing and theoretical skills that Bob had previously felt an inadequacy in, it was hard from his narrative to say what exactly Bob felt he had not achieved. There seemed to be an aspect of his education that still seemed to be unfulfilled, even though he had been successful in gaining his degree. Bob in this instance compared himself with a particular younger student who he imagined had been taught differently to him although he was not very sure what Luke’s educational background actually was.

In a similar way to Chad, Bob compared himself to others who were younger than him, although he used an example of a particular individual rather than a ‘generalised younger’ other. He only now recognised the significance of what he was learning on his *Access o HE* course, which was three years previously. The degree in interdisciplinary art and design had allowed him to make

connections and to give his previous educational experiences a new meaning that was not there when he completed his Access course. Within Bob's story there was still a feeling that he had missed out on something due to not going to art school when he was younger.

Bob went on to recount how he stopped Luke throwing away the sketchbooks from his plan chest (where students store their art work).

*B: Yeah because that bloke was going to throw that [Luke's sketchbooks] away, "I'm going to throw this away!" Now I'm saying to him, "Don't do that - you don't do that - save those because later on when you get to be my age you'll look back at those and say I wish I'd saved them." I'm glad I saved those now, it's the nostalgia thing plus you can see a natural progression, sketchbooks are much better than any blog. But I think people like myself who struggle with writing things and when they keep blogs it's beneficial, the tick box, the tick boxes can be accessed – "Has he referenced this? Has he looked at that? Bing! Bing! Boom! Boom! That gets me through my exam and my assessment. It gives the tutors the ability to assess that I've understood and looked at things. However, I think that if you're a real artist whose day-to-day sketch book is really important and you can see the person, you see them in the book. In a WordPress blog, it's cold and it's dead. But yes it gives evidence in understanding certain things but I don't think other things come across in the blogs.*

*S: What kind of things?*

*B: Spontaneity, in a sketchbook you get spontaneity and like I learnt that myself, through Access actually, it was a positive thing I learnt with Annette [an Access tutor] in some ways she drove, pushed me a bit. That was one good thing I got from Annette, I remember her saying, "I want you to push yourself and do some... and she was really pleased with how I'd done a sketchbook. I enjoyed doing it that way because it wasn't about being neat in your sketchbook - it was about how ideas flowed because that was another thing I was doing originally I was really making everything neat in the sketchbook and that's not the point. Later on you can be neat with your finished piece or whatever but your sketchbook should be scribbled*

*and ideas and quick notes that kind of thing, I think that anyway. (Bob and Sam, June 2014)*

Bob brought out the contradictions and tensions that existed in art and design education. He had come to realise that he was making work to be assessed rather than to be presented as art work. Bob remembered activities he had learned on his Access course in connection with the degree he had just completed in an attempt to weave his educational journey into a coherent whole. His own feelings and experiences motivated Bob to intervene when Luke was about to throw away his sketchbooks.

These were artefacts that Bob clearly valued; they had a materiality and immediacy that a blog did not have. A blog could be edited and re-edited to some extent and it was always written with a view to being seen by others and as such could potentially be designed to be easily assessed. A sketchbook contained more contingent and risky content and sometimes it was made for the artist themselves rather than an audience (although as they were often also assessed they too could become edited or self-conscious).

When the artist committed to making marks in the sketchbook they could never be totally erased, and so had an authenticity as a document of the creative process which digital records could not have. The complexity and messiness of some sketchbooks could mean that they were less straightforward to assess and some students may not have had the confidence that all the assessment criteria had been clearly met. The way that blogs could be organised reassured Bob because he could clearly see if he had met the brief's learning outcomes or not; but this may not be the way Bob wanted to function as an artist.

Bob aimed to save Luke from a feeling of regret that he could feel later on in his life if he threw away his work; regret was a feeling that Bob was very aware of. He drew on his own past experiences that allowed him to imagine or empathise with Luke's feelings in the future. Bob's actions mediated through the horizontal discourse he had with this younger student in the studio showed his care for Luke's future wellbeing and was an example of practical wisdom in action. Bob demonstrated friendship and generosity as important aspects of phronesis where he was acting well for himself and others.

Bob began to think about what his next steps would be after his degree.

*B: I don't know, Sam, it all grows organically. Do I sound like a politician or a lecturer perhaps? I don't know, as I said when we first met things change as you go along and you keep your fingers in a lot pies. You don't know what's going to happen. You can't say that I had a clear cut plan where I would do my degree and then go on to do a PCGE and then teach some people ... because of certain things that have been highlighted through my degree I don't want to put myself...*

*... I enjoy art that's why I'm here! I've always enjoyed art of some kind, the aesthetics of it, soulfulness of it, how people, how it brings things out in people and that's the part of it I do like.*

*What I don't like is people pressurised into, into being, doing English, and writing. I struggle with the mechanics of it sometimes and it kind of strangles my creativity rather than influencing it at times. If I'm enjoying doing my art then it comes naturally but that last project - I really enjoyed doing it. I'm going to continue doing it as well because it's part of my life story, it's where I'm from, it's my family history and I found a lot out about it that I didn't know by doing the dissertation research. (Bob June 2014)*



Doing the degree had not made Bob feel any more comfortable about his writing skills and like his earlier discussion he saw writing and art as opposing activities; one causing him stress and pressure and the other he viewed as more pleasurable and positive. Bob had not been put off by his experiences and seemed resolved to continuing his art practice. The social aspects of art seemed also to appeal to Bob, he liked the fact that others could be involved, however, his fear of writing meant he had ruled out pursuing a postgraduate certificate in education.

## **Discussion**

Bob did not seem to have been subjected to a large amount of unexpected events that impacted on his education, whereas Chad had to deal with pregnancy, tunnel carpel syndrome, and her Nan breaking her hip. This could be due to his family situation or the fact that he was a little older. Being older and male he did not necessarily have the domestic responsibilities that Chad had. It could also be that Bob had not perceived or reported events outside his college life as being of significance.

What Chad and Bob both shared was a feeling of inadequacy in certain areas of their learning, whether it was in computer aided design or academic writing. The degree did not address these feelings as they seemed to continue through all the interviews during the three years. Both Chad and Bob compared themselves with younger students, imagining that they were better educated, more able and were better prepared to study in higher education. Bob thought



of himself as a doer rather than a thinker and this fixed position did not seem to change.

Duckworth, (2014, p.181) claimed that rather than schooling being a meritocratic site, it was exposed as a site for intergenerational marginalisation, social exclusion and labelling by teachers and peers. Oral and written capabilities were not equally valued in schools and even within the oral tradition the codes of the upper classes were valued over the codes of working-class and ethnically diverse students (Bernstein, 1971; Labov, 1972). This meant that students who were not skilled in linguistic skills required in school and colleges were defined as failures or lacking in intelligence by virtue of how they related to the world (Duckworth, 2014, p.181).

Bob and Chad's perceived failings had an impact on their struggles and progress through the educational field it also had an impact on the choices or lack of choices they made. This could be seen in Bob's continued struggle with writing and how he perceived himself. The 'generalised other' for Bob and Chad a normative group with which they compared themselves were those who have had conventional learning careers, who had achieved the different stages of learning at 'appropriate' ages. This lack of confidence in one's own ability did not seem rational as both students were succeeding; Chad constantly gained high marks and Bob had achieved his degree in the three years along with the rest of his classmates. Perhaps this feeling of never being good enough was a general feeling shared by many people.

It was apparent that both Chad and Bob were included in the culture of the studio through the horizontal discourses between students. Conversations were recounted a lot by Bob and Chad commented on the friendships she had with people in her cohort. However, the conversations in Bob's case often seemed to be about exploring regret at being at college too late in life and this was linked to Bob's sense of feeling slightly out of place. Exchanges between Bob and other students were really about re-enforcing differences rather than seeking points of similarity. The day-to-day discussions in the studio had the potential to make people feel as if they belonged, and this in turn, meant that students supported one another.

Bob helped others in the studio for example he encouraged Luke to keep his sketchbooks. Chad reported that she helped her family members, for example she looked after her Nan when she broke her hip. They both received and gave help to others but this was not a simple transactional relationship (I will do this for you if you do this for me). It was when the situation arose where people needed help that phronimos was 'called to action' when the spirit of generosity and friendship motivated phronesis.

Both Chad and Bob reflected on their experiences and did sometimes take a critical stance. Chad suggested that her control over her own life was somehow diminished as she was required to fit in with course's deadlines: she commented she would manage her time differently if she were able to do so. Bob described and questioned the tensions between an art practice that was complex and open-ended with an assessment process that he felt was a 'tick-

box' approach. He also talked as if he believed text based evidence had more validity than his practical work.

## Chapter nine: Eliza's story of exclusion

This chapter discussed Eliza's experiences on her art and design degree. Her situation was different to that of Chad and Bob in three ways. Firstly, she needed to do the course part-time so she could continue to be employed in another university. Secondly, Eliza elected to study her degree at a different institution to where she did her Access course; this was partly due to the fact that the second HEI had a part-time mode of study. Thirdly, Eliza had already achieved a *MSC Career Counselling and Management* and so had already experienced postgraduate learning in higher education.

In spite of this previous educational success this chapter discussed how she felt frustrated and confused by her course. Some of the processes and infrastructure of the institution seemed to have been designed for the full-time mode of study and did not meet the needs of part-time students. Also the implicit nature of art and design assessment seemed problematic. As has been discussed previously, studio practice worked as a pedagogic device because students immersed themselves in the space and were able to share 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1990; Byrom, 2010) through horizontal discourse with staff and students (Bernstein, 1999). Due to time restrictions Eliza found this hard to do and so was out of the loop when information was shared.

These issues contributed to Eliza feeling as if she did not belong and at certain points in time she questioned why she was doing the course and wanted to leave. This was unexpected because of Eliza's proven track record in higher

education and also that she worked as a career advisor within a university setting. There were times when Eliza employed her practical wisdom to try to navigate through the course, but this was not always successful, and even though Eliza was in some ways more confident than Chad and Bob she often felt excluded from the culture of the studio.

Eliza was the only black student in the group of participants and was in her early 50s when the study began. Even though she had a very successful professional career she also wanted to develop her creativity in textiles (she was an accomplished dress-maker). She had explored textiles and printmaking on her Access course and so decided to do this as a degree. Studying her degree part-time meant she needed to plan her schedule well in advance so it was important she had accurate, timely, information about deadlines. Unfortunately, Eliza's experiences seemed to revolve around her being treated in a dismissive manner by staff who did not understand her needs as a part-time student. Inclusion issues led to Eliza not receiving a democratic education (Bernstein, 2000).

The content of Eliza's course seemed on the surface to be similar to Chad's degree in surface pattern. However, this course included opportunities for learning knit and stitch as well as printing and CAD. There also seemed to be a much more explicit concern with the design industries and the professional context rather than the explorative and creative strategies of design innovation.

## **The BA(Hons) Textiles Design course structure**

The first two years of the course were at level four, the modules included an introduction to creative practice and experimentation; design research and the exploration of textile design contexts. There was a clear focus on employability and students were encouraged to take part in overseas study, work placements and trips to professional trade fairs and studios.

Level five, also delivered across two years, continued with a more in-depth analysis and practice of market-led design; trends and innovation; research into the textile professional context as well as historical and contemporary critical issues and design as a practice. The modules built upon existing skills whilst utilising creativity in an innovative and professional manner.

The final two years at level six allowed students to pick their own personal creative pathway. Modules included a final major project which was in keeping with other art and design courses. The students also wrote a critical appraisal relating to their work and were also required to think about the promotion of their final degree collection. Students were expected to utilise a combination of creative intuition and acquired technical skills such as CAD.

The meetings with Eliza were more difficult to organise due to her very busy work and study schedule. In order to not inconvenience Eliza too much we met in a city coffee shop which was near her place of employment so that she could take part in the research after work.

## First meeting at the end of the first term

This extract was from a longer discussion and was at the beginning of her programme of study. She had handed in some work about colour and texture at this point in time and here she discussed the formative feedback she received about her work.

*S: Have you had any feedback at all on your work?*

*E: Yes at the end of each crit. somebody looks at your work and gives you a 'formative' and she talks you through it. I have to admit I didn't like – 'I see you in this band' and it's like well, 'Am I always going to be in this band?' because it wasn't explained quite well. For instance, there was a bit on texture and colour so the only things I could put in were embroideries as the sessions on colour were on Wednesday when I'm not in. So I missed quite a bit of it. I was told I was being, what's the word? 'Safe' and yet I'd gone off and done my own research about colour and did what I thought the colours were relating to. I think it was lipstick and make-up reds so I did my colour palette based on lipstick. I was a bit miffed at that because while she was saying stuff, I was saying, 'you'll have to explain what you mean by that, you're going to have to explain to me exactly what...' - I could see that she was getting frustrated; I was getting frustrated. I kind of just thought that's it! I don't want to hear any more. I don't do any more feedbacks. The last one we had to do, fortunately I wasn't there, so she couldn't give me any feedback. (Eliza, November 2011)*

There were issues that were concerned with pacing and criteria; that were the discursive rules of the pedagogic relationship between tutor and student (Bernstein, 1999). The tension between the explicit nature of the brief and the implicit nature of how the assessment criteria were applied caused confusion and frustration. The feedback diminished rather than expanded possibility and hope for future achievement by placing people within bands. Eliza had followed

the brief and believed she had complied with what it had asked for, however the tutor had used the word 'safe' to describe the embroidery which implied a lack of risk-taking and experimentation which was an important aspect of level four work.

Bernstein (1975) has said an invisible pedagogy implied an access to time and space in order to take risks and to experiment widely; however, this was exactly what Eliza did not have. Her inability to use colour with confidence could have been because she had not had an appropriate amount of tuition in this area due to not being able to attend all the classes. Also, the 'rules of the game' were not transmitted effectively when a student was not in the space often, talking and exploring meaning together with other students. It was not enough to meet the learning outcomes, to do well students needed to be risk-taking and thinking 'outside the box' (Burke and McManus, 2011; Broadhead, 2014, p.52) and this nuance perhaps was not clearly transmitted on the brief.

The part-time mode of study had not been perceived as part of the problem by the tutor, nor did there seem to have been any adjustment to take this into account. The deficit was seen to be in the student's performance rather than due to a disruption to the sequencing and pacing of the curriculum caused by Eliza's need to work on a Wednesday. Although the course had been offered to students as a part-time option, there was a lack of clarity about how this worked in practice.

*E: Doing the assignments was a bit of a nightmare because I wasn't sure what I was doing - I was given work the same as full-time so it was very confusing and I'd say, 'well how much?'*



*'We don't expect you to do as much work.' But 'What work do I need to do?' So it was a bit frustrating.*

*There are three of us who are part-time and it's just the same - make sure you give us the part-time brief so we know what's clear. I think its things like that the other two ladies who are part-time don't question. I say 'so alright, ok, but hold on a minute.' I can see that is going to be a sort of an issue. From my understanding the staffs are used to needy teenagers or something like that. (Eliza, November, 2011)*

Eliza was uncertain and constantly questioning about the art and design briefs which were written for full-time students. She sought clarity about the work load but staff gave her ambivalent answers to her questions. The assumption being that materials addressed to full-time students would also make sense to those studying part-time. This uncertainty did not inspire creative action (Shreeve, 2011) but frustration. Eliza perceived herself as being different to the other two part-time students as she had the confidence to question the tutors, however, this did not lead to change in her situation. The feeling of being excluded from knowing important things about her course continued throughout her first year, as can be seen by the next extract.

## **Second meeting at the end of the first year**

*I just felt, well I don't know what I'm doing. I'm having to fit in but nobody's actually explaining anything properly or finding out stuff I should know. Found out about and using their Moodle, for instance. They say to book on there but they don't put anything on it. I don't know where anything is in order to put anything in and there's been a few times when - me being me - I have to have a conversation with various tutors 'what's going on, don't know anything about this?'*

*The 'Design your Future' which is a module that just happened, and again, I'm a career advisor, so I was picking*

*holes in it. We do this work for the 'Society of Textiles' programme and we also do an external exhibition which is some of your own work. So the tutor went round everybody's workspace and of course, as usual, I was left to the last two minutes so it again it wasn't equal time given. So when she looked through my work she said, 'I suppose you can put something in for next year', so I said, 'What does that mean?' 'I don't think you've got enough here' so I said 'Surely there must be something that I can work on that I can submit?' (Eliza, June 2012)*

Eliza still had not got a grip on the way systems and procedures worked within her institution. The lack of information that she trusted could ultimately lead to an erosion of confidence. She could not fully take part in the horizontal discourses of the textile studio where knowledge was shared between staff and students (Bernstein, 1999). Bernstein (1999, p.60) made the point that, "Clearly the more members are isolated or excluded from each other, the weaker the social base for the development of either repertoire or reservoir." Eliza had fewer opportunities to develop a repertoire of strategies to enable her to meet her potential. She also did not get fair access to the tutor's time and expertise due to always been given the last tutorial slot. Bernstein argued that unequal distribution of resources could impact on enhancement, inclusion and participation (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxii).

This was demonstrated by the fact that Eliza did not have enough work to submit to the textile exhibition which again led to further exclusion. Most worryingly Eliza was not given the chance to work on something so she could submit. Perhaps the tutor believed that as Eliza was part-time she would have another chance to participate next year, but this was not made explicit in the conversation, nor framed in positive terms. The concern about not having the

correct information had a big impact on Eliza's ability to take part in enhancement activities, as could be seen in the next meeting:

### **Third meeting half way through the second year**

*E:It's outrageous! And there's the tour to Milan and Venice and I thought 'right - what's happening in February?' So I arranged everything at work; someone to do my teaching; someone to take over my job - things like that. While I was away last week before the end of term, we were told the dates had changed! So I'd already paid my deposit and I said well I can't go, (what do you mean you can't go?), 'because,' I said, 'You gave me these dates and these are the dates I'm going on holiday from work - so I'm really sorry I want my money back, I can't go.'*  
(Eliza, January 2013)

Eliza had missed out on the trip even though she had taken the time to plan her leave from work so she could go to Milan with the other students. This was yet another form of exclusion, due to Eliza not having access to accurate information and staff not considering the needs of part-time mature students. Again Eliza's experiences revealed the mythical nature of horizontal solidarities constructed within a cohort of students where they were addressed through assignments and activities as if they were all the same with similar amounts of flexible free time (Broadhead, 2014). The students who did go on the trip would gain more opportunities for enhancement than Eliza. Bernstein (2000, p.xx) claimed that the right to be included, socially, culturally and personally was central to a democratic education; through poor organisation Eliza has been excluded. The series of issues derived from Eliza's mode of study, as a mature student who needed to work, contributed to an overall feeling of not being valued and being invisible, as if the institutional discourse was only addressed to 'traditional students'.

## Fourth meeting at the end of the second year

There were times when Eliza began to feel she was making progress, especially when she felt respect for a particular tutor who was able to communicate effectively with her.

*E: We did prints in January, was it January? We were I got a new brief and which was really good, really enjoyed it and the tutor was absolutely brilliant! She was very encouraging, very motivating and I just had to do it properly. So one of the things that I did; I made sure I looked at the brief, covered everything on there. But again, me being me, let's get it right - the brief was for the full-time students and not for the part-time students. So I did point out that actually if someone looking at this I haven't met the criteria because it was for full-time and not a part-time. So got that sorted out, so that was fine, so I knew what I was doing. I just think the print - it was brilliant - so I felt really, really pleased that I've learnt how to actually print something from the design.(Eliza, June 2013)*

Eliza's tutor was able to listen to her concerns about the brief and was able to change it so it was appropriate for the part-time mode of study. This made Eliza feel confident that she was going in the right direction and at the end of module felt that she had made progress and learned something. There could have been many elements that contributed to this success such as the content of the module, Eliza's personal engagement with the work or the teaching strategies employed by the tutor. However, Eliza herself seemed to cite being able to discuss her concerns over her education with the tutor and to have her concerns acted upon. This could be seen as an example of phronesis where both Eliza and the tutor were acting in the best interests of themselves and others whilst respecting each other's point of view.

Eliza commented that she was still finding aspects of her course difficult due to poor communication with her personal tutor.

*S: Is this the same tutor from last year?*

*E: Yeah, yeah, not had a tutorial. I realize I could be intimidating and I realize that, that could put her off as well. But at the same time she should be able to handle me [both laugh]. As I said before, you know, I'll send e-mails - don't get replies - so I have to send another one about what I'd like her to do. I'm like a dog with a bone I don't give up. (Eliza, June 2013)*

Eliza was weighing up two different ideas, her sense of entitlement that she needed a tutorial with her realisation that the tutor had human fallibilities and might be vulnerable to feeling intimidated by a student who was confident, knowledgeable and articulate. Overall she put her own education first saying she would not give up. This could be viewed as resilience, however, a person of practical wisdom may acknowledge that emailing was not working and perhaps another method of communication should have been tried. It must be asked whether this problem with communication was only the responsibility of the student. Again as in the case of Chad and Bob humour was used to temper a tense situation. Eliza used the humour to show that she knew that people may have perceived her in a particular way, may even have been a little afraid of her, but at the same time she needed to diffuse the tension out of the situation so she was not emotionally hurt.

Eliza had been on the course two years and was reaching the end of level 4 and still the issue of being part-time came up. It had become the subject of

horizontal discourse between students and the notion that part-time students were not valued was one that was perpetuated in the discussion.

*E: One girl that was doing part-time decided to go full-time because we get forgotten about. She was told 'oh it doesn't matter because we'll just put you on the file.' So I said 'Does that mean we're [part-time students] off the file what does that mean?' And I just keep saying, 'Part-time how's this going to work as far as I'm concerned?' I'm paying; I expect to get a service. I'm just happy to say what I'm doing this summer, because I'm reading books about prints and try to get up to speed with Illustrator and Photoshop. So next year I'll spend lot of time doing. What was really good about doing the prints was I did it free hand so I drew; it was interesting because I'd thought I'd probably be better off sticking with Photoshop. (Eliza, June 2013)*

At this point it seemed Eliza was very sensitive to her part-time status and was mistrustful of how staff prioritised her learning needs as opposed to those doing full-time study. She interpreted a comment from a member of staff as being further evidence of this inequality between the modes of study. It would be hard for the institution to win back her trust. Duckworth, (2014, p.179) observed that some students' experience of the symbolic power they were subject to was not hidden. They had a strong awareness of where they were being positioned and were aware they were being labelled and stigmatised.

Eliza resorted to seeing her relationship with the HEI as a transactional one because she continued to feel excluded. However, she was still motivated to plan her studies which she intended to pursue in the summer break. She was an example of a self-directed learner who was happy to take ownership of her own education. So this 'transactional' stance was taken because she did not

feel valued as a legitimate student, not because she did not recognise her own agency in the educational process.

Eliza also showed herself to be self-critical and reflective identifying what she had learned; that the whole creative process was what was being assessed not just an end artefact or outcome. Marks for Eliza seemed to be a means of suggesting where the strengths and weaknesses lied although she did not seem to recognise a consistency in the marks she was achieving. One similarity with Chad was that she imagined using her break to improve her IT skills, although this did not seem to be an area of great concern at this stage of her course.

*E: In my first semester I only got 58 or something like that I can't remember. I got 75 for my techniques and processes as well so, so it's funny because all the marks can be a bit ... I think with the studio practise I realize that it's not the end product; it's actually the process and, you know, experimentation - so that's something I need to work on.  
(Eliza, June 2013)*

Although Eliza was more playful and experimental when studying on her Access to HE course, she seemed to have become inhibited. Again the way she had to balance her work and study has meant that she had to be strategic in how she used her time.

*S: You used to experiment in Access didn't you?*

*E: Yes, yeah but for some reason I noticed I sometimes get a bit of a block. I think a lot of it is better than last year and hopefully going into the second year (which actually does count now). I think it's a certain amount that goes towards your final mark or something. So I know I've got to be a bit*

*pragmatic at the same time I got to really put a lot more work into it than I have been. I have done the Wednesdays and if it's the open access as well I'm there all day 'til about 7 o'clock at night making use of all the facilities. This year I had to work half a day extra at work so I was working 3 1/2 days, instead of doing two days I was doing 1 1/2 days on my course. It couldn't be helped it was just one of those things, it helped to pay for the course and again since I was being pragmatic about it all. Every now and again I asked 'Oh what am I doing this for, why am I doing this?' (Eliza, June 2013)*

Because Eliza was not in college every day, she had to make sure she exploited the resources (print workshops, library, IT suite) when she could so this would mean putting long hours in when she was in the HEI. The amount of time she was able to donate to her course had fallen, even though she acknowledged she needed to produce more work. At the same time she was mindful that the marks in the second year contributed to her final degree. Eliza employed a pragmatic stance by seeing the positive in a situation she had no control over. She told herself that the extra half-day at work would help pay for the course. There were clearly moments of doubt in Eliza's mind, perhaps the balancing act was just too difficult. Perhaps to take a pleasure in the playfulness of creativity a person needed time and space to indulge themselves in materials and processes, without an eye on the learning outcomes or possible marks.

Marks seemed to mean a lot to Eliza as to other students; it seemed that getting to know her feedback and marks was not straightforward in her case:

*E: This semester because I couldn't get in, I did say, I was going away I wouldn't be there to pick up the marks. So when I came back and went in, I asked, 'Have you got my marks?' 'No, not yet', and I said, 'Well the external examiners are coming in so where are my marks?' So anyway I managed to get them verbally but I haven't seen the feedback sheets or anything like that. Maybe it's a bit naughty but I'm thinking, well, I want to*



*complain about my marking. I thought it's not worth it because it doesn't go forward to anything it's probably me just being a bit naughty thinking how far can I go with this. (Eliza, June 2013)*

Again Eliza constructed an internal narrative about what course of action to take because of the difficulties she had getting her marks. Was Eliza being over critical of the academic staff due to her also working in an educational context? Were some of her expectations unreasonable or did she have a point when she was waiting to get her feedback? Eliza did entertain the idea of complaining, but did not do this lightly. After her deliberations she, again pragmatically, decided that the marks did not contribute towards her degree so it would not be worth the effort to complain. She also questioned her own motives for complaining: was she genuinely concerned or was this her exercising her power as 'a consumer' demanding a service she had paid for? Williams (2013, p.7) has talked about the construction of students as consumers and with this a perception that they now felt empowered to exert their rights. If Eliza did feel this sense of empowerment it had not come through in her narratives so far and in this instance she had decided not to act on her sense of injustice.

*E: Another thing! It was quite interesting. Well it's called 'Design in your Futures' which is about what I would call 'careers' really. I found a lot of the second years coming to me and asking questions. I'm thinking, 'why are they asking me questions?' 'You're a careers advisor aren't you?' Which I didn't mind but I say have you done this? Have you done that? - and they're going no, no.*

*One girl wants to do teaching and I said, 'Well have you done any work experience? Have you been into schools? What age group do you want to teach? I said 'Because when you come back you're going to have to complete your application form and you're going to need to say you've done that otherwise, you know, you're not going through!'. 'Oh, nobody told me that, nobody told me that.' I went 'Well that's what you need to sort*

*out; you need to run around...’ and hopefully she’s working at some summer schools. It’s not my job, I’m here to learn not to, I could quite easily take over the role if they paid me but...(Eliza, June 2013)*

Eliza was comparing herself with the academic staff; she recognised their responsibilities towards the students and often found them lacking. A relationship of slight competitiveness and hostility seemed to be growing between her and some of her tutors. Was Eliza compensating for her novice status to the visual arts by exerting her expertise as a careers lecturer? By advising the other students Eliza could become included in the horizontal discourse of the studio whilst gaining a feeling of value. In terms of phronesis, it could be seen that Eliza had noticed a need to advise one student in particular and was drawing upon her own professional experience to help her because it was the right thing to do. However, was she at the same time undermining the staff and sending out a message to the students that they were not very good, perpetuating a ‘them and us’ situation? Would Eliza be acting in this way if her early experiences on the course had been more positive?

### **Fifth meeting half way through the third year**

Unlike Chad and Bob, Eliza had begun to seriously consider leaving her course. The problems that she had been having at level four were not being resolved.

*E:I am thinking about leaving this ridiculous course. I was looking forward to the second year (moving up to the level 5 now as it is a part-time course). I was so looking forward to doing a new brief as I had done quite well on the previous one. But it was not a positive brief. Our six designs were to be given to an American firm – six designs – so I knew I had to produce the work. But my sketch book wasn’t progressing or*

*up-to-date as I was working hard in the print room. I knew it was supposed to follow your working process. The tutor told me to leave it to the end – but I wasn't sure about that. The last project I did really well, but I didn't really understand visual research – every time I was stuck I asked for help. (Eliza, February, 2014)*

Eliza was able to ask for help and could identify areas that she needed further clarification on but she still seemed unconfident and uncertain in her design practice. The tone of this account had lost the positive aspects that were part of the previous year's meeting. She seemed to be unable to prioritise the tasks, focusing on the doing and making rather than the documentation of the process and the reflective thinking that should be seen in her sketchbook. Was this another issue of part-time study?

*E: So the tutor said come in early and I will talk to you. So I did I came in at 9.30 when we start at 10.30, but she told me she couldn't speak to me as she had to go to a meeting. So I tried to teach myself CAD and just got on preparing my screens. I went back to the learning outcomes and didn't do any samples. I felt frustrated I didn't want to do it. One of the younger students was so sweet they put together 'a how to do CAD' guide for me. (Eliza, February, 2014)*

Much like the experiences of Chad and Bob, a class mate had tried to help Eliza. It was interesting that in two very different institutions the mature students have had to teach themselves CAD or try to gain help from their peer group. It was also a mark of the phronesis of the younger students who wanted to help others. It was interesting that both instances of helping happened in the second year, before a competitive culture could develop. Eliza was clearly frustrated and again went back to the learning outcomes on the brief to see if they would help her. It was clear that the learning outcomes, on their own, did not help and Eliza needed the support of her tutor:

*E: I stayed late and I knew two screens wouldn't be enough so I ended up doing 34 screens. But she kept saying I would have to manipulate them and I kept saying 'I don't understand'. The upshot was I only got 48% and I got 55% on my Techniques and Processes (T and P). Last time I got 75%. It so complicated so I went back to look at my feedback I got 56 for my visual research and 51 from my T and P and I still don't understand their marking system. But I still produced 6 designs. I didn't know what I was doing or where I went wrong. I sent an email but then staff went defensive. I bullet pointed the points, I wasn't blaming her. But when I got to the meeting it wasn't her but her line manager and the head of the course. We had this meeting and I still don't know where I went wrong. How do you learn something two hours a week especially if you don't have the packages at home. I'll just do it my way.(Eliza, February, 2014)*

In a sense Eliza was doing everything right she was using the learning outcomes as her guide; asking for help and re-reading her past feedback to try and discover what she was failing to do. Getting a mark of 75% previously was not useful if the student did not understand why they got such a high mark. It seemed that one of problems was - how could Eliza learn CAD? -which would be difficult to learn at home unless one was very confident and proficient in IT skills? The tutor had called upon other staff members to answer Eliza's questions. Reading between the lines this member of staff seemed reluctant to communicate with Eliza or did not feel able to clarify what Eliza needed to do to succeed. Perhaps the part-time route did not provide enough time and resources for her to learn? There still seemed an air of ambiguity in the assessment process. Information should be made explicit, some careful thought by educators on what information students needed and the best way to communicate it would have benefited the situation.

## Sixth meeting half way through fourth year

Eliza was now half way through her degree having completed three years, now she had three more years yet to do. It seemed that she had been taking stock and thinking about her educational experiences so far on the course.

*E: I got my last lot of work back which was not too bad you know. I did talk to the tutor and basically said, "You know I'm not sure if this is for me and you know really I'm not enjoying it and if I'm spending two days of my life for the next three years, it's not a good use of my time really." And she was a bit shocked and bit surprised and basically said to me, if I could get through the next year (which is this coming year), things will be a lot easier in the final two years because it's much more bio-self-direct stuff. (Eliza, February 2015)*

Eliza had thought about her time commitment and was making a rational decision as to whether to stay or leave. She was asking the tutor about it and so she seemed to be taking into account the opinion of others. The tutor was surprised that Eliza had considered dropping out so it could be assumed that she had not noticed how frustrated Eliza had been. Eliza had been encouraged to stay, to 'get through' the second year as if it would be a trial with the promise that the final two years at level six would be easier because they were more self-directed. There was no suggestion that the course would change to address to some of the problems Eliza had been having. Why would level six be easier than level five? Was Eliza ready for level six now and that was why she had been frustrated at levels four and five? Although the tutor had been encouraging, the underlying problems were not really thought about in depth or addressed. The tutor had not listened to what Eliza was unhappy about and assumed it was do with finding the course difficult when actually the issues had

been to do with communication, misunderstanding and exclusion. Eliza decided to stay for another year and was attempting to accept that she would have to keep being pro-active in getting the support she needed as a part-time student.

*E: I'm only here one day a week and they tend to forget so now I can joke about it and say, "Yeah, I'm part-time - but I'm still here!" So I just make jokes about it now and so that's fine. For the last brief's submission I asked do I need to do anything else? I need to just check what I'm doing is okay because I don't want to be spending twenty pounds to come up for a day just to change a name. It just so happened on that day we had a big meeting at work so I was late getting to the studio which meant I had to come in again. I had to change everything to a Wednesday because they kept changing dates. Normally it's a Friday then they'd change it to a Wednesday or Tuesday. The last final bits were on a Tuesday when I can't get in so I said, "Can I have a handout so I can see what you've done myself?" So I got the handout, went in late on the Wednesday stayed as long as I could. (Eliza, February 2015)*

Eliza continued to use humour to draw attention to her part-time status without it seeming that she was being overly critical or a 'difficult' student. This could be as a result of her being interviewed by the course leader when she questioned her marks. Perhaps Eliza was trying not to get too frustrated with the situation and humour could be a way of tempering her feelings of injustice. The changes in scheduled sessions were another source of difficulty for Eliza. She kept being pro-active in asking for the information she knew she needed and in this instance was successful in getting a handout.

*E: So now we've started this new brief and again it starts. I need to start now; sit down and go through everything. So again I emailed last week and said, "Can you let me know if I need to bring anything this Friday nothing is on the Moodle? Do we have our own [part-time] brief on the internet?" Liz is now the course rep. so she's actually sent an email to say, " You know nothing is on the Moodle. Just read the brief today and it says very clearly that a lot of information will be put on the Moodle.*

*We're expecting you to do that." I went on Moodle again today - nothing there. I kind of know what I need to do. I know that I've got to start doing surface design trend forecasting. I just need to have designs ready to go by Friday. Also I'm working at night so I'm thinking, "Right I need to get this done and it's quite an interesting brief or not as the case may be, about being innovative; innovative through fabrics and I don't understand what that means." (Eliza, February 2015)*

This was an example of students participating politically in order to try and improve the issues that were making their educational attainment difficult.

Bernstein's (2000, p.xx) third pedagogic right was that of participation where students could, through democratic means influence change in their education and in the wider society. Liz and Eliza were making a claim from the position of being on the outside to those with power over the curriculum (Biesta, 2010: Ranciere, 1999). The student representative was also studying part-time and understood what difficulties Eliza had been having in getting access to the correct information.

The *Moodle* or VLE was very important for students who were part-time as this could be a means of including people who were not able to attend certain sessions. However, as had happened previously, Eliza and Liz did not get what had been promised and continued working in the dark. In effect the claim had not been heard. The student representative system would only instigate innovation and change if students were listened to and their concerns acted upon (Biesta, 2010,p.122). Eliza said she 'kind of knows' what she needed to do, but then went on to say that she did not understand what the phrase 'innovative through fabrics' meant, more information on *Moodle* could have helped her respond to the brief well; there was a danger she could have misunderstood what she should have been doing. The scenario that Eliza

described was very similar to the problems she had had in the first year, there was no brief designed for part-time students; no understanding that last minute time changes made it hard for students to plan their time and information was not made explicit on the VLE.

## **Discussion**

The tone of Eliza's narrative was that of frustration; she was drawing upon her previous experience of higher education where she had been successful in order to try and improve her performance on the course. Chad also talked about frustration when she was unable to master CAD. Both students identified areas for improvement but seemed to be at a loss on how to move forward. Eliza claimed that she did not understand what the tutors were trying to tell her. She also seemed focused on the marks rather than enjoying the process of learning and creating. The two aspects that seemed to be inhibiting Eliza's achievement were a lack of clear communication and a restriction in the amount of learning time Eliza needed.

Bowl (2001) has found that mature students could be frustrated when engaging with education. Was this because the institutional infra-structure had not been designed for their needs? Due to Eliza's patterns of attendance she was not able to fully take part in the culture of the studio. Thus there were less opportunities to engage in horizontal discourse with staff and students and it was through discourse Bernstein (1999, p.159) argued that students could become adept in using the vertical discourse (the formal and academic language) of a subject area like the social sciences or in this case art and



design. Eliza and her tutors seemed to be talking at cross purposes, or perhaps talking with different languages. It also meant that Eliza missed out on the implicit strategies for success or the unspoken rules of the game that staff and students share.

These 'hidden codes' were not explicitly written on the brief so when Eliza looked to the learning outcomes for guidance they do not give the whole story. Orr's (2010) observation that in practice learning outcomes could have an ambivalent relationship to face-to-face teaching seemed particularly relevant in this case..

Perhaps it was unrealistic of both the institution and Eliza to expect high achievement on this particular course. The reasons for this were not to do with ability or aptitude but to do with the pedagogic device that had been used to teach the subject. The invisible pedagogy of the studio required resources of time, space and in this instance, the physical materials and equipment of the print workshop to be effective (Bernstein, 2003, p.208). As Eliza had said herself, how could she learn something so complex (CAD) in two hours a week? Often the specialist equipment required to get a professional result could not be sourced or re-created within a domestic space, so the strategy of catching up on work at home could be much more difficult in practice for those working in the field of art and design.

Much of art and design education was an embodied experience, in that a student had to physically practice the skills in order to gain what Calucci-Gray, et al. (2013, p.130) called embodied knowledge. To what extent were Chad and

Eliza able to master print and CAD skills when both were restricted in time, Chad due to family commitments and Eliza due to her career? There appeared to be a climate where students were expected to succeed against all odds and if they did not the fault was their own and not the structural inequalities many were up against during each step of their learning journey, (Duckworth, 2014, p.185; Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiv).

This blame and guilt associated with 'failure' was hardly surprising in current neo-liberalist society, where myths of everyone having equal choice and options permeated through institutions and public life (Duckworth, 2014, p.185). Institutions projected images of themselves that showed them to be professional, inclusive and of quality. So if a student did not achieve, their institution did not have to take any responsibility as it could point to the structures it had in place that seemed to enable student success. Thus students as 'savvy' consumers were expected to make informed choices and navigate their own educational experiences; failing to do so was ultimately their own failing (Williams, 2013).

The second point about the invisible pedagogy was that it depended on a space where the students were physically present and were seen to be present. It was the performance of the students within that space which was assessed implicitly by tutors (Bernstein, 2003, pp.200-210). Thus students could easily be misread as not being serious or not engaging with the course if they could not be seen in the studio space (Bernstein, 2003 p.200). If Eliza was not physically present in the studio she was not only less visible to the tutors, her absence was in danger

of being misread by tutors as signifying someone who was not serious about their practice.

The evidence that Eliza acted with practical wisdom could be seen at various points during her narrative. She debated with herself as to whether or not to complain about her marks, reasoning that if she did she may not be acting for the best reasons and that the marks would not act towards her final classification. Eliza also tried to help a student who wanted to teach because she noticed she was in need of some timely advice about gaining work experience. Eliza did this because it was the right thing to do rather than because she 'was being paid to do it' (Ricoeur, 1994, p.189). There was also evidence of a 'younger' student helping her learn CAD which was similar to the acts of friendship experienced by Chad and to some extent Bob. Some students were resisting the competitive culture of grading and 'one-up-manship' in order to support their peers.

The narratives of Chad, Bob and Eliza had revealed the importance of friendship and trust or social capital in supporting students through their learning journey. Trust was something some students lost due to the symbolic violence by those in position of power (Duckworth, 2014, p.183). This could be seen in the way Eliza was treated at certain points in her educational journey which could be viewed as an act of violence against her sense of self, it was also clear she had lost her trust in some of the tutors.

At her lowest ebb when she was trying to produce six designs using CAD in a restricted amount of time Eliza found a friend from her younger peers. Students

could find courage to empower themselves through the bonds of friendship, (Duckworth, 2014, p.184). The social networks and experiences they encountered could allow them to go beyond their previous experiences which often resulted in violence and trauma (Duckworth, 2014, p.184). So Eliza did not give up as there were others who try to help her.

Eliza was applying her expertise and experience gained from her past education and employment in the higher education sector to a new context and perhaps she had not fully realised the impact this might have on the staff, who appeared from her narrative to be intimidated by her. This could also contribute to the difficulties in communication. Phronesis drew partly on experience, but, it could be argued that people of practical wisdom should be open to innovative solutions and the surprises that came with living a good life (Nussbaum, 2001, p.305). This was because if something worked well in the past it did not mean it would work in a new situation.

Perhaps Eliza and her tutors could think of new ways to communicate effectively. Here the role of imagination and foresight would be important, in terms of having sympathy with other people through their narratives (Erben, 1998, pp.10-11) and to be able to imagine the possible consequences of one's actions. Behaviours; such as always leaving Eliza to the last tutorial slot of the day; not answering emails and missing meetings did not give the impression that the staff were acting with phronesis. It could be that this was defensive behaviour because Eliza was quite confident and was not afraid to ask questions about her assessment. In effect Eliza's questions exposed some of

the ambiguities that lay at the heart of the invisible pedagogy of art and design education.

As a newcomer to this discipline her participation had the potential to effect innovation and improvement on her course, if she was listened to, (Biesta, 2010, p.81). And as been said before perhaps Eliza needed to acknowledge her own limitations and not expect the high marks she had gained previously in another discipline, but everyone wants to do the best they can and to achieve in spite of the difficulties (Sennett, 2008).

When Eliza talked about paying for a service it seemed that this was due to her feeling excluded and frustrated, if she had not felt alienated from her education she might not have taken such a stance. Williams (2013, pp. 86-87) has argued that students have been constructed by higher education as customers in a financial, transactional relationship with an institution rather than one based on intellectual engagement. Students were in danger of equating value for money with academic success. Eliza did not have such a simplistic understanding of the educational process as she did take responsibility for her own learning. She considered her own conduct and areas she needed to improve in order to get good marks. Perhaps her frustration was with the paternalistic nature of her particular course that seemed to tell her what to do but did not listen to her concerns in return?

Williams (2013, p.98) discussed how the infra-structure of an HEI left a forty-one-year-old woman feeling 'angry, patronised and infantised' when she was given an absence mark for being late to a seminar. Her argument was that the

contemporary university was becoming more like an extension of compulsory schooling. This can be seen in how Eliza felt when she was seen by the head of the department and the course leader instead of her tutor when she questions her grades for six designs. This heavy handed approach did not help her understand her creative practice but made her feel that she should try and work on her own with no help from the tutors. Thus Eliza's trust had been further eroded.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at Eliza's experiences in light of Bernstein's (2000) definition of a democratic education. It has looked at the aspects that seemed to exclude her from enhancement activities on the course, for example, being selected for external exhibitions and going on trips. There had been an overriding tone of frustration in Eliza's tone. She did have a certain level of knowledge, confidence and experience in higher education but in a discipline other than art and design.

The ways in which being a part-time student were problematic when learning through an invisible pedagogy like studio practice have been discussed and the potential to overcome some of these problems with the help of friends. There seemed as to be a continuing problem of misunderstanding and miscommunication between the staff and Eliza which had eroded a feeling of trust between the two parties. Overall it seemed that Eliza was frustrated because she was not heard when she asked questions about her own education.

There were some similarities between Chad, Bob and Eliza's experiences in that they all struggled with a particular aspect of the course and the issue never seemed to get resolved. For Chad it was her lack of confidence using CAD; Bob had a fear and antagonism towards academic writing and Eliza constantly felt excluded and frustrated in not understanding the way she was assessed.

There were moments when Chad, Bob and Eliza experienced a democratic and inclusive education and these were the points when students helped each other in the spirit of friendship. These incidents were where people were not just focused on their own individual attainment but helped others to achieve their potential too. It could be seen as democratic because people were able to act with practical wisdom and virtue. However, these moments were fleeting as there were also instances where all three post-Access students were subjected to symbolic violence, were excluded and their potential was not enhanced.

Chad and Eliza were at times 'infantilised' by the structures of their institutions. Chad felt she had lost her control over her work load by having to submit to the constant deadlines for small tasks and larger assessment briefs (some she felt were not important). Eliza felt patronised when she questioned the feedback and marks for her work. Issues to do with power and the unequal relationship between transmitter and acquirer were at work here.

The experiences of Chad, Bob and Eliza were not considered by the educational institutions and none of the post-Access students talked about trying to change their education through political action. Eliza was closest to doing this when she spoke to the course leader, but she was not listened to and

reported it as a negative experience. Eliza and Liz, the student representative, did make attempts to ask for information to be made available on the VLE; this would be a way of including part-time students by increasing their access to learning resources. However, they were not listened to and the information was not put on the VLE.



## **Chapter ten: Jane's story of confidence, inclusion and participation through phronesis**

This case study explored the experiences of Jane that offered an account of how she felt confident and included on her course. This led to her participating in order to make her educational experiences more positive for herself and others; at the same time she was able to practice practical wisdom at various points during her studies. This did not mean that Jane found higher education straightforward as she still had to work hard to overcome aspects of study she found challenging. Jane was in her early 50s; she was a mother to two grown up children and lived with her husband. She came from a well-educated family; her father studied at Oxford University but she saw herself as the 'non-academic' family member. She had an ageing mother who was bipolar and Jane often had to care for her. She studied full-time for a *BA (Hons) in Art and Design* at the local HEI. Although this course was delivered in a different institution, it shared some similarities with Bob's degree programme of study in that it gave students the opportunity to work with a variety of media and techniques.

### **The BA (Hons) Art and Design Course Structure**

During the first year, level four, students studied four modules: *Studio Practice; Techniques and Processes; Theoretical Studies; Visual Arts Studies*. At level five the students repeated the modules which were described as being intermediate. They also did an additional drawing module. At level six, the final year, students study: *Final Major Project; Integrated Practice; Advanced Theoretical Studies (Dissertation) and Art and Design Studies*. Students were

able to specialise in two of the following areas: Painting; 2D/3D Media; Photography; Printmaking; Ceramics; Drawing and Digital Arts. Jane made particular reference to *Studio Practice, Techniques and Processes* and the dissertation within her narrative. The course placed particular emphasis on the development of transferable skills specifically that developed an understanding of the demands of different aspects of a professional practice.

Further to this, students were increasingly encouraged to utilise self-led, independent learning as the course progressed, so that they could fully realise and fulfil their creative potential and individuality style. On the website the course area said that, “Our students, as varied in age as in background, create a friendly, creative and stimulating community, which makes learning and teaching a pleasure. You will be provided with work areas in stimulating and well-equipped studios.” This suggested that unlike Chad’s course where she was the only post-Access student, Jane potentially was studying in a more diverse cohort of students.

Jane and I met in a library so that she could attend the meetings without much disruption to her schedule.

## First meeting at beginning of the first year

*J: Well going back to schooldays I did GCEs and CSEs (I'm now a mature student and very mature). I stayed on a year for A levels but couldn't cope with the pressure of exams. So I left after a year of A levels and just got a job in a bank. My children had been at the art college and really enjoyed their time there; one doing a degree and one doing National Diploma in art and design. They both did really well and had a good time. When they left I thought it was my time to have a go. I'd been going to sketching and drawing classes and pottery classes and things before and so I started on the Access course and it was a very, very informative and enjoyable time. I hummed and erred about doing a degree but I think the Access course gave me the confidence to be able to go for it. So that's what I've started now BA (Hons) Art and Design at the HEI. (Jane, November 2011)*

For Jane it was her children who were the role models that inspired her to return to education. Their experiences motivated her to go to art college although she had begun to take some creative classes. She explicitly said that doing the Access course gave her the confidence to do a degree, she was able to act because she felt confident. This was really positive because some people would be fearful of not being able to cope with higher level study after previously dropping out of A levels. When Jane commented on her first term in was very positive:

*S: Jane could you tell me what your first term has been like at the HEI?*

*J: Yes it's been very enjoyable. I think the Access course did definitely prepare me for some of the pressures of the work that's expected. We've had a couple of written pieces to do. We've already had to do a one thousand word essay and we had to interview somebody who is doing a job or a similar job to what we are hoping to do when we've finished our degrees and then we had to write a thousand word report on that. Now those aren't my strengths - just not my strengths. I did okay though, they seemed pleased enough with what I'd done but I'm much better on practical*

*work. I've been doing printmaking - there were two mini projects. The facilities are very good and the teachers are very inspirational and helpful and encouraging. So it has been a good first term. (Sam and Jane, November 2011)*

Very much like Bob, Jane viewed herself as a practical person rather than an academic one. She like Bob viewed writing as being inherently different to the practical elements of her course. She felt well-prepared by her Access course and commented positively on her teachers. Jane's academic success on the course was very strong:

*J: I got 85 percent for studio practice and 83 percent for technique and processes and then I got for the essay I got 65 percent and for the report 62 percent.*

*S: For practical that's very good, so are you pleased with that?*

*J: Yes I was very pleased with the practical work and I suppose really expected that for the essay. I do want to get higher. (Laughs)*

*S: But you still did very well.*

*J: They do give very good feedback. Actually it was very helpful feedback as it had been on the Access course. Actually for the report feedback the tutor wrote a lot of notes. She annotated my report which I will find very helpful and then she wrote a lot of helpful notes at the end as well. I'll be able to refer back to that when we have to do it again this semester and do another essay this semester. (Sam and Jane, November 2011)*

Although Jane perceived that her strengths did not lie in essay writing, her marks were not terrible, although in comparison, she did excel in the practical modules. Unlike Bob she imagined that she could do better, she wanted to improve, her essay writing ability was not perceived as being fixed. Coffield (2009, p.5) has argued that some students believed their abilities were static and could not be

improved. He pointed to the evidence that all students could develop their skills and abilities (Hart et al., 2004).

Jane's belief that she could improve was significant; belief in self-improvement was the beginning of Coffield's (2009, p.14) upward spiral where all students and staff could meet their potential. She had the foresight to know that she would be asked to do another essay in the future and that the feedback could help her do better. She valued the feedback. The member of staff had taken the time to give her student detailed notes and Jane recognised this as helpful, enhancing her educational experience. When considering Bernstein's (2000, p.xx) pedagogic rights it could be seen that Jane had been encouraged and supported both during the Access course and during her degree and she had a certain amount of confidence. She was also being included unlike Eliza who was often excluded.

Like Jane, Eliza valued and used the feedback from her tutors in order to improve her performance, however, she often had to fight to get the timely feedback and information she needed. The difference could be in the fact that Jane was full-time and Eliza was part-time. Jane seemed to have quickly fitted in and seemed to have access to the information and resource she needed to achieve. Jane could also give her time to being in the studio and in the workshops which Eliza could not do.

## Second meeting at the end of the first year

The positive tone of Jane's narrative continued at the second meeting where she talked about the activities she had been involved with. In particular she talked about an installation she made using clay forms:

*J: I also strongly lit them so there were shadows; that was what it was about. Seeing what the shadows would be like because the clay was all sort of undulating. The shadow would fall on each piece. I experimented with glazing so hung some of the glazed bits up. And then I was trying to use multimedia - just sort of trying to push ideas in different directions and see how it went. I was quite pleased with it. It was very, very simple. These pieces of clay were very simple but I got some quite positive feedback from it they seem to quite like it and the photographs worked quite well. (Jane, June 2012)*

Jane was very confident in experimenting with her work taking some risks and combining different materials. She again mentioned the supportive feedback which enhanced her confidence in that what she was doing was good. As Jane did not seem to struggle for information or feedback from the tutors she was able to immerse herself in the making process, there was also a sense that she was free to try her ideas out without any fear of failure. From a position of confidence she then was able ask another student to help her:

*J: I had an idea of asking one of the photography students at the college if they might like to come and take some photographs of my work. One of my fellow students suggested a post- Access student who was doing a photography course as a degree at the HEI. So Cliff very kindly came along took some photos for me and I took some of my own photos so I had a good collection of lots of photographs of the piece. I actually developed a frame for them to hang from. The pieces hang using an idea I had from my Access course that used a trolley wheel. I've made it so the frame would actually rotate from the ceiling so the pieces could be turned round and photographs taken from different angles. (Jane, June 2012)*

The students were clearly sharing information and skills. Jane was able to identify Cliff as a suitable collaborator from a fellow student which demonstrated the networks of solidarity that could develop in the studio. Chad, Bob and Eliza sought help from other students because they were not confident in aspects of their courses; for example Eliza needed help with CAD; Chad needed a graphics person to help her with typography and Bob needed help organising work for assessment . However, Jane was able to take her own photographs but recognised the value of working with a skilled photographer to enhance the quality of her work. She contributed something innovative to the enterprise by building a rotating frame so that interesting photographs could be taken. She was able to re-contextualise ideas from the past in conjunction with different media to create something new.

*J: I don't know quite how it happened but I ended up being the co-ordinator on behalf of the HEI for part of the City's open table-top sale and that was held at the Carla Sangam building.*

*S: Where's that?*

*J: It used to be St. Peter's House I believe and its right in front of the cathedral. Unfortunately it's not anywhere really near the city centre so the people don't just pass. I had sort of hoped because the cathedral was there... this building is beautiful in such a setting with the cathedral right behind it. A lovely sort of oasis; I sort of hoped there would be people visiting the cathedral and come to the exhibition but not many people came at all. Four of us students actually turned up there so that was a good experience. I'd not done anything like that before. One or two of them had been involved in open student fair before but it was a new experience for me. It was a bit of co-ordinating I had to do in a very short space of time so I learned quite a bit from that. We've got ideas for doing something similar like that but in the city centre if the opportunity arises again. (Jane and Sam, June 2012)*

Jane had been confident enough to carry out a project outside of the HEI and although it had a mixed success Jane could see the positives in it. She had done something new and learnt from the experience and she was open to taking part in the event in the future. It was interesting in that she said 'we've got ideas' as if she envisioned working with these people again. She had been open to grasping an opportunity even though it was out of her comfort zone and had begun to evaluate the reasons why more people did not visit the building. So Jane had had a very good first year and like Chad appeared to have made some friends, at least one was a post-Access student. She fitted in with the learning culture of the HEI; was achieving good marks and was confident enough to co-ordinate a small external project.

### **Third meeting half way through the second year**

*J: We have to talk about our work and evaluate our work in front of our peer group. It's about 15 minutes, the presentation. And then I've also done a three thousand word essay which again I really struggled with. But I got there in the end and just waiting till the end of this month for my results to see how I did. We had to use a title, 'How and Why', so my title was 'How and Why Creativity Makes Me Happy'. The idea of that is it keeps your mind focussed on what you're supposed to be writing about. So I started with an introduction to why creativity does make me happy, mentioned about walking and thinking of ideas and I love experimenting (that's my favourite thing) and being at college. As when I was on the Access course just gives me the freedom to do that which is brilliant ... lost my thread now (laughs). (Jane, January 2013)*

She was still finding writing more difficult to do but this did not deter her and she remained quite optimistic about it. The title of her essay was also very positive, Jane would have to explore what she meant by creativity and happiness. It suggested that Jane saw being creative as part of living a good life. The



presentation, which would make some people nervous, did not seem to bother her at all. It was not just art and design but also being in education that seemed to make Jane happy as she mentioned being in college and doing the Access course as part of what gave her happiness.

The next part of Jane's narrative as it revealed her relationship with her father and could partly explain her perception of herself as a practical person rather than an academic:

*J: It [the essay] was interesting actually. The tutor suggests you ask somebody , a layperson (he says an intelligent layperson) to read it. And my Dad is definitely that so asked him to have a look at it and he said that I was good to start with but I really needed to concentrate more on me and talk about me. Maybe that was me being a bit shy about talking about myself. So that really, really helped me because Dad used to worry a bit and frightened me when I was at school doing homework. He used to be cross with me when I was doing French and maths. So his approach this time was really, really good and very, very helpful and so that gave me confidence then to carry on with the essay.*

*S: Was you're dad a teacher then?*

*J: No, he wasn't, no, no but he's clever.*

*S: What did he do?*

*J: Well he's retired now, he was a business man but he did go to ... he got a scholarship to go to Oxford. Yes (laughs) so he's very clever.*

*S: What was his father?*

*J: He started up Puro soap in Leeds actually (laughs)*

*S: Puro soap!*

*J: Puro soap, yes.*

*S: What's that?*

*J: It was a factory in Leeds that made soap flakes I think it was one of the first ones (laughs).*

*S: So you're from a dynasty, a soap dynasty?*

*J: Well, no, it wasn't anything grand really nothing grand about it at all but it was quite interesting.*

*S: Sounds grand though.*

*J: (laughs)*

*S: Pears Soap? Lady Lever?*

*J: No. I can remember big bars of not very pleasant smelling soap around at home (both laugh).*

*S: So your Dad helped you with your essay.*

*J: Yes and he was very good and as I say I have to wait to see how well I did but I did my best. I did my best and I took such a long time, took me a long, long time. (Jane and Sam, January 2013)*

Jane admired her father and it was quite moving that she was able to share with him her studies. As a child he seemed to have been over anxious that she achieved academically, which may have been the reason why she ultimately felt that she was not as strong in that area of learning. As an adult she had been able to work with her father and act on his feedback. In terms of thinking about Jane's context from a sociological point of view, it could be argued that she had the cultural capital and social capital from her family background. This could be the reason that she was flourishing on the course. Yet she did share with Bob,

who did not have the same cultural and social background, a perception that academic writing was difficult. Both saw themselves as practical people rather than academic ones. As well as class backgrounds, the way people are positioned within the family could impact on their perception of themselves.

Jane went on to recount a story about visiting the Hayward gallery to see *Art of Change New Directions from China* with some other students as a study trip.

This story also revealed aspects of Jane's background that were quite emotional.

*J: Well it's something I actually struggle with because my mum is actually bipolar. So you know there have been a lot of difficulties in the past with my mum. She's been, you know, in my young teens years she was in and out of psychiatric units. That's why I try... I think this is why I always have a happy, positive attitude towards things. I'm positive about everything. I think I over compensate sometimes but part of the exhibition was this person standing... In stripy pyjamas standing by the exhibition notice. Don't know if I got a photo ...when we read about it, it said it was to do with a psychiatric unit and these pyjama-clad people were about the gallery and the might pick upon one of the visitors and follow them round. They called them doppelgangers, and weirdly they picked me up.*

*And I wasn't very happy. I really had to talk to myself very strongly and say, "Look, you're on... look it's okay." and I was trying to photograph her shadow, you know, because I was thinking; I was trying to think sort of creatively as well. Try to make the most of it and I kept moving and she kept moving behind me so I couldn't see her shadow but I did actually get her. (Jane, January 2013)*

Jane did not find this a pleasant experience, and it made me think of the responsibilities galleries should have towards their visitors when they present socially interactive work. However, Jane recognised the situation and was able

to turn something that could have been quite harrowing into an opportunity for her creative work. The ordeal did not end quickly:

*J: And then also I kept hearing this wailing sound which really took me back to when mum was in these hospitals, you see.*

S: Yes.

*J: When I spoke to the other two girls, as I call them, afterwards they hadn't heard that! They hadn't picked up on that. I expected maybe something to see; some sort of monitor with some images on it and this wailing coming from it. But I think probably on reflection it was just around this area where these doppelgangers were following you around and it was a noise from a psychiatric unit.*

S: So it's a real noise.

J: Yes.

S: Gosh.

*J: And one of my bad dreams is actually going up in a tall room; up a ladder and going through a very small hole. And there was this very small hole at ground level. I thought well I'll be able to get away if I go in there so I had to force myself to go in there.*

S: So you went through the hole to escape.

J: Yes, to try and escape and she didn't follow me, thankfully.

S: (laughs)

J: (laughs) but she did pick me up again on the way out.

S: Oh no! (Jane and Sam, January 2013)

The story that Jane told had a big impact on me the listener, I felt that the gallery had been irresponsible and was in danger of exploiting people who needed psychiatric care. On the other hand this was a public exhibition within an art gallery so the audience should expect happenings that challenged our expectations. Jane was able to cope with an unexpected situation by drawing upon her rational thoughts to temper the unhappiness the exhibit had evoked. Situations in the past had been traumatic for Jane but she had learned to cope with them and was able to remember how she had used strategies of positive thinking in the past and use them in this current instance.

*J: Well it moved me so much. As I say I'd normally be very positive and do happy things but it has moved me to record this in some way. I mean ideally ... but my computer skills are very negligible ... I would like to create some sort of digital book, you know, on an iPad so you can flick through the pages. I just thought that it might be quite good then maybe create a bit of animation with the opening of these notes. I just felt that I wanted to record it because it was powerful. (Jane, January, 2013)*

The experience had a big impact on Jane too and she wanted to turn it into something positive. Like Chad she felt that her computer skills were not her strength but this did not seem to be a big issue for Jane, it did not stop her imagining what she could produce if she found the means to do it.

#### **Fourth meeting end of the second year**

Jane had had another successful year, it was not that she found all the aspects of the course easy, but she seemed to enjoy being stretched.

*J: So in my ceramics (my studio practice), I got 72 and in my techniques and processes which is what I was really concentrating on I got 82 which was a double A. So I was really pleased with that and then, I got 75 for my presentation and my essay so I was really thrilled with that. But then we had to do a proposal for level six. I only got 55 for that; there were sort of various reasons for that. I believe I could have probably, got a lot better than that. I was very disappointed with myself for that but I shall be trying even harder next year now.*

*S: But why do you think that's really a blip compared with..*

*J: Yes it is. But this is my first proposal. The criteria was that you had to write this proposal on a piece of A4 in size 12 font. So I did it - but you can see the margins are very virtually non-existent and I am a very wordy person. When I first sent it in the tutor said this isn't a proposal it's looking at what you've been doing, it's more of an appraisal. (Sam and Jane, August 2013)*

Jane had got a very good mark for her essay and this was something she had put a lot of work into with the help from her dad and she said she was thrilled about it. She continued to do very well in her practical subjects. However she said she was very disappointed with herself because of her low marks for her proposal. She analysed why the marks were not as she wished:

*J: But you see when we 'd given a presentation in preparation for this; the feedback I got was that she liked my liked how I'd reflected on what I'd done and how that was influencing what I will be doing so I thought it was okay. So anyway a friend actually helped me cut it right down and but that just wasn't me at all so I added a bit more to it. The tutor said in the end it should have been somewhere in between the two so before we go back I'm going to have another go at it. The tutor said she'd have a look at it and see if that was better but unfortunately this is what is going to be put with the work at the end of the year so that is disappointing but just have to get over it (laughs). But my average at the moment is 72.5 is not bad so I've got to work very hard to keep that up now (Jane, August 2013).*

Jane was not producing work for high marks but these were an indicator to her on how well she was doing. She was going to work on her proposal over the

summer because she wanted it to be the best she could make it. This work would not increase her marks, but she was resolved to improve her work. She appeared to have a good working relationship with her tutor who had offered to look at her work again. Jane appeared to enjoy the support from friends, family and tutors and to have a lot of social capital to draw upon. She also knew that she should not dwell on her low mark, but was focussed on the future. She was already thinking about the next year, level six when she would be writing her dissertation and undertaking her final major project:

*J: Yes so I think we're going to be hitting the ground running. I'm happy to get into my work now. I'm going to do some research for my dissertation before we go back and also start preparation for my studio work and start my sketchbook with all the bits of research that I've got so far. Then Karen, who is another post-Access student and we still work closely together; she's doing fine art and I'm doing art and design. We are very keen to make our final exhibition as good as we can so we're trying to work out ways of ... There was the sort of booklet thing/flyer thing, for this year's final end of year show which we weren't terribly impressed by. I'm afraid we have to raise the money. You have to raise money to produce things like this so it maybe we find we can't do anything different. But we're sort of thinking about it and looking into it as soon as we can really and try to work out a fair way of people to raise their part of the money. And not rely on just a small group of people which is what quite often happens so we're thinking ahead. (Jane, August 2013)*

Jane had again demonstrated foresight in recognising some of the problems with marketing the cohort's end of year show. The phrase, 'hit the ground running' was interesting. Similar sentiments were mentioned by Chad, Bob and Eliza, where they hoped to try to get ahead of the work load. It was as if they were reluctant to waste time. Again Jane was working with a post-Access student, throughout her narratives she mentioned the positive impact other staff and students had on her learning experiences. She was also interested in a fair way that people could contribute to the end of year show. Rather than leaving

this to someone else; she recognised the importance of the end of year show and planned to participate in organising it so everyone had good publicity for their work.

*S: What are your feelings about your final year?*

*J: A bit mixed really. I'm excited but I'm also a bit anxious particularly about the dissertation and that side of it. But actually just going back to the mind maps made me feel as if I'd turned a bit of a corner. It did make me feel a bit excited about doing the research because I thought I'd come up with this idea that would work for me. Also I changed the question around and from the How and Why question to a Why and How question which seemed to fit better with my actual subject so I just felt quite positive about it. I'm hoping I can get back into that zone as I say and make a really good job of it. (Sam and Jane, August 2013)*

Jane always wanted to do the best she could, she was able to temper her fears by considering the exciting potential of her work. She was also able to use techniques to help consolidate her ideas and was not afraid to modify them. At the end of the fourth meeting Jane mentioned the impact of her domestic life on her studies. Unlike Chad who seemed to weave her stories of her mothering and caring roles together with her stories about her education, Jane seemed to have separated them out.

*J: It's hard work and I've had other things in my home life that have challenge. Not quite so much this semester but the previous semester my husband was made redundant and my mum had a pacemaker fitted and there was something else but I can't remember now. So these things happen and you just have to deal with them and try and fit your work in around them as well but ...*

*S: Is she okay your mum?*



*J: Yes, thank you, she's just in the last month or two had a hand operation and my mum-in-law has had a knee replacement operation so I've my nurses' hat on...*

*S: So you're using your nursing skills now as well?*

*J: I'm not a nurse, no nursing.*

*S: So it's just that you have that role?*

*J: Yes, yes that's right yes. (Sam and Jane, August 2013)*

Much like Chad, Jane had caring responsibilities for her family members. She seemed to be able to manage these with her educational aspirations. She remained determined to do her best and achieve the highest possible result. Both Chad and Jane were very resilient, but Jane's domestic stories did not seem to 'bleed' into her stories about her educational experiences; they were for the most part kept separate. It must also have been a very uncertain time for Jane as her husband had been made redundant; however, this did not come across in our meetings which were very much focussed on the course. Jane met these events with stoic good humour.

### **Meeting five in the middle of Jane's graduating year**

Jane had been writing her dissertation during the first part of the third year of her degree, much like Bob who was working on his *Context of Practice* three module which comprised of a substantial written element. Whereas Bob aimed to have his writing inform his practice Jane has kept them separate.

*J: Well I've been concentrating mostly on my dissertation the first draft which I just handed in this Tuesday and that's taken an awful lot of time. It does take me a long time to get anything written down it doesn't come at all easily to me but I have actually enjoyed doing it. The dissertation is the thing I was really dreading as part of the degree course and that I have actually enjoyed doing it because of the subject and title; 'Why and How Creativity is Essential to Happiness?' Last year in the second year I did a three thousand word essay on how and why creativity is essential to me so I just wanted to broaden that but because I feel very strongly that it is very healthy thing for everybody . Whether it's you're actually being creative yourself or you participate in creative activities or whether you go exhibitions or museums or you know share in other people's creativity. So I can't sort of concentrate on two things at once so I haven't done very much practical work at all so that's what I'm going to be doing this term now we've two or three weeks before we get feedback on our first draft so I'm starting to get into practical mode now. (Jane, January 2014)*

Jane has discussed how, much like Bob, she saw herself struggling to express herself academically through writing. It took her a long time but she was prepared to invest time and energy in it. Although Jane commented on the amount of time it took her to write it could also be seen she had begun to enjoy it, her investment had paid off. She quite explicitly articulated her belief that creativity was an important aspect of everyone's life, there was a moral dimension to Jane's writing which could be seen in her desire to support and help her fellow students through organising the end of year show. Her sentiments could be compared with the ideas of Morris (1884 in McAlister, 1984) who believed beauty and fulfilling labour should be part of every worker's life.

*S: What do your family think about your study?*

*J: Well they're very encouraging, yes, yes, they call me a geek.*

*S: A geek?*

*J: Yes, well when I was doing my dissertation, you know, I'd get up at maybe six or something like that and put a load of washing on and then I'd sit alone in the dining room and get on with it. I could quite well be there when they got back as well because it just takes me such a long time. And actually with the internet your research can lead you from one thing to another, to another, to another can't it? (Sam and Jane, January, 2014)*

Jane had become intensely interested in her subject and she was colonising the domestic space with her academic activity. The way her family responded to this showed how she was now behaving like a writer; being called a geek implied they viewed her as someone with a lot of in depth knowledge about her subject. She was also using the internet as a research tool. This could have challenged Jane's perception of herself as a doer as opposed to a thinker? Unlike her previous narratives she was combining her writing with her domestic life, and she was doing the work in her dining room. When thinking about some of Bernstein's ideas it could be seen that she demonstrated his argument that middle-class students had the space and resources to do extra study at home (Bernstein, 1975, p.67; Bernstein, 2003, p.210).

Bob was never explicit as to where he did his writing, but Jane situated it within a particular space within her home and within a particular time frame. So the fact that Jane did not need to work like Eliza and had a dining room in which she could work made her studying much more coherent and straightforward. Chad did this too when she wrote her essays they were done at home at particular times of the day. Jane went on to return to the topic of the end of year show; the catalogue and the marketing campaign.

*J:... the catalogue is an important part of your ...I was thinking particularly for younger people. The catalogue is something I would*

*always want to give anyway but it's really important for the young people who are going on into work. So we've raised £600 for that; we put a deadline on it just before Christmas and all bar one have coughed up. The tutors have said this sort of thing has never happened before, so organised in advance like this. We were talking about it again after we'd handed our dissertations in and we went to the marketing department on Tuesday. We'd heard that our marketing department wasn't fantastic so we wanted to give them a sort of advance warning that we mean business. The guy I spoke to was really helpful. Actually he's very, very good. We talked to him about, Chris and I, about flyers, posters but then we'd have to raise more money for that. This guy actually guided us to Facebook and Twitter as being really good ways of getting information out there. We'd suggested one or two places in town where we might be able to put a poster or leave some flyers but there aren't really that, many places where people would be interested so it'd just be a waste of money. (Jane, January 2014)*

Jane was thinking that a good catalogue for the end of year show would be good for her but also for others. Much like the other participants in this study she used the notion of a generalised other in terms of the 'younger ones' who would at some point be working professionally so would need a good catalogue of their show. Implicit in this is that Jane, herself, might not be using her degree to gain paid work as an artist or designer. She could perceive a potential future problem with marketing the end of year show and so with her fellow student went to sort this out. Again Jane was being pro-active on behalf of her graduating year group. It was interesting that even though the marketing team seemed to have a negative reputation Jane was open to the ideas they discussed. The marketing person surprised Jane in that his ideas were very useful. Both Jane and Chris made a prudent decision not to waste money on posters and flyers that might not be effective, they were able to come to this decision because they were open to the advice of an expert in the field.

*J: So neither Chris or I are up-to-date with this sort of technology but there are younger people obviously who will be able to do that.*

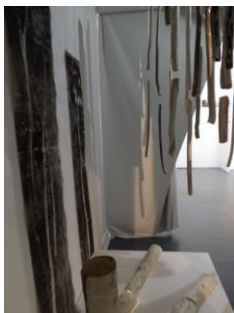
*We felt quite excited by that; he was saying that he called it 'Guerrilla marketing'. If you can find somebody who's on the wave and get on their wave... Then with regards to getting in touch with the press, Look North, set our sights higher - we need to come up with a story, you know, the press would want a story really.*

*S: Press release.*

*J: Yes, he said maybe if there's, if you've got a student who's got a promise of a really good job or something like that...If there's an interesting part of the story. (Sam and Jane, January 2014)*

The fact that Jane and Chris did not feel they had the skills and knowledge to use Facebook and Twitter as marketing tools did not put them off. They assumed that they would be able to work with 'younger people' to make the guerrilla marketing work. Again there was an assumption that social media belonged to another generation. However, unlike Chad who had demonised digital technologies Jane saw the concept of social media as exciting especially as it could save the group money and perhaps be more effective. If Jane did not feel she had the skills in a certain area, as in her academic writing or in social media she did not construct this as a barrier, she was prepared to work with others or work hard to get those skills herself.

### **Sixth meeting in front of Jane's work in the end of year show**



Images 8 and 9: Details of Jane's installation from her Degree show

The sixth meeting took place in front of Jane's work (Images 8 and 9). It was an installation based on ceramic forms which cast interesting shadows on the wall. It was ambitious in scale and was beautifully executed. This was an appropriate time for Jane to reflect on the three years of her degree in art and design:

*J: Really, really hard, really hard I've worked. I mean I've worked hard in my life before but the last few weeks were incredibly difficult but enjoyable but really, really hard. I feel like I've been on an emotional roller coaster; you know, one minute I'm feeling quite happy with everything and the next minute I'm full of doubts. So it's been really trying but at the end of the day a very enjoyable time. My first semester was mostly taken up with my dissertation which was a huge challenge but one that I actually enjoyed I didn't expect to enjoy it but I did enjoy it and I'm proud of my final dissertation. So yes just a lot of hard work but really enjoyable and I think I'm going to miss it enormously. (Jane, June 2014)*

Jane had not found the degree easy; she had pushed herself to do the best she could. In a very similar way to Bob she felt that it has been an 'emotional roller coaster'. The tone of her stories was the most part positive, so perhaps the emotional aspects of learning were not always apparent in Jane's account of herself and experiences. It was good that she felt proud of her dissertation which she did not expect to. The word 'enjoyable' was mentioned quite often in Jane's narrative so even though the work had been hard it had not stopped the process being pleasurable. She began to think about the loss of certain aspects of the course:

*J: I'm going to miss the people and the tutors and the environment and just being able to experiment with all the equipment; materials in college and the materials I've collected myself. Yes, just the whole experience really which started off on the Access course. I had a fantastic two years there and where again I was able to experiment. I'm very materials and process driven I'm really just in heaven in this sort of environment. (Jane, June 2014)*

The Access course was still remembered and seen as an integral part of Jane's educational journey. The degree had been very positive for Jane and it was the people and the environment which would be lost when she left. She had integrated well into this particular community of practice but would have to find another context to work in if Jane wanted to continue as an artist.

*J: I think it's probably reinforced what I... I think it's probably brought out a certain something in me. I think you know having the opportunity to just go with the flow which is something I talk about in my dissertation and one of my tutors says that I have changed. I'm not sort of aware that I've changed that much, but one of my tutors saying that I have excites me really because part of this was to prove to myself... because really apart from voluntary work I've really just been a housewife and mother so this is something to prove to myself that I can do more than that.(Jane, June 2014)*

The voluntary work, house work and mothering had probably given Jane more skills than she realised because she had been able to take on co-ordinating responsibilities for external activities and the end of year show which her peer group did not do. She also was able to plan for upcoming events and was resourceful enough to work with others; sourcing experts when she needed them. Jane could also draw upon the cultural and social capital and perhaps even economic capital from her family; this may have given her a safety net, so she was free to take creative risks on her degree. She was also free to 'go with the flow' whereas Chad, for example, always had in the back of her mind the financial necessity of getting a job after her degree. Jane had only now begun to think about what she would do after the degree has ended.

*S: So what are you going to do next?*



*J: After I've caught up with all the housework and everything, I'm keeping my eye out for opportunities. I'm continuing with my voluntary work at Champion House and I actually met, I think she's the owner of Kala Sangam which is an art centre in the City. I met her just by chance on the train at the beginning of this last year and we were just chatting and she said to go and see her. So I would like to I think I might well do that because she says they work with children and with people with disabilities. I work with adults with disabilities at Champion House so just keeping my eyes open. I'd like to take advantage of the access facility to this college that you can do for a certain number of hours for the first year after you've graduated so I'll do that. (Sam and Jane, June, 2014)*

Jane still envisioned her role as a housewife as being an important aspect of the future. 'Catching up with the house work' implied that she had let things slip recently, perhaps due to the work she had put into completing her dissertation and end of year show. However, Jane was planning use her art and design skills with other people, which fitted in with the theme of her dissertation. She was open to new opportunities, but she did not seem to have had the pressure of securing paid work. She also planned to keep using the facilities at the HEI, this was a good opportunity for artists and designers who might find the first year after their degrees difficult due to not being able to afford a studio space or equipment. Also the contact with other creative people in the form of staff, students and visiting artists would be invaluable.

*S: Do you think you'll ever get yourself a studio?*

*J: Yes I would love to have a studio, yes, yes.*

*S: I just feel that's the direction you're going in.*

*J: Yes, yes, yes actually when I was doing my research I came across an artist, I can't remember her second name now, Valeria. She does beautiful very delicate porcelain work and her studio was white with very organised boxes. She just makes very small pieces*



*of porcelain by hand. I think she uses a clay roller as well to get it really thin. She makes sort of relief sculptures for the wall as well as hanging sculptures. So I thought that was doable you know even from home. I thought that was achievable if I can just get a kiln maybe. (Sam and Jane, June 2014)*

Jane was thinking pragmatically about how she could continue her art practice. She was thinking about adapting part of her home into a studio as she did have the space and some resource. However, this would not provide her with the community of practitioners that were an important aspect of any studio; it was not just about the space a studio would provide but also the contact with other creative people. By working at home then Jane ran the risk of isolating herself.

## **Discussion**

For Bernstein (1958, pp.160-161) the middle-classes were defined by educational achievement and employment in skilled or non-manual work alongside a particular attitude towards the achievement of long-term goals. As a woman who had spent most of her life as a mother and housewife, Jane did not fit simply into this model; she had limited educational success at school; but did work for a short amount of time in a bank. However, she did have a belief in the possibility of achievement in the long term and was prepared to invest time and resources into fulfilling her dreams. It was perhaps this optimistic belief and confidence that Bob and to some extent Chad did not have. Stone and O'Shea (2012) and Burke (2002) have talked about the majority of students returning to education later in life being women, due to taking career breaks or spending their earlier life mothering. Thus Jane could be seen as representing those

women who feel they had given their time to others and at some point wanted to do something for themselves.

Even though Bob and Jane had very different backgrounds in terms of social class they did have some similarities. Both had a feeling of failure at the end of their school life, Bob felt he was not able to go to art school and Jane did not complete her A levels. They took a pragmatic approach to their lives and both left education to get a job. This could be one reason why they viewed themselves as practical people rather than academic ones. Both Bob and Jane were a little fearful of academic writing. However, Jane seemed to be more optimistic that she could improve her ability. She did end by being very proud of her dissertation even though she was not looking forward to writing it.

Jane was generally quite confident, she accepted that some elements of her education were going to be difficult but had a belief that she would achieve through hard work. She was confident to act, she could approach people who were experts in their field to ask for their help and she did this from a position of strength not from a perceived sense of lack. Jane clearly enjoyed Bernstein's (2000, p.xx) first pedagogic right of enhancement.

She was also included; unlike Eliza, Jane had a good relationship with the staff and tutors seemed to have gone out of their way to help her. She seemed to have had good quality feedback and encouragement from the staff. Jane at several points during her narrative talked about how much she enjoyed experimenting with materials and processes; that she was able to go with the flow. The invisible pedagogy of art and design seemed to have enabled Jane to

really flourish. Bernstein (2003) said that when exposed to an invisible pedagogy the middle-classes thrived because they understood the significance studio practice and could engage in the kinds of communication that regulated it (Broadhead, 2015, p.142).

Eliza and Jane were studying at the same institution but on different courses; Jane was full-time whereas Eliza was part-time. Jane appeared to have made full use of the resources, this would have been noticed by staff and she would have been perceived as a serious student. Within the invisible pedagogy often used in art and design courses, surveillance of students by staff often led to students being read or misread as engaging or not engaging with their studies, (Broadhead, 2015, p.150; Bernstein, 1975, p.67). Jane was a white, middle-class, middle aged woman; it could be speculated that the staff would recognise Jane as being very similar to themselves, perhaps with similar cultural references and so this too could explain Jane's inclusion in the course. She also kept links with other post-Access students and this seemed to have been another source of support for Jane.

There were many instances of Jane acting well for herself and for others. Because she was confident and had been included on her course, she was also able to participate in organising the end of year show (Bernstein, 2000, p.xx). In some senses this was a political and moral act. Jane wanted to make the end of year show better for all the graduating students and to provide them with a high quality catalogue. She also wanted the financial burden to be fairly distributed. She did succeed in her goal, of all the participants in this study, Jane was the

most politically active although not through the formal structures of the student representative system.

There were many examples of Jane acting with phronesis. She was able to manage her emotions when coming across an upsetting scenario in the art gallery and tried to transform this experience into a creative one. She also made prudent decisions over the marketing of the end of year show, deciding not to spend money on traditional marketing methods but opting for the use of social media.

It could be argued that Jane's class position and the socialisation she was subject to as a young child, along with her experiences as a mother and as volunteer worker, had enabled her to act with phronesis, so that she could even tackle her slight anxiety over the dissertation. She also had the resources of time and space which she was able to utilise when writing. It seemed that for Jane, she did enjoy moments of a democratic education. If Ranciere's (1999) model of democracy as a call from the outside was applied to Jane's situation it could be seen that whilst she had been on the outside of higher education in the sense of someone who felt they were not academic and were a little uncertain that they could achieve; she was able to quickly align herself with the values and culture practiced in the field of art and design education.

## **Conclusion to Jane's story**

An imagined normative and generalised other, (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2007) was used by Jane, in much the same way as Chad, Bob and Eliza, as a

normative group with which she could compare herself with. The younger people were those who were seen to have social media skills, and to be those who would be working after their degree. Jane did not consider that some mature students might need to work, indeed might have studied a degree in order to have the career in the arts they aspired to. Jane viewed education and being an artist as part of enhancing life in general she seemed to be one of Osborne et al.'s (2004, p.296) personal growers.

Chad, Bob, Eliza and Jane all had different amounts of confidence. There were areas that Bob and Chad seemed to remain unconfident in, computer aided design and academic writing. Eliza began as being very confident in her academic ability, but this seemed to be eroded by the ways she was excluded from taking part fully in the textiles curriculum and the poor communication there was between her the tutors and the institution. Jane began with some misgivings but generally flourished on her course, improved her writing and was able to participate fully in her education.

There were times when Chad, Bob and particularly Eliza felt frustration at not being understood or listened to. This complied with Bowl (2001, p.154) where she said that the educational experiences of non-traditional students were sometimes based on frustrated participation. However, Jane did not describe these kinds of feelings; *enjoyment* was a word that came up often in Jane's narrative. The only difficult situation Jane found herself in was in an external gallery setting being confronted by a piece of performance art based on psychiatric patients. But even then Jane strove to see the constructive aspects of this event.

If a student was included, had confidence and could act politically it was more likely they would be able to act with practical wisdom. Jane was able to identify a situation that needed prudence; she was able to draw upon her previous experiences; she was open to new ideas; she used the expertise of others to make prudent decisions for herself and others. She appeared to be very much in control of her education and not in any way infantilised, in the way Chad and Eliza seem to have been.

## Conclusions

This investigation into the experiences of post-Access students as they pursued their art and design degrees was undertaken because they had invested substantial time and finances into their education, so it was important to find out in what ways their degrees contributed to a better life . As these were mature students who had had careers, the decision to study on an Access course and then to spend at least three years in higher education involved risk and sacrifice by themselves and their families.

When the research was first initiated the economic and political climate was uncertain which suggested that students who were giving up the security of a full-time job in order to fulfil their dreams to be artists or designers needed to be quite certain that this was the correct path for them. As has been argued the careers of artists and designers have been associated with uncertainty leading to a precarious life style which some people might feel was exciting or creative; whereas others might feel it was frightening and unpredictable, (Elzenbaumer, 2014; Helms, 2011).

One way of dealing with this precariousness has been for artists and designers to have 'portfolio' careers where a person has many kinds of freelance and part-time jobs concurrently and consecutively, (Bryan, 2012, p.3). The physical, material and emotion investment post-Access students have put into their education could lead to very different work patterns and ways of living that they

had previously experienced, indeed being an artist or designer could be very different from what they imagined or expected.

The theoretical lens through which the issues relating to mature students were considered came from two sources. Firstly, from the work of Basil Bernstein whose writing on the ways pedagogy included and excluded certain groups of students was relevant to this thesis. His description of democratic educational rights was also useful, which could be broadly understood as being concerned with enhancement, inclusion and participation (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxi). The second lens was that of phronesis which was an intellectual virtue identified by Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 5 p.176) as a means of living a good life with and for others. Phronesis has been used to reclaim teacher's professional judgement in the face of growing managerialism and prescriptive edicts on 'best practice' (Elliott and Norris, 2012; Curren, 2010; Biesta, 2010; Biesta, 2007). Cooke and Carr (2014, p.94) and MacIntyre (2007) have talked about phronesis in relation to professional life; focusing on teaching but also referencing law and medicine. This was because phronesis was concerned with the cultivation of virtue and moral character through deliberating well for the self and others. However, phronesis could also be a useful framework through which to understand the cases of post-Access students who have made, it could be argued, courageous decisions based on their previous experiences and their desire for a better life. This better life might not only be about extrinsic rewards (a well-paid job or increased status) but a happy and developed inner life.

If a wider understanding of practical wisdom was considered, that which was not strongly linked to professionalism, but as an intellectual virtue that was



necessary for a good life in general (Ricoeur, 1994; Nussbaum, 1990), then it became important to see how students were able to act with practical wisdom in order to manage their hopes and dreams; their families' needs and aspirations as well their education. As mature students had experience to draw upon were they able to act with phronesis as they studied their on degrees? Coffield (2009) has argued that a student's past experiences should be valued by educators, but was this the case within this study?

Bernstein was used, in particular, to consider how mythical solidarities were constructed within education based on age (Sadovnik, 2001, p.2). Implicit in pacing and sequencing regulative rules used by teachers and managers in formal educational institutions were that there are 'age appropriate' stages of learning (Bernstein, 2000, p.xxiv). This called to question the position of post-Access students who were sometimes known as 'second chance' students because for a variety of reasons they had not completed their education within a normatively constructed timeframe (Osborne, 2004; Wilson, 1997). Bernstein (1999) also described how horizontal discourse, which was the day-to-day contact and discussion students have with each other and staff, could be related to either making people feel part of the cohort's solidarity or making them feel different and marginalised. The studio was identified as an important site for learning in art and design higher education, where Bernstein's theories of visible and invisible pedagogies were used to show how some students understood the significance of the space and others did not, based on their social group (Bernstein, 2003; 1975). The studio was described as a space where an invisible pedagogy could take place, but this was an expensive form of learning

in regards to the resources of time and space. The brief (the assignment that art and design students respond to in order to be assessed) was identified as a visible pedagogy where learning outcomes, time-constraints and teaching and learning hierarchies were made explicit. It was argued that these two modes of pedagogy did not always fit well together and this was seen when students tried to make sense of their assessment and feedback where the openness and uncertainty of studio practice could not always be easily defined and measured by learning outcomes.

The post-Access students were defined in relation to a series of terms such as: mature students; non-traditional students; second-chance students, in other words they were often seen as being different to traditional students who entered higher education with A levels, (Hudson, 2009; Burke, 2002; James, 1995). They were a diverse group of people from a range of class, ethnic and social backgrounds, (Busher et al., 2012; Broadhead and Garland, 2012). Due to post-Access students being constructed as different, they could internalise this difference and begin to feel themselves as not belonging on their courses, due to being older or from a social back ground that was different from a white middle-class one. They might not be included because of being perceived as different by other students and teachers as well as through the symbolic framework of the institution: websites; marketing materials; learning materials and the differentiating rituals of education (Bernstein, 1966).

Hatton (2010) talked about students having pedagogised identities where educational processes positioned non-traditional students as 'other' or as not being 'good enough' (Raey, 2002 in Ball, 2014); this was in congruence with the

ideas of Bernstein, where he talked about the micro-processes of education such as pedagogy, language and curriculum acting on different social groups in ways that reproduced unequal power relations in the wider social context, (Bernstein, 1999, p.159). However, one criticism of looking at pedagogy in this way was that people who may be non-traditional students seem to be inevitably positioned as marginal within the educational systems, where they were passive, subject to various educational codes and hierarchies. Because post-Access students were often in the minority within a cohort there was a danger they could be represented as being victims; by having a restricted sense of agency with which to improve their situation.

Bernstein has been described as a structuralist and his work could be criticised as representing social and power relations as fixed or deterministic (Atkinson, 1985; Sadovnik, 1991). Structuralism as an approach was criticised as being:

... conceptual paralysis, by the dehistoricising of process and by reducing class, ideology, social formations, and almost everything else, to categorical stasis... the systems-analyses and structuralisms. . .the econometric and cleometric groovers – all of these theories hobble along programmed routes from one static category to the next. (Thompson, 1978, pp. 299-300)

However, Bernstein was constantly updating and refining his theory to take into account new economic and social contexts. It was at the point where Bernstein (2000) argued for a democratic education that he envisioned a possibility for students to actively take ownership and change their educational experiences. The conditions for Bernstein's notion of democratic education were enhancement of confidence which was an important aspect; inclusion and the right to be separate and finally political participation. Bernstein's notion of a

democratic education could be closely aligned to Aristotle's intellectual virtue of phronesis.

The right of enhancement meant that students could see the tensions between their past and future lives. They could imagine how they could meet their potential; their hopes and dreams. However to do this a student must have confidence. Without confidence Bernstein pointed out it was difficult to act. Coffield (2008, p.29) described enhancement as being about students having critical understanding and being open to new possibilities. Practical wisdom also entailed thinking about past experiences and being able to see the consequences of actions in the future; to make judgements based on knowledge and experience within a particular context. Where enhancement and confidence enabled people to act; phronesis meant that they also acted well for themselves and others.

Bernstein's second pedagogic right was to be included, but also to be separate when appropriate. Students should feel they belonged, that they were part of their learning or studio group. Including people could also mean ensuring that language, images, structures and procedures produced and transmitted by an institution represented the diverse range of students (and potential students) who studied there.

Not to do so would be to commit acts of symbolic violence against under-represented groups of students. An important aspect for Aristotle of practical wisdom was 'good feeling towards others' and so one way of including people was to take responsibility for their welfare as well as one's own, (Aristotle,

Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 11, p.186). Friendship could be a way to counter any exclusion or symbolic violence a person could experience (Duckworth 2014, p.184). Phronesis meant that people were included when deliberations, decisions and judgments were made. Being included could improve people's confidence just as being excluded could erode a person's self-belief. These two conditions (enhancement and inclusion) meant that people could act politically.

The third condition of a democratic education was that students should be able to participate politically in changing their education. For Aristotle politics could be seen as the highest form of phronesis, or at the very least phronesis could be a compliment to political science, (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, Chapter 2, pp.26-27). Ricoeur, (1994, p.180) concurred with this by seeing the aim of phronesis being the ethical intention of living 'the good life with and for others in just institutions.' Thus democratic education called for participation and phronesis ensured that participation was done at the right time, in the right way and for the right reasons. In other words phronesis could give the democratic education of Bernstein a moral quality that these things were done for the best for everyone not just the individual.

Narrative inquiry has been the approach of this thesis because it could capture people's experiences (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013, p.48). It also was appropriate to do this within the field of education, as Plummer (1995, p.144) has commented education could be seen as a systematic story telling. Ricoeur (1994) saw that there was a need to think narratively in order to practise practical wisdom. This enabled the person to deliberate on the past as

experience and memory alongside the future as imagined possibilities; weaving these into a narrative unity, (Simms, 2003, p.103; Linde, 1997, p.283; Dickinson and Eben, 1995, p.255).

At the same time it must be remembered that narratives were only a representation of experiences, where they could be reconstituted, and (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013, p.48). Narrative inquiry through interviews also produced stories that were jointly constructed through interviewer and interviewee, or researcher and participant (Rapley et al 2004, pp. 26-7; Tannen in Tedlock and Mannheim, 1995, p.202). Thus narrative could not present the researcher with 'pure' unmediated insights into the experience of another, and the researcher must try to be mindful of what they bring to the process (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.65).

The narratives of Chad, Bob, Eliza and Jane have, over the three years of the study, revealed what they themselves have thought of as significant; 'that' what was worth recounting to another. However, at the level of selection, editing and analysis the case studies also indicated what I as an educator of Access students in art and design had thought to be important. The other participants, whose stories had not been presented at this time would have had different meaningful points to make. There was perhaps another story that could be told about the particular experiences of working-class men within the art institution, where they as a social group in higher education were under-represented (McGivney, 1999).

## **‘The Younger Ones’**

The case studies that had been chosen show how post-Access students sometimes were subject to symbolic violence due to them not being perceived as traditional students. There seemed to be an assumption that the ‘normal’ age to enter art and design higher education was late teens to early twenties. These students were considerably older, in their 40s and 50s. All the participants compared themselves with ‘the younger ones’ as a generalised other with which to evaluate themselves.

Chad, Eliza, Bob and Jane all at various times during their narratives imagined that the younger ones were more skilful in CAD, digital literacy or academic writing. Bob explicitly commented that, *“I kind of compare myself to those who have just left school so they’re used to writing loads of stuff, the essays and that kind of thing, yeah.”* Chad believed the younger ones were more able to cope with the pace of the course, *“It is hard for 21 year olds and a lot harder for adult students.”*

These beliefs might not be accurate since the younger ones could have found higher education a challenge also for any number of reasons. What the comments implied was that the older students at time felt ‘out of place’ aware of their difference in terms of age and life experience. There was also the intersection of race, class, gender and motherhood that could impact of a student’s sense of self within an educational institution. The identity of the participants as non-traditional mature students seemed to be accepted by them

all, and more particularly, they referred to themselves as Access students rather than art students, textiles students or undergraduates.

Connected to the otherness of younger students was a fear of information technology, whether this was CAD or social media. This was most extreme in the case of Chad whose fear of CAD seemed to get worse during her course. Initially Chad tempered her fear with the realisation that she had achieved academically in other areas of her education; she planned ways in which she could improve her skills by teaching herself at home. She believed that she needed coaching in this area of her work but there seemed no space in the curriculum to support her learning needs. It has been argued that studio practice, an invisible pedagogy, was the dominant way in which Chad was taught, where students took creative risks and were self-directed as they explore media and techniques.

However, Chad needed a more explicit and structured means of training in CAD, which suggested a different more visible pedagogy was needed. As she said, *"I hate it. I hate it cos it's there's no...if there was a book, step by step how to book. Step one - press this - step two - press this! I'd be away but there isn't."* There was not enough time at college to improve her skills but there also was not enough time at home as Chad was a mother with a young child and a baby. As Chad had no confidence in her IT skills she also was not motivated to learn CAD, preferring instead to read her design history books. Without confidence it is difficult to act.



Eliza also struggled with CAD although she did not constantly return to this particular issue within her narrative. Eliza did not have the time to study CAD, although she too did attempt to teach herself, “*So I tried to teach myself CAD and just got on preparing my screens. I went back to the learning outcomes and didn’t do any samples. I felt frustrated I didn’t want to do it.*” Lack of confidence and lack of time to learn new digital skills quickly led Chad and Eliza to be demotivated, yet both were capable women who had proved themselves academically at different times during their learning careers.

Jane realised that social media would be a solution to marketing her end of year show with a restricted budget. She felt that this was an area that she did not understand, but was confident that ‘one of the younger ones’ would be able help. Bob did not seem to have any worries about digital literacy, however he did have his own fears that seemed to spiral out of control. Bob’s fear of academic writing was the issue that was constantly being referred to within his narrative and again he imagined the younger students would find the theoretical aspects of the course much more straightforward than he did.

Bernstein’s notion of enhancement and its condition of confidence did not appear to be always part of Chad, Bob and Eliza’s educational experiences. They seemed frustrated and fearful of the lack of progress made in certain areas of their education. They often focused on areas of learning which they already had excelled in, in effect, staying within their comfort zone. The fear also skewed the way they perceived a situation, making the practice of practical wisdom difficult. For example, in spite of getting very good marks throughout

her course, Chad built up her lack of digital literacy into a significant problem which ultimately added to her stress and anxiety.

## **Exclusion and eroding confidence**

Eliza was the only part-time student represented in the case studies. Her story repeatedly referred to misunderstanding and frustration. As a well-educated woman who had previously achieved academically and being educated to postgraduate level in a non-arts subject area, Eliza was confident in her abilities to study. However her confidence gradually was eroded through her progress on the textiles degree. Her needs as a part-time student were not specifically considered by staff. For example, there was not a brief written particularly for part-time students so Eliza could not understand the amount of work she should be striving towards. Important learning opportunities and enhancement activities like trips and workshops were scheduled when Eliza could not attend. More importantly, dates and deadlines were changed at the last minute so she could not plan her education and work commitments properly. The solution could have been to put information on the VLE which could be accessed off-site; however, this was promised but not delivered in a timely fashion.

Eliza needed clear and trustworthy information that she could depend upon as she did not have the flexibility that full-time students with no other responsibilities or commitments had. Whereas Jane embraced studio practice, Eliza did not have the time to immerse herself in her studio space. There were aspects of the course that Eliza seemed to be unable to understand, particularly, about practice-based research, playfulness, risk-taking and

uncertainty. She did not respond well to the invisible pedagogy of art design. She constantly read the brief and the learning outcomes in the hope that she would gain understanding; however this did not always help.

The nuances of creative practice were not always made explicit through learning outcomes (Orr, 2010). One way of gaining an understanding of what staff expected from art and design students was through the horizontal discourses of the studio where students could share 'the rules of the game' with each other (Broadhead, 2014; Bernstein, 1999, p.160). Interaction within the studio also allowed students to see what success and innovation looked like to others as well as themselves (Clarke, 2008, p.93-94). However, Eliza missed out on this aspect of her education due to being part-time and not utilising the studio space. Bernstein (1999, p.60) made the point that, "Clearly the more members are isolated or excluded from each other, the weaker the social base for the development of either repertoire or reservoir." Eliza could not often practice her repertoire of strategies for success but she also had restricted opportunities was adding the cohort's reservoir of art and design knowledge.

Bob in particular recounted some of the conversations he had in the studio with younger students and these demonstrated how the horizontal discourses of the studio could help construct the social solidarity of the cohort, promoting friendship and virtuous action, as in the conversation with Luke about the importance of sketchbooks. However, some kinds of discourse could re-enforce feelings of difference and being excluded, for Bob this was where issues to do with his age were discussed, "*...it does hit you - it changes as time has gone on. The young people start to accept you. You get odd comments and things*

*but then you just brush it off as a laugh kind-of-thing.*" This could be linked to a shame Bob appeared to feel that he had not completed his education in 'age-appropriate' times (Duckworth, 2014, p.182).

Chad also felt a kind of shame and so she refused to ask for extensions when her work load was getting to be too much. Her reluctance to ask staff for help seemed to come from a wish to be seen as coping as she imagined the other students were. Eliza did try to have a sense of agency over her education by seeking a tutorial with her tutor so she could discuss the elements of her course that she was struggling with however this did not meet with success, *"As I said before, you know, I'll send e-mails - don't get replies - so I have to send another one about what I'd like her to do. I'm like a dog with a bone I don't give up."*

Unlike Jane, Eliza did not seem to have a positive relationship with her teachers. Although she claimed to be resilient Eliza did question what she was getting out of the course and considered leaving.

Confidence, an important condition of individual enhancement, could be eroded during a degree by feeling excluded, confused and a sense of not making progress. In spite of this Eliza still managed to act with practical wisdom. At the end of her story she gained hope in the fact that the new student representative was herself a part-time student and understood the problems Eliza had been having. Things might change in the future.

## Infantilisation of students

All of the case studies were based on middle-aged adults in their 40s and 50s. All had previously been in employment; four had been parents. They all had life experiences on which they could draw upon to help them make decisions about their own learning. All had risked engaging in higher education in a time of uncertainty. All had decided that being artists or designers was part of living a good life for themselves and their families, (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI, Chapter 5, p.176). There were times in some of the students' stories that their adulthood; their capability to practise practical wisdom was, in part, compromised by their participation in art and design education. This was most clearly articulated by Chad when she felt that the amount of deadlines imposed on her cohort were unrealistic and that she would not have put so much pressure on herself. She argued that, *"When you get older the difficulties are your choice, when you are younger they are imposed on you. Older people make choices but you can't make a choice on this course you just have to do it."*

Eliza did not make this point in such an explicit way as Chad. However, her endeavours to plan her work to fit in with her education were undermined by the poor information and changing deadlines set by her tutors. Her requests to meet with staff to gain clarification on what was expected from her as a textiles student were ignored. There was a tension between the ways in which the degree programmes communicated with students and the age of the students. In a way they were 'infantised'. Williams (2013, p.98) has talked about how some of the processes of higher education keep traditional students in a state of

childhood and at the same time anger and frustrate mature students.

Furthermore, this would make enhancement, inclusion, participation difficult to achieve and the student's potential to act with phronesis would also be diminished.

### **Friendship and virtuous action**

In all four case studies there were examples of students acting well for each other. Chad had gained friends from her cohort of surface design students and this seemed to enhance her sense of belonging; being on the right course in the right institution, (Thomas, 2012; Vallerand, 1997). The impact of this on Chad's education was very important because it meant she still felt connected to her course even when she had to take a year out to have her baby. Her friends shared their experiences of their second year with her so she could begin to prepare work for when she returned. They showed the virtues of generosity and kindness. Bob was helped by Rosie, who was also a mature student, in using blogs to present his work for assessment. This was another virtuous action done to help Bob succeed in his education. Eliza was helped by another student who made a CAD guide for her to use; this would have entailed some considerable work. Jane was helped by another student in photographing her work.

The post-Access students were not only receivers of help; they often used their own experience to advise their fellow students. For example Bob advised Luke to keep his sketchbooks because they were a valuable resource and Bob did not want to Luke feel regret at losing them at a later date. Bob's age seemed to

give a particular view point on it where he said, *“Don’t do that - you don’t do that - save those because later on when you get to be my age you’ll look back at those and say I wish I’d saved them.”* Eliza used her experience as a career advisor to help a student who wanted to study for a postgraduate certificate in education, *“One girl wants to do teaching and I said, ‘Well have you done any work experience? Have you been into schools? What age group do you want to teach?’”* There were instances where students wanted to help each other out and will act well for others as well as themselves.

These virtuous actions by students for other students were a means for including people who might have previously felt excluded due to the kind of pedagogy used on their course or the kinds of symbolic violence they were subject to through the institution’s representational practices (Duckworth, 2013; Bernstein, 2000).

Jane was able to not only act well in terms of friendship, but participated on a political level to improve the quality and dissemination of her end of year show. This was done not just for her own benefit but for the good of other students. Jane pointed out that, *“We are very keen to make our final exhibition as good as we can ...But we’re sort of thinking about it and looking into it as soon as we can really and try to work out a fair way of people to raise their part of the money - and not rely on just a small group of people which is what quite often happens so we’re thinking ahead.”*

This appeared to be an example of where Jane was confident enough to act for herself and others with the aim of doing something well. She was motivated by

the virtue of justice; to do something that she perceived as fair and wanted to deliberate and plan ahead. She was engaging in a moment of democratic education and was steered by her practical wisdom. Jane was the phronimos guided by the virtue of friendship and justice in determining the correct course of action (Nussbaum, 2001, p.306). Jane continued to think and act in this way, *“The catalogue is something I would always want to give anyway but it’s really important for the young people who are going on into work. So we’ve raised £600 for that; we put a deadline on it just before Christmas and all bar one have coughed up.”* Jane’s story of her education journey through her degree in art and design was on the whole the most positive.

### **‘Thinkers and doers’**

Bob and Jane both believed themselves to be doers rather than thinkers. They polarised the practical and theoretical aspects of their courses, where doing was associated with studio practice and thinking was aligned with writing. Chad believed herself to be disorganised and easily distracted and that was part of being a creative person, at one point she described herself as not being a digital person. These beliefs about one’s own capabilities were referred to throughout the participants’ stories. The students were often reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses.

Jane commented, *“We’ve already had to do a one thousand word essay and we had to interview somebody who is doing a job or a similar job to what we are hoping to do when we’ve finished our degrees and then we had to write a thousand word report on that. Now those aren’t my strengths - just not my*



*strengths.*” Bob similarly contemplated, *“With me, my time at college has shown weaknesses -there’s times where no one likes to be ... but in some ways it’s good.”* Did this way of perceiving themselves mean that the students were not always open to possibilities? Coffield (2009, p.5) has argued that students needed to think about their capabilities differently. Rather than seeing abilities as fixed students and educators should focus on how improvement could be gained through democratic education comprising of a virtuous spiral of feedback that encouraged enhancement, inclusion and participation. This was not dissimilar to Clarke’s (2008; 2014) and William’s (2011) model of assessment for learning which has been used in other sectors of education.

Jane was the student who believed that through hard work she could improve her academic writing skills. Her understanding of her strengths and weaknesses did not seem as fixed as Bob’s. She also appeared to have developed a good relationship with staff; one tutor offered to give Jane extra feedback on her written work over the summer. She felt at home in the studio and in the workshops of her institution. She also fully embraced and flourished in the studio, responding well to the invisible pedagogy of art and design, she clearly said, *“I had a fantastic two years there and where again I was able to experiment. I’m very materials and process driven I’m really just in heaven in this sort of environment.”*

Bob’s time at college made him aware of his weaknesses whereas Jane became aware of her strengths. It was not surprising that Jane felt confident enough to organise the end of year show and its marketing. Jane’s class position meant she ultimately had the time and resources to improve her skills;

she also understood and embraced studio culture. There was not an additional pressure on Jane to see her degree as part of getting a career in the creative industries. The sense of risk and precarity would not be as severe in her case as she had the safety net of her family to fall back on. This did not mean that Jane found her studies easy; she also had caring responsibilities for older members of her family but she worked hard and succeeded.

Of the nine students who began as participants of the study, only four completed their course within the three years. One person chose to leave her course; two chose to study part-time; due to ill health one person did not achieve a degree but a higher education diploma and one person took a year out to have a child. Two of the case studies did not have a neat resolution, Chad's story ended with her struggling at the end of her second year and Eliza, after considering leaving had decided to stay on her course (for the time-being). Education for these mature students was challenging as they strove to manage their lives and education. Sometimes it was prudent for students to suspend their studies; leave all together or accept a diploma rather than the degree.

Due to the methodology used in the study, that of a longitudinal study based on narrative inquiry, it was possible to see that often issues the students entered higher education with were not always resolved, but were the constant causes of stress and anxiety. These issues were often to do with fear; a lack of confidence and feeling that one did not live up to the abilities of the younger students. There was also an anxiety about ultimately finding a creative job, this was apparent in Bob's and chad's accounts and was apparent from the first year of their degree until the end. When fear spiralled out of control it stymied

the wise judgment of the participants. However, often support was there from other students using their own practical wisdom and this helped the participants succeed.

By revisiting the original research questions it was possible to assess the value of using narrative inquiry to capture the post-Access student's narratives whilst considering Bernstein's democratic education and Aristotle's phronesis as theoretical frameworks with which to understand the experiences of non-traditional students.

**Did post-Access to HE students receive a democratic education as defined by Basil Bernstein (2000) when they study in art and design higher education?**

The method of narrative inquiry was able to identify moments in one of the participant's accounts when they appeared to have engaged with a democratic education (Bernstein, 2000). Jane reported that she had been stretched academically and creatively; been included in the studio culture of the programme and clearly was able to participate politically to improve her education for herself and others. However, in the other case studies participants often felt excluded and frustrated with their education. There were times, which were fleeting, where the participants felt they were doing well and through friendships with others on the programmes were included. The instances of participating politically to improve their education were minimal and in Eliza's case the student representative system did not seem to be effective in instigating change. The study revealed that Bernstein's theoretical definition of a democratic education was useful for evaluating the kinds of educational

experiences the post-Access students were recounting. It showed that the middle-class female student who was able to fit in with the culture of the programme was also able to reap the benefits of a seemingly democratic education. The problem with Bernstein's framework was that it did not account for how some students in an institution could feel enhanced, included and able to participate whilst others did not. By considering the ideas of Biesta (2010) a democratic education could not be captured through a static system of institutional policies and procedures, but should be open to newcomers and newness. In other words a democratic education would be something that was responsive to new ways of doing things. Within the narratives, in spite of them being carried out over three years there was not a dominate storyline of transformation in the students' perceptions of themselves (fixed ideas about ability, for example, seemed to remain in the accounts). Nor was there a transformation within the institutions in which the students were studying. Transformation of higher education institutions in response to the participation of non-traditional and mature students has been called for as a means improving their experiences, retention and attainment (Gale and Parker, 2014; Frago et al. 2013; Ecclestone, 2009). Thus if Bernstein's framework of a democratic education was not understood only in terms of the student's rights of enhancement, inclusion and participation but also in terms of the institution's responsibilities to be open and responsive to newness then it could be seen that the participants did not experience many instances of a democratic education.

**Were post-Access to HE students able to draw upon their practical wisdom in order to act well for themselves and others whilst studying their degrees in art and design?**

The original meaning of phronesis as deliberating well for a good life was a useful concept for analysing the narratives of mature students. The post-Access to HE students had already made a decision to return to education as a means of living a good life with and for others. For mature students going to university was not part of growing or becoming an adult. For them going to higher education for the first time was one of many life changes. It was possible to show that students had experience in planning and deciding on their best courses of action, they had to do this to get to university in the first place. Going to university was a conscious decision not something that one did mindlessly. When the students acted with phronesis they were able to remember similar if not identical past experiences and used them to guide their actions in art and design higher education. The participants were able to identify situations where their wisdom was needed and to plan for the future based on what they had done before, alongside any new knowledge they had gained. They re-contextualised their previous experience and knowledge within the new context HE art and design studio.

Narrative inquiry was a means of examining how post Access-to HE deliberated, made judgements and acted on their degree programmes. The relationship between narrative and phronesis has been discussed previously. Nussbaum (2001) argued that narratives could be a model of phronesis or practical wisdom and Ricoeur (1994) described phronesis as a poetic and narratively-driven process. Because the study was carried out over three years

the outcomes of the deliberations were also captured along with the changing emotional or affective responses the participants had towards various situations. The first aspect of phronesis was being able to see a situation clearly; this ability was often diminished when the participants became fearful, frustrated or anxious about their studies. They worried about failure even though their marks suggested they were doing well. Fear, frustration and being unconfident led students to dwell on certain problems but their deliberations did not always solve them. As the students became anxious about the programmes' workload, deadlines and assessment they seemed less likely to deliberate wisely and seemed to repeat their sufferings through not taking a balanced view of their situation. In particular, Chad's, Eliza's and Bob's sense of agency as seen through their ability to practice phronesis diminished as their education progressed. It seemed that as the demands of life and education grew the participants were not always able to temper their 'passions' resulting in not being able to see their capacities and achievements clearly.

The positive consequences of the participants' actions were also suggested from their narratives, for example, how making friends helped some students stay on their programmes of study. In some instances phronesis was used as a means of coping with the difficulties of being a mature student. Good deliberation by the participants was occasionally impeded by the processes and regulations of higher education, for example, when Chad could not manage her own work load and Eliza could not get accurate information about her programme on *Moodle*. The narratives also included the conversations that took place between students and staff but more often between peers. From

these conversations it could be seen that friendships were definitely important, not only in making the post-Access to HE students feel they belonged on their programmes, but also in maintaining their engagement with their studies when challenges and difficulties arose. The friendships were inter-generational; the participants being in their 40s and 50s whilst the other students tended to be in their early 20s. This would have added to the richness of their learning experiences. Narrative inquiry showed not only the wise deliberations and actions of mature students but also those of the younger students when they acted well to help others. This could mean that chronological age was not always an indicator of how well someone could judge and act wisely. A person in their 20s may have accrued a lot of life experience and have the capacity to act with phronesis. More work was needed on distinguishing different kinds of mature students, it could be argued that the current definition of mature students as being over 24 was too wide and did not address the diverse problems of being middle-aged or elderly students.

The participants used the process of telling their stories about their experiences as a means of re-establishing what their hopes and dreams were in relation to why they were studying to be a creative. Sometimes the post-Access to HE students needed to modify their life plans; their future aspirations in order to cope with the contradictions and uncertainties of time and the recounting of their stories helped them do this. The constant restating of their ultimate goals associated with the sacrifices the participants had made seemed to help them keep motivated when their education became challenging. However, reflecting on their educational experiences did not seem to increase their confidence in

her own abilities. Jane was an exception; she did grow in confidence and felt proud of her achievements. Contemplating the past was a motivator for being resilient and sticking with the programme. Bob's regret at not studying at art school in the past motivated him to stay on his course. For Chad it was rethinking how much time she had invested and an embarrassment of being the oldest student in her cohort that kept her on track in spite of her many caring responsibilities. This supported O'Shea's (2014) argument that non-traditional students have the capacities of resilience and aspirational capital that should be acknowledged and valued by institutions and educators.

**Did receiving a democratic education entail students as well staff being able to deliberate wisely according to one's previous experiences and practical wisdom?**

Jane was the only participant who strongly described receiving a democratic education. She gained confidence in her academic studies; felt included on her course and was able to actively participate in the organisation of her end of year show. Throughout her narratives Jane was able to describe her deliberations round writing her dissertation; working collaboratively with other students and raising money for an end of year catalogue. Jane's growing confidence in her own abilities gave her a sense of agency and faith in her own decision making. The motivation to act well was not just due to self-interest; Jane also thought about the needs of her fellow students. The conditions of a democratic education which Jane enjoyed enabled her to deliberate wisely according to her previous experiences and practical wisdom.



In the other case studies the relationship between the pedagogic rights of a democratic education and phronesis were more difficult to establish. On occasion the participants were able to use their practical wisdom to navigate the problems that came up during their education. For example, Chad planned to take a year out when she was pregnant and to use the time to develop ideas of her design work. However, three of the participants continued to have low levels of confidence in their abilities and mostly did not consider engaging politically to change their circumstances. The other participants did not always have the sense of agency that Jane seemed to have.

It was important that a democratic education where all students enjoyed the pedagogic rights of inclusion, enhancement and participation also respected the capacities that students already had. In the case of mature students these capacities could include resilience, aspiration and phronesis. Respecting students enough to allow them to deliberate and act well for themselves, their families and other students could potentially lead to transformation and innovation not only in the students but also the programmes and institutions where they studied. For this to be the case the institutions and educators should be open and where appropriate responsive to the judgements of all students.

## Recommendations

From the study I have proposed a series of recommendations that will promote a democratic education that enables students to act with practical wisdom.

### **Recommendations for staff teaching and managing Access to HE art and design courses**

- Engender a belief that everyone can improve their abilities through practice and feedback. Tutors should not only talk to students about achievement and improvement but actually believe that students can become more successful in their subject.
- Consider the ways art and design is taught in higher education; where possible promote studio culture and studio practice, explaining to students how to get the best from learning in this way.
- Discuss with students the limitations of learning outcomes when assessing art and design practices. This is an aspect of the assessment for learning philosophy (William, 2011)
- Coach all art and design students in computer aided design. Do not underestimate how long it takes for students to feel confident in this area of work. Digital literacy and CAD may be modules that need to run throughout the length of an Access to HE course and are just as important as academic and creative skills. Build information technology skills into the assignments so that students can gain confidence from succeeding in this area.

- Develop confidence and resilience in students by setting them ambitious 'live briefs' or encouraging participation in exhibitions and competitions where success can be publically seen and acknowledged.
- Look for opportunities for students to collaborate with each other and people external to the course.
- Encourage students to develop networks of creative people who they can help and collaborate with in the future.
- Identify Access to HE students who have gone onto higher education and put them in contact with new and up-coming art and design students. This will expand their networks and social capital.
- Introduce students to positive ways in which they can communicate with staff when they are struggling with their education, for whatever reason, and reiterate that asking for help or feedback is not a sign of weakness or failure.

### **Recommendations for teaching and managing higher education art and design programmes**

- Endeavour to provide, timely, accurate and clear information on virtual learning environments. Avoid last minute changes to the dates and times of trips, tasks and deadlines to assignments. Consider the impact of changes on part-time students or non-traditional students.
- Facilitate and celebrate friendship and virtuous action within and outside the studio by noting this in feedback to students.
- Listen to students who are under-represented on the course, they may have a valuable perspective that has not been considered before. This perspective may introduce innovation and change into the programme.

- Practice different forms of pedagogy for different student needs. Just as a focus on lecturing can be ineffective in delivering a creative curriculum; a focus on studio practice can be an ineffective means of teaching particular skills. It can also be difficult for part-time students to learn through studio practice due to not having the time and space to do so.
- Challenge age-related notions of educational achievement that may be inadvertently signified through course websites, prospectuses and learning materials. Represent a diverse group of students in the institution's public-facing and student-facing communication platforms.
- Challenge beliefs that a person's capabilities are fixed, this can be addressed in the verbal and written feedback students receive. Consider adapting the assessment for learning model for higher education.
- Promote open and critical discourse between different generations of students in the studio. Often mature students have different cultural points of reference from the younger ones. By sharing this knowledge with each other students can gain a richer and broader understanding of their creative contexts. They also can share the 'rules of the game' or strategies for success.
- Be open to students negotiating deadlines and work load where appropriate. Clearly defined, rigid deadlines are useful for students when they manage their time. However, students could be encouraged to negotiate changes if unforeseen circumstances occur.
- Avoid a 'one size fits all' to quality control and modes of communication.

## **Recommendations for Access to HE art and design students**

- Make friends with students from all ages and backgrounds. Even if you are one of the few mature students on your course you will still have things in common with your cohort; a passion for art and design for example. Friends can help you through the difficulties or frustrations you may experience on your course.
- Challenge any assumptions you have about your own abilities and those of other people; accept that you like everyone can improve. Try not to assume that younger people find their learning easier than you; they may need your help too.
- Be open to different kinds of pedagogy, the ways you are taught may be different to what you expected. You may be discovering new skills and new knowledge as well as new ways of learning.
- Fear of newness, of failing, of being different, of the unmanageable are all part of being human; but try to temper these fears by considering other more positive factors and previous successes.
- Where information is not clear ask staff for further explanations. When requesting help do not see this as a weakness; at times other students probably need help and clarification too.
- Focus on developing your creative practice rather than chasing marks and referring only on the learning outcomes. Consider how you can exceed the assessment criteria.

- Look for opportunities to organise events to help yourself and others; this may be a frightening prospect that involves some risks. However, it can also increase your confidence and that of your peer group.

This research will be shared with various interested parties through events that include *Access to HE* students, staff and access validating agencies.

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## Appendix 1: Letter to participants

X

26 October 2011

Dear Participant,

**Re: Research project about the transformation of access students' learning identities during their art and design degree courses**

Thank you for agreeing to help me with this project. Your involvement will be by taking part in interviews about the educational experiences on your degree. These interviews are planned so they will record your journey through the three years of your study. It is predicted that there will be between 3-6 meetings. There may also be opportunities for the small group of participants to take part in a focus group. The project will be written up in 2015.

I am following Sunderland University's guidelines on ethical research. So the information gathered will be confidential and no individual will be identified by the project. The results of the interviews will be used for educational research and no other purpose. The final paper may be presented at a conference or in a publication.

In the long term this project aims to contribute towards the improvement of Access students' experiences when they do their degrees.

Yours Faithfully

**Sam Broadhead**

Course Leader Access to HE p/t

## **Appendix 2: Permission to use images of research participants work to illustrate Sam Broadhead's PhD thesis**

Sam Broadhead may use images of my work produced during her research project 2010-2014 for the purposes of illustrating her PhD thesis about post-Access students on their art and design degrees. They may appear in conferences presentations, academic papers and publications as part of the dissemination of the research. They will not be used for any other purpose. This will not affect the artist's ownership, copyright and intellectual property related to their work.

Signature

Date

Sam Broadhead

Date

## **Appendix 3: The College mission statement**

### **Our mission**

We are an influential, world-facing, creatively driven institution where professional educators, practitioners and researchers work together to develop and enable excellence. We aim to promote distinctive, critically informed and relevant practice in order to support economic growth and cultural advancement.

### **Our values define us and guide decision-making and behaviour**

#### **We are:**

#### **Student-centred**

maximising potential, nurturing talent, respecting individuality, holistic

#### **Focused on specialist creative communities**

collaborative, interactive, multi-disciplinary, studio-focused, externally engaged

#### **Critical in our thinking**

aspirational, challenging, researching, questioning, analytical, innovative, independent-thinking

#### **Professional**

relevant, contemporary, ambitious, achieving, international, employable, entrepreneurial, networked with industry

#### **Progressive**

beautiful, unconventional, risk-taking, experimental, radical, responsive

## Appendix 4: Strategic plan of the HEI

The Strategic Plan sets the direction of travel for the HEI. It is a statement of our priorities. It describes a period of exciting change covering the five years up to 2015, and a continuing commitment to providing education and opportunities to a wide range of students.

The College consulted with all its stakeholders in the development of the plan. The values, principles and priorities of the College reflect a process of consultation with all staff and students.

### Vision for 2015

The purpose of Bradford College, as articulated by our students, is to provide the skills and knowledge to help access careers and improve life chances.

### Mission

To help students from the region, nationally and internationally, achieve their potential and make a rewarding contribution to their own communities.

### Core values (The 7 Es)

**The seven E's are shorthand for the culture and values to which we aspire. They are:**

#### Employability

The College from which employers actively seek students who not only have the subject knowledge of their course of study but the wider skills required for today's work place as well as good levels of literacy, numeracy and IT literacy.

#### Equality & Diversity

An open and welcoming College where equality and diversity is celebrated and promoted and discrimination challenged. Where staff and student communities reflect the demographic of the local population and where students are prepared for work in diverse labour markets.

#### Enterprise

The College with a reputation for supporting entrepreneurship and producing entrepreneurs.

#### Enrichment and Entitlement

The College where student enrichment opportunities and entitlement to employability skills are regarded as a source of competitive advantage.

## Environment

The College that educates students who can contribute to the sustainability agenda in today's workplace and society in general.

## Engaging Employers

The College that engages with employers in the public and private sectors and the voluntary and community sector and is the first choice provider for the areas in which it delivers curriculum.

## Excellence

The College with the reputation for providing excellent courses, customer service and academic outcomes.

## HEI Strategy

Taking into account our mission, vision and the core values we aspire to, we have identified four strategic aspirations:

- **Identity:** Develop a branding strategy which communicates our core values and has resonance with all markets served
- **Student Experience:** Develop a student experience which provides a genuine source of competitive advantage
- **Infrastructure:** Improve our internal capabilities and assets to ensure that we are able to deliver the strategic objectives
- **Business Model:** Review and refine our business model to reflect our growing Bradford College family and the pursuit of Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP)

## **Appendix 5: Notes from meeting held on 1st July 2014**

**at 1– 2 pm**

### **Members Present**

S Broadhead (Chair)

Bob

Joe

Jane

Polly

Eliza

### **In attendance**

Y Coggins

### **Apologies for absence**

Snake

Chad

Lucylu

S Broadhead reported on issues/themes that arose over the last 3 years out of the meetings with students. Confidence has been an issue faced by mature students when it comes to education even though they are confident in other aspects of their lives.

Bob talked about coming straight through the education system onto a degree being a natural progression, being up to date with current teaching methods and confident in your abilities being stretched, however when you have been out of education you are not at the same level academically as your cohort you feel like you're starting off at a disadvantage constantly playing catch-up he spent too much time on the writing and not enough on the art a lot of the time people are strong on the art and weak when it comes to academic writing.

Jane responded by telling the group about her experience where in the first semester she felt she had to isolate herself at home and zone out of everything around her to be able to concentrate on the academic writing required and as a result did very little creative work and her tutors felt she should have been spending much more time in the studio and concluded by saying that we are artists not essay writers.

Polly responded has seen how the current level 6 students feel under pressure over the summer and how it takes over their lives, she has a year to think about it being part-time. There shouldn't be a split between theory and practice they should be synthesised.

S Broadhead asked if the group were confident as designers.

Joe responded by explaining how he enjoyed writing however he was used to be a creative writer not an academic writer and because of that struggled with academic writing and his dissertation.

Eliza responded that she felt like she was doing something wrong missing something she was out of her comfort zone had low confidence unsure about what she was doing and questioned why she was there, she was on a more commercial course and one of the briefs was about designing for a company that she had no interest in working for. She went through all of her feedback and found that research was in there a lot and felt that she was good at research but Joe explained that she must not have been so good at evidencing the research she had done in her own work. Are they just looking for impersonators copying what has been done before?

Joe responded you are expected to start from a place that is not you hence the low marks, he had good artwork but low marks because he was not evidencing enough research. Felt that research makes you a better copier of other artist not a better artist in your own right.

Polly responded with the feeling that people were being pushed onto a certain path/way of doing things. She felt that because of that she was not communicating well with a couple of her tutors and her opinions went against their advice. Felt under pressure to be the same as the other two part-time students that are able to be in college more than she is feeling like she's constantly running to keep up. You either fit in with the institution or you don't they don't change to accommodate mature students because they are in the minority, you need friends that are going through the same course as you on the same timescale it makes a difference to have others experiencing the same things you are you don't feel isolated and alone.

S Broadhead asked what is not thought about as far as mature students are concerned.

Bob responded it's how the course is designed to be taught regardless of who you are.

S Broadhead do you think friends can provide what you need where the institution is lacking?

Jane responded it is really important to get support from the rest of the cohort.

Joe responded it's a game of chance the people you are with and the friends you make.

Joe and Bob became friends when they were on the same degree programme Bob had seen Joes work exhibited and thought it was very good before they met.

Polly liked the 2<sup>nd</sup> year group more than the 1<sup>st</sup> year group and the people she will do her end of year show with will not be starting till this September so apart from the two students doing the course part-time like she is she won't have the same relationship with the rest of the students, it is isolating when you don't feel part of a group.

Bob made an effort to get to know the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students on his programme until then there was little communication between the levels and felt that there should be more of a chance to mix with other programmes not be separate all the time though to a certain extent that is down to each individual to make friends, he has learnt a lot more by coming into college and experiencing what's going on in the studio than just from reading a book at home.

S Broadhead asked Jane and Joe to show the drawings they had done before the rest of the group had arrived, the drawings were a representation of their experience in education over the last 3 years.



Joe explained that his diagram represented that in the beginning he was reproducing photographs as artwork it was very chaotic throwing paint onto a canvas randomly but by the 3<sup>rd</sup> year he knew exactly what he was doing, the other of his diagrams showed cog wheels the first year was represented by a large wheel where anything goes the 2<sup>nd</sup> year was a bit smaller and the 3<sup>rd</sup> year was a small perfectly formed cog representing that he knew where he was as an artist.

Jane showed that in the first year she had peaks and troughs she naturally focusses on the positive being a positive person she found each year got harder and harder and found the dissertation very challenging and pleased when she had finished it and submitted the hardest thing was the end of year exhibition she was very stressed about it surviving on very little sleep found it very hard and had butterflies before the private view because it was a showcase of her work.

Polly does the course because she enjoys it something for herself an outlet for her creativity and looks forward to it every week.

Joe found that on the access course he was doing very well achieving merits and distinctions enjoying art learning a lot but once he started his degree was achieving lower marks because the academic element of the programme was where he was a weaker student and struggled but has not put him off enjoying his artwork.

Bob stated that despite achieving a low mark for his dissertation due to late submission it hasn't put him off art, he finds the educational environment too stressful to do an academic masters.

S Broadhead noted that a lot of the feedback she had received talked about the educational journey the mature students had undertaken was like being on a rollercoaster ride going from Access to HE to doing a degree programme ups and downs.

Polly has more confidence with her academic writing skills because it's what she knows how to do and has experience of and less confidence with her artwork and feels she is too sensitive about feedback the comments that are bad she takes to heart too much and the good comments she has disbelief about.

Bob commented that crits undertaken in the last year where feedback has not been favourable he didn't agree with and feels that some tutors are very good on theory but not on practice. Some staff rub you up the wrong way being dismissive is not a good thing.

Joe found tutors criticising the conclusion of his work because it's not the same as what they would do.

S Broadhead stated that emotions are fragile within art and design in particular because work is displayed for others to comment on and view whereas other degrees you submit written work that gets marked but not displayed art is much more public.

Jane commented that tutors should not impose their own views on students, if the student can argue their point then it will be fine. Don't tie yourself up in knots worrying about marks focus on the art and enjoying what you're doing.

It was commented that Damien Hirst realised that he had to be successful commercially and made it his goal to sell his work. He carried on despite being

rejected from institutions of his choice it didn't deter him from pursuing his art and becoming a famous artist known all over the world.

Polly struck by tutor's mind how tutors are influenced by different things Suzanne Orr a Professor of Fine Art at the University of the Arts London a writer has written about how you assess art tension between learning outcomes and art and design that makes it difficult to put into words what people learn by talking to a cohort of students. You have to understand the rules of the game not just understand the brief and you have to tick all the boxes it's not easily communicated through the written word but takes years to gain expertise and is hard to articulate.

Bob saw things in the fine art end of year show that were out of the box and felt that some of the students would make good artists and could see a lot of the conceptual material.

S Broadhead asked if the group through the educational process has formed their character.

Joe was in agreement with that statement all his art mediums were separate before he started his educational journey now they have been brought together and he has much more confidence the friendly people he's met along the way has made a big difference made the whole experience much easier.

Bob feels that he has changed.

Jane feels unsure at this point whether she has changed but has gained a little more confidence.

The other members of the group were unsure, it has been harder to maintain friendships as a part-time student if you don't have friends you only see half the picture you miss out on what's going on.

## Appendix 6: Participant profiles

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age at start of the study</b>	<b>Qualifications before Access to HE Diploma</b>	<b>Previous employment</b>	<b>Specialist Art College/HEI</b>	<b>Course name</b>	<b>Gender</b>
<b>Chad</b>	41	A levels in Geography, Art and General Studies	Navy, Flight attendant	Specialist Art College	Printed Textiles and Surface Pattern	Female
<b>Bradie</b>	32	No previous qualifications	unknown	Specialist Art College	HNC Millinery and Textiles	Female
<b>Bob</b>	55	CSEs at school, Technical Qualification in Refrigeration	Refrigeration engineer	Specialist Art College	Art and Design	Male
<b>Joe</b>	39	No formal qualifications, YTS, first aider	Machine Operator, Fork Lift truck operator	Specialist Art College	Art and Design	Male
<b>Snake</b>	43	No qualifications	Market trader	Specialist Art College	Art and Design	Male
<b>Lucylu</b>	23	Unknown	Unknown	Specialist Art College	Visual Communications	Female
<b>Eliza</b>	52	MSc Careers Counselling and Management, City and Guilds Fashion	University Careers advisor	HEI	Textiles, part-time	Female
<b>Polly</b>	48	Degree	Asylum seekers volunteer manager	HEI	Art and Design, part-time	Female
<b>Jane</b>	55	GCSEs and CSEs	Banking and housewife	HEI	Art and Design	Female