Bodies-in-Transition:

an ethnography of the opportunities and constraints of BTEC performing arts students

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Abstract

Set against widening participation agendas in the United Kingdom (UK), educational policy makers and practitioners have become increasingly invested in supporting more diverse populations of young people across the entire student lifecycle. The current and potential role of vocational education has commanded notable attention in these public discussions. This refocussing of attention towards student lifecycles has, in turn, led to growing political and academic concerns regarding *student transitions*. However, research conducted at the intersections of these interests indicate that transitional opportunities are unevenly distributed across changing student populations. It is this mosaic of differential opportunities that this project set out to explore.

BTEC level three qualifications are popular vocational options, and pathways into higher education, situated at the heart of these wider debates and tensions circulating in the UK. The performing arts are notably emblematic of the increasingly unequal, precarious, individualised, and unpredictable nature of transition. This 18 month multi-sited, multi-sensory ethnography explored and articulated these transitional experiences vividly. Findings were organised into three 'plays'. Each play provided separate but interrelated analyses and narratives of transition, that together uncovered an important range of educational and social processes. These were represented as: (1) a web of power relations that constrained individuals and groups based on gender, sexuality, and class; (2) the embodiment of a hidden curriculum of expression; and (3) the operationalisation of skills discourse that ordered the technical and creative value of certain performances. Theoretical reflections on these transitional narratives provided more substance to what is often referred to as the messy, fragmented, or complex process of transition. Through this, a new theoretical option is offered, *bodies-in-transition*. This timely contribution responds to the call for more sophisticated accounts of transition to surface while setting an agenda from which educational policies and pedagogies must now respond.

Preface

It is precisely 11:44pm on the 31st of December 2017 at the time of writing this sentence. Given the right conditions, this time of the year can make one pensive. The conditions are ripe for some pertinent reflections tonight. Tomorrow my thesis will be sent to print and the day after, bound and submitted. The processes of writing and rewriting will come to a pause - for a moment. The theories and stories of transitions that I have developed over the last five years will continue to live, and change, beyond any of the single points in time listed above. Even if I abandon these academic interests, a new theoretical framework that was developed through this ethnography might inform future research; the data might (re)feature in other forms of dissemination; the students that I encountered will continue to be *in-transition*.

Why do these realisations have relevance in introducing this thesis? The answer is because this thesis is to do with *transition*. It is therefore fitting for this PhD to begin by reflecting on what transitions are. Not the impending transition to 2018 because that is not important here. It is with the transitions of students that this research is ultimately concerned. Specifically, the research aims to *articulate the opportunities and constraints BTEC[1] student encounter in the Performing Arts*. There were many reasons why this simple aim became a full time intellectual pursuit of mine for half a decade. Many of which will be justified through identified gaps in academic discourse and literature in due course (see Chapters 1 - 6). As will be made clear there is certainly an academic thirst to better understand and support student transitions. Colley (2007) has gone as far to suggest that transitions have "become a major political, popular and academic concern in the UK and Europe" (p.427).

The academic context provides a needed rationale for this study to avoid criticisms of indulgence. However, a personal introduction is much better equipped at positioning the research and the researcher. Between 2006 and 2008 I was enrolled on a BTEC in Sports course in a 'low participation neighbourhood'. At that time I had two ambitions: to play Rugby or to coach it. Many of my contemporaries shared similar practical aspirations for their futures.

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[1] The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) is a provider (existing as part of Pearson Education Ltd) of 'vocational' qualifications in the United Kingdom. More details are provided in Chapter 2.

Despite sharing similar dreams, and all being classified as 'BTEC students', our lives have taken very different paths so far. Little commonalities bind us together today apart from the ability to track each others' movements on social media. There remains something puzzling and difficult to pinpoint when reflecting on all the competing variables that have resulted in such different outcomes. This messiness is one reason why I have found 'student transition' to be a fertile ground to nourish my curiosities. An accumulation of events and decisions in my own life provides the second.

Having just moved to New Zealand with hopes to continue to learn how to play Rugby to the best of my talents my shoulder was injured beyond repair and with it so was my imagined future. With my main reason for moving gone, and the unforeseen financial climate in 2009 draining savings, I returned to the United Kingdom to pursue a degree in Sports Coaching. Here my taste and interests continued to develop gradually towards sociological concern with bodies rather than a practical one. A transition that some may consider to be from a vocational interest to a intellectual one; even though this never appeared as a distinctively different interest to me. What my body does has always been ingrained in how I have come to understand it. At the very same time as these transformations, my body was also changing from previous configurations. My flesh has been in transition ever since (and before) my BTEC.

At some point I began a habit of sitting with my right leg over my left, so I can rest a book. After working as caretaker (and labourer) I often find pencils behind my ear without remembering putting them there. My view and sense of the world have expanded in some respects and diminished in others. Communication with some bodies has become drastically easier but more difficult with those it once was so natural. The pleasure I experienced from playing Rugby no longer exists but the intensities of Boxing are my new fix. I have the word 'embodied' tattooed under my left armpit, the ink is beginning to bleed into the surrounding tissue. The list continues. I am, always have been, and alway will be *in-transition*. Yet none of these events are unique or unusual - it is merely a part of being a body (Chapter 6 develops this line of thinking further).

My body has been central to my transition in countless ways (in physically typing and submitting this thesis for example) - and as Chapter 8 will show the students' bodies were also. As an ethnographer my body was the instrument of data collection and analysis. Through the oversimplified recollections above you now have got to know *this* body a little better. But more importantly by the end of the thesis you will know *their* bodies (BTEC in Performing Arts Students) even more so. It will be through the new awareness that the ethnographic texts elicit that you will even get to know these transitions in ways that have yet entered the literature. There is a lot to learn and to reflect upon from these *bodies-in-transition*.

The time is now 3:01am on the 1st of January 2018. My intention for this preface has been met. The New Year has been ushered in, the music has stopped, but there is no time for these bodies to pause; we continue to be *in-transition…*

PART 1   CONTEXT

Introduction to CONTEXT

This section consists of four separate but related Chapters that narrow in focus. Chapter 1 begins by mapping out general trends that relate to the changing nature of 'vocational transitions'. Vocational transitions here broadly refers to the context in which 'vocational' students progress through education and into the world of work. These broad brushstrokes focus on outlining political and academic discussions that seek to characterise these transitions in one way or another. The four main points that are unpacked in this chapter are: (1) a hybridisation of educational systems, including rapidly changing relationships between education and forms of work; (2) the rhetoric of and drive towards an equality of opportunity; versus (3) vocational education as a massive deception; and (4) the characterisation of transitions as messy.

In Chapter 2 the three main contexts of the study are unpacked and so are the relations between them. Because the aim of this study is to articulate the transitions of BTEC students the subsections of this Chapter included: (1) the BTEC; (2) BTEC transitions into, through and beyond Higher Education; and (3) BTEC transitions into Employment. The four issues in Chapter 1 return thought these subsections to demonstrate how the BTEC is uniquely situated within the landscape of Vocational education in the United Kingdom.

Within both Chapter 1 and 2 an emphasis on the importance of skill emerged within the reviewed literature. Both vocational and BTEC transitions relied heavily on the idea that 'successful' transitions require students to become skillful. In response to this, Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature that can provide an overview of the educational and occupational social contexts in which skill has become a determinant and marker of transition.

The final Chapter in CONTEXT generates a detailed account of the main themes that frame discussions around 'Performing Arts Transitions'. The section begins by providing an overview of industry and education prioritising statistics of the BTEC in Performing Arts where available. In the second section (4.2a & 4.2b) the search is widened to look at the Creative and Cultural Industries more generically for two reasons. Firstly, because the BTEC in Performing Arts advertises itself as helping students acquire the skills needed for these sectors. The second

reason is that there is much more literature within this less niche field. This Chapter ends by considering the body in the performing arts - again drawing from a different pool of literature.

The fieldwork was conducted between September 2014 and April 2016. Much of the literature drawn upon in this section to provide an account of the CONTEXT therefore is sourced from documentation relevant to that period. It is acknowledged that policies, practices and statistical trends may have altered since this period.

Chapter 1
Vocational Transitions

1.1. *An overview of Vocational Education in the Untied Kingdom*

No official definition of Vocational Education (VE) has been adopted within the United Kingdom (UK) and consequently Vocational Education and Training (VET) encompasses a wide range of provision with "very different purposes and outcomes" (Wolf, 2011, p.19). In mapping this diverse and changing landscape the Wolf (2011) report[2] acknowledged that some vocational qualifications are highly specific and strongly orientated towards well-established, predictable pathways to employment. Whereas others are more general and flexible in nature, with the intention to develop a range of *skills* desirable for students that wish to progress within a certain sector. In addition to these differences, there has been reported disparities in quality of provision; where some vocational courses "are very difficult and demanding, others [are] not" (*ibid*, p.23). VE therefore, in the UK context has increasingly been accepted as an umbrella term; now referring to an extensive range of courses from entry level to level 8[3]. Acknowledging the numerous forms VE can take, Atkins (2009) argued that contrasting strands of the UK vocational system are only bound together by one common theme, the connection of an educational programme to an occupation. Noting this single commonality, the function of vocationalism in the UK, has been to facilitate student transitions into (skilled) work; or, to put it another way, to provide students with "the chance to progress, immediately or later in life" (Wolf, 2011, p.20).

According to Winch and Hyland (2007) the founding priority of VE has been to develop students' technical accomplishments rather than more liberal pursuits of the mind. This is what distinguished the *vocational* from the *academic*. There have, however, been many attempts to reconcile vocational-academic, technical-liberal, divisions in the UK educational system. Winch and Hyland (2007) also mapped out a number of measures taken over the twentieth century in Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) that sought to overcome such dualisms. In the contemporary and internationalised era of today this blurring has continued. Davey and Fuller (2013) identified an eclectic popular menu of *hybridised qualifications* that appear to

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[2] The Wolf report was an independently commissioned review of vocational education in the United Kingdom, published on 3 March 2011.

[3] See, https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels (Accessed 14/06/2015) for a detailed list. Figure in Appendix a.

transcend these established binaries. As a result of such hybridisation, the once defined perimeters between the "'so-called' vocational/academic divide" (*ibid*, p. 1) have become even more difficult to draw within the UK. Yet despite such clear shifts in provision many political (and academic) commentators continue to heatedly debate "the damaging divide between vocational and academic education" (Labour, 2013, p.3). As such, current political debates tend to be framed by the perceived differences between vocational and academic education. Consequently, familiar topics (such as, issues of 'parity of esteem', the nature of 'vocational education' and the progression of students into higher education or employment) dominate scholarly and political attention within the UK[4]. But these are only one form of discussions that are of importance in relation to vocational transitions. Another topic, of sociological relevance, in this area is the rapidly changing relations between all forms and levels of education and labour markets.

Post-compulsory education has been increasingly subjected to what Ainley and Allen (2010) termed as an extended period of "education for employability" (p.159). An emphasis on employability in post-compulsory *academic* qualifications, they argued, has drastically reformed the function of FE and HE within the UK. In this period, qualifications that might have been traditionally academic by nature have moved to integrate a range of vocational elements; such as work placements and professional development planning. In relation to this, the academic face of HE has responded to market interests in the UK. As a result, the majority of HE "students are now studying subjects that could broadly be described as 'vocational'" (Brown & Carasso. 2013, p.7). Meanwhile, post-compulsory *vocational* qualifications have hybridised. The vocational sector, in the UK, is now frequently referred to as a 'stepping stone' into HE (Atkins, 2010; O'Shea, Lysaght & Tanner, 2012). Most noticeably, swelling numbers of vocational qualifications in FE as familiar routes into HE. Within this growing sector, BTEC level 3 diplomas, have emerged as the second most common route into HE (Western Vocational Progression Consortium [WVPC], 2014). Qualifications of this nature are explicitly designed to integrate and develop certain key academic skills, or functional skills, desirable for progression into HE. *Vocational* qualifications, such as the BTEC, have become increasingly popular options for students to an extent that "post-16 the majority follow courses

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4 To watch a debate on VET, in the House of Commons (2014), http://www.bbc.co.uk/
democracylive/house-of-commons-28228727.

which are largely or entirely vocational" (Wolf, 2011, p. 7). Even though more students opt for vocational, 'vocationally-orientated' or 'vocationally-related' qualifications (Wolf, 2011) they tend to be enrolled on a mixture of vocational-academic programmes simultaneously (UCAS, 2012). With changes to educational provision briefly outlined above, it has become increasingly complex to understand the nature of 'vocational' transitions.

Despite the fragmenting landscape of educational provision, on a national scale, prevailing discourses continue to be (re)produced. In this process, nuances are often filtered down and perceptions (over)simplified. On the extremes two dominant, but opposing, discourses are at play. Each presents the vocational system in a particular light within contemporary society. On one side of the debate there is a strong optimistic rhetoric that celebrates VE potential and ability to provide students with great *opportunities*. From this perspective, VE is acknowledged for its continued role in assisting social mobility and eroding social inequalities by removing barriers for those most destined for failure. But perhaps more central to this rhetoric is the anticipated role vocationalism has towards greater economic prosperity. In response to the economic recession investing more in the vocational sector was proposed as "essential to building sustainable growth and stronger communities… [and] to stimulate private-sector growth" (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2010, p.3). There are however many to the contrary that strongly express the opposite. From this counter perspective it is argued that much of the former rhetoric is ideational and detached from the reality in which vocational students experience their transitions. From this position, it is often proposed that official vocational discourses are deliberately misleading. Furthermore, accusations are made that VE systematically funnels young people from particular backgrounds into low paid, low-skilled work. This counter discourse portrays the vocational sector, as a system that places *constraints* on young peoples' futures, whilst simultaneously contributing to the (re)production of social inequalities. Between these extremes, however, the transitional realities vocational students experience might be far more nuanced and *messy* than both popular rhetorics imply.

1.2. *Vocational education providing an 'equality of opportunity'*

Vocationalism is part of an educational system in the UK that explicitly strives to achieve an "equality of opportunity for all" (Wolf, 2011, p. 8). In the context of education, equality of opportunity refers to a political notion where every student has the same opportunities regardless of social background, race, gender or religion, and where people achieve success in education according to their efforts and ability. Bathmaker (2013) claimed that VET is deeply entrenched in this wider political agenda and has therefore become "entangled with questions of inclusivity and widening participation" (p.89). In relation to this, at a government level, VE is seen as a vehicle through which social mobility and stronger communities are, and can be achieved in the UK (for example, BIS, 2010). It is in this national policy context that VET gets frequently cited as a central plank to widening participation agendas (for example, Hoelscher & Hayward, 2008; Foster, 2009; HEFCE, 2006; Crabtree & Roberts, 2007). In the official discourse VET is therefore recognised for positive contributions to achieving an 'equality of opportunity' and for empowering students in their transitions through the educational system and into work.

With educational provision in the UK historically divided along academic and vocational lines, equality of opportunity has usually been discussed in terms of creating a 'parity of esteem' between the two (see, Winch & Hyland, 2007; Atkins, 2009, 2010; Atkins *et al.,* 2011; Wolf, 2011). On paper at least, over a 20 year period a series of educational reforms have sought to reconcile many issues relating to the accredited value of vocational qualifications (Atkins *et al.,* 2011). As a result of concurrent policy modifications, the government tends to claim to have achieved a parity of esteem (Hoelscher, Hayward, Ertl & Dunbar-Goddet, 2008). This claim is predominantly based on the alignment of vocational qualifications with their academic counterparts, within both national and European credit frameworks. Progression statistics have also supported claims that issues of parity of esteem have largely ceased to be the defining tension of the vocational system in the UK. Tracking studies tend to acknowledge that there is "little evidence to suggest that vocational students struggle to access HE" (Foster, 2009, p.8). Despite this, it is widely acknowledged that vocational students continue to be underrepresented within more selective HE courses (Hoelscher *et al.*, 2008; HEFCE, 2006). Persistent statistical

imbalances, however, are not always understood as disparity between vocational and academic qualifications, but a natural stratification created through the realisation of students' abilities, efforts, and choices. For example, Vickers and Bekhradnia (2007) noted a potential reason for a persistent disparity between A level and vocational transitions into HE. After taking into account the 'ability of the student' (in terms of GCSE passes), their "analysis does not actually indicate a problem - at least not the one that is often cited" (p.26). Explanations of this manner bring individual qualities of the student into the frame, and contribute to a sense that vocational transitions into HE and employment are within the control of the student.

The official discourse of opportunity therefore might be seen to both reinforce, and be underpinned by, individualistic perspectives of vocational transitions that elide rhetorics of choice, ability, and autonomy. This is reflective of what Ball, Maguire, and Macrae (2000) recognised as "the rise and spread of the culture of individualism" (p.2) in education. This encourages a conceptualisation of individual students as powerful agents that poses large amounts of agency. Individualism propagates the assumption that vocational students are able to actively negotiate their transitions and identities within wider educational and occupational networks. Students' successes and failures are therefore often portrayed as an organic reflection of their abilities, efforts, and potentials. Not only does this impact the way outsiders perceive vocational transitions but "young people see themselves as individuals in a meritocratic setting, not as classed or gendered members of an unequal society" (*ibid*, p.4). Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) suggested that, unchallenged, equality of opportunity ideologies in education, and society, allows public perception to "get caught up in discourses that present education as an equal playing field" (p.818). As part of this equal playing field, VET is regularly presented as a second chance, or alternative pathway for lower ability and disengaged individuals within the UK policy context (Bathmaker, 2013; Foster, 2009; Bostock & Wood, 2015; Fuller & Macfadyen, 2011).

Ainley and Allen (2010) argued that VE is often represented in the media in this 'positive' manner in the UK. They suggested that VE has frequently been mentioned for its central and admirable role in providing 'disaffected' youth with opportunities (see also, Avis, 2007). As a result, common public perception is indicative of the idea that VE provides 'less able' students

with opportunities to become 'skilled' instead of becoming marginalised from education, work, and society. Proponents of the existing vocational system in the UK, therefore, think of VE in terms of harnessing 'skills' and opening doors for students with practical aptitudes. A plethora of empirical evidence is drawn upon to underpin the suggestion that VET provides students with opportunities to make 'skilled' transitions. For example, Hoelscher *et al.*'s (2008) quantitative analysis showed that vocational routes in FE clearly open access to HE for students from a lower socio-economic population. In addition to this, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skill [BIS] (2011) contributed "to the weight of evidence showing positive employment and earnings returns for the vast majority of [vocational] qualifications" (p.2). A key finding of this tracking study was the lifetime financial benefits associated with Level 3 vocational qualifications that stood between £37,000 and £89,000. Findings of this nature support the BIS (2014) claim that employers value and desire the skills associated with vocational learning. With associated benefits such as this being recorded Atkins *et al.*, (2011) suggested that the *official* policy rhetoric of VE in the UK tends to reinforce the individualistic notions of vocational opportunities. However powerful the notion of (an equality of) opportunity might appear in the vocational discourse there is a strong counter discourse. In opposition to the official discourse many argue that the "illusion that success is open to anyone if they can only achieve remains just that, an illusion" (Platt, 2011, p. 130).

1.3. *Vocational opportunities – the great deception*

In the UK vocational context, Atkins (2010) argued that "the rhetoric of opportunity and aspiration found in policy documents is in tension with the realities facing young people" (p. 256). These tensions were previously identified from Ball *et al.*'s (2000) comprehensive study of post-16 vocational transitions in London. In this longitudinal study the authors demonstrated that transitional choices made by "young people bear only a passing resemblance to the one-dimensional, cognitive, individualistic, consumer rationalism which predominates in official texts" (p. *book abstract*). At its most critical, structuralist sociological analysis concludes that the notion of vocational "opportunity is merely smoke and mirrors, a massive deception whereby young people are channelled into the low-paid, low-skilled work… to fulfil economic demands for cheap labour as and when is needed" (Atkins, 2010, p.253). More than being deceitful, analysis and commentary of a social constructionist nature infers that the VE system actively contributes to a systemic (re)production of class, gender, and economic inequality in our society. These messages have been strongly conveyed in educational research for decades. For example, seminal ethnographic studies (Willis, 1977, Bourdieu, 1984) have demonstrated the intense power of social and educational structures to funnel people into certain vocations. It is from these types of occupational socialisation perspectives that Atkins (2010) referred to the discourse of vocational opportunity as "the Great Deception" (p. 253).

As might be expected, the suggestion that the UK's vocational system intentionally funnels young people into low-skilled, low-paid work is largely absent in political discourse. In the prevailing neoliberal context, powerful voices in mainstream political spheres seldom challenge the notion of individualism. As such, it has been left to academic commentary to challenge the 'illusion' of vocational opportunities and propose that, in reality, vocational qualifications only offer a "'mirage' of wider opportunity" (Pugsley, 2004, p.28). On this matter, political commentary tends not to be motivated by a desire to expose structural inequalities, that the establishment (re)creates intentionally for the purpose of cheap labour. Instead, deficiencies within the VET system are highlighted for the purpose of justifying plans to reform, or, to undermine the opposition's political rhetoric. For example, in incumbent fashion former Education Minister, Michael Gove MP commissioned the Wolf Report. This independent report

collated a strong pool of evidence that recognised that "30 or 40 years ago vocational routes offered young people better and more secure prospects than is the case today" (p.9). In response to these findings, Gove condemned a section of the VE system in the UK, stating,

> a third of young people between the ages of 16-19 are, right now, either doing nothing at all or pursuing courses which offer no route to higher levels of education or the prospect of meaningful employment… *young people are being deceived* and that this is not just unacceptable but morally wrong (Michael Gove cited in, Wolf, 2011, p. 4)

Although Gove raised the issue of deceitfulness in the current system, he did so with the suggestion of inheriting a vocational system that "remains weaker than most other developed nations" (*ibid*, p.4). Whilst acknowledging problems vocational students might face in progressing though education and into 'meaningful work' Gove proposed a series of reforms that rely on greater input from businesses, in order to "get the structure right… [and] give all our young people the opportunities they deserve" (*ibid,* p.5). This example illustrates how the great deception metaphor can be employed to push forward reform; in this case, the strengthening of relationships between industry and VE. In this senses, the rhetoric of the great deception merely operates as discourse of recognising systematic constraint, it is an exposure of the (re)production of structural inequalities that are prevalent within the vocational system. But this politician's understanding of the problems provide only one possible type of explanation and outlines a vision for the future that does not necessarily bring about greater equality for vocational transitions.

In relation to this there have been a number of key themes of inequality consistently identified within the UK vocational system; such as those based on ethnicity, and geographical location (see, Atkins, 2009). Moreover, it has been widely recorded that gender and class demographics of vocational qualifications have been far from inclusive or diverse (*ibid*). Atkins (2010) noted that vocational opportunities are heavily marketed towards classed and gendered audiences relating to the occupational areas that the courses are linked. This, she argued, contributes to the ongoing reproduction of social inequalities of class, gender and labour power in the UK. Colley *et al.,* (2003) developed the concept of *vocational habitus* to explain the transmission of the guiding ideologies of vocational cultures across generations, that in turn, contributes to the (re)production of class and gender inequalities within those professions. Colley (2006) later

referred to the vocational habitus as "dispositions to which students must orientate themselves in order to become 'the right person for the job'" (p.25). In the female-dominated context of childcare, Colley *et al.*, (2003) illustrated how 'rough' students from deprived areas struggled to embody the 'correct' vocational habitus. As a result these students "became isolated and then eventually excluded from the learning site in various ways" (p.482). Whereas in the male-dominated environment of a 'BTEC in Engineering', Colley *et al,.* (2003) discussed how the 'maleness' of the physical space was alien, and somewhat threatening, to some females in the college and reinforced the socialisation of students towards the masculine occupational culture of engineering.

Despite the celebrated rhetoric of vocational opportunities, gender remains as important in VE today as then. In 2015 the *International Journal of Vocational Education and Training* published (another) special edition on gender in VET claiming that "gender injustices remains a central issue in VET and the labour market; and as the social, political and economic landscape changes rapidly in today's world, it is inevitable that gender inequalities are produced and reproduced new and different ways" (Niemeyer & Colley, 2015, p.1). Moreover, despite VE's central role in widening participation efforts, vocational transitions remain synonymous with working-class transitions. Vincent and Braun (2011), also utilising the concept of vocational habitus, concluded that typically being young and working-class, vocational students tend to "lack forms of cultural capital which would automatically ensure that they behaved 'professionally' and thereby attain respectability" (p.783). These issues of inequality cannot pin great hopes on recent educational reforms that aim to strengthen relationships between vocational programmes and industry because the inequalities that they are concerned with exist in these industries as well as in wider society.

In recent times, as previously discussed, the relationships between (vocational) education, industry and society have been rapidly changing. This has led to a situation where the *opportunities* and *constraints* of vocational students have also changed at a similar rate. In response, contemporary sociological research into VE has therefore become more reflective of the transitional experiences of vocational students that are of course far more complex and

nuanced than both powerful discourses (of systemic constraints vs an equality of opportunity) suggest.

1.4. *Messy Trajectories*

Both discourses of vocational opportunities, and of systematic constraints, are reflective of the two opposing extremes. They convey only partial representations of the transitions faced by the vocational students today and informed commentators express a more balanced, nuanced view. In this middle ground it is recognised that there can be real vocational opportunities for students. However, due to a mixture of factors these opportunities are rarely as accessible as policy might suggest. In attempts to understand the nature of vocational transitions through this unclear landscape, an emerging body of literature seeks to explore vocational transitions as an increasingly complex and messy process, where neither models of occupational socialisation or individualism neatly fit.

In a context where it is widely recognised that normative linear transitional pathways have been eroded (Brockmann, 2012; Furlong & Cartmel, 2006; Ecclestone, 2007; Smith, 2009), ideal frameworks of transitions contradict the complex reality of transitional experiences. As such, the complexity of contemporary vocational transitions challenges both established discourses of vocationalism outlined above. It is difficult to sustain an argument that VE systemically (re)produces inequalities by funneling students into low paid, and skilled labour. It is equally difficult to defend the notion that VE provides equal opportunities for students, regardless of background, to progress through HE and into meaningful employment. The majority of vocational students do not follow predictable pathways, and now it is common for students to move in and out of their studies, swapping full-time and part-time education and employment (Wolf, 2011). In a wider sense, Smith (2009) argued that transitional research needs to respond to these fundamental changes to the labour market. Through his examination of UK trends in social mobility, Smith concluded that young people's transitions into work are set to only "become more complex as the processes of transition continues to be both extended and diverse in their arrangements" (p.389).

A number of typologies have emerged recently in the educational literature to describe these types of transitions. Cashmore, Green and Scott's (2010) longitudinal ethnographic study of student experiences during their transitions into HE describe the process as *fragmented*. They

suggested that "the transition and the whole university experience is fragmented, involving not just an initial adjustment to university life but also repeated re-adjustments" (p.109). Importantly, this process is not linear, and students experience a variety of social and academic transitions simultaneously that impact upon one another. In the context of physical education, Aldous (2012) also described some students' transitional experiences as 'fragmented'. In this ethnographic study he noticed that students were required to continuously negotiate their practices in relation to the exigencies of the contexts they were exposed to.

In conjunction with the fragmentation of student transitions through the UK's educational systems, transitions into work, and adulthood, have become *delayed* (Ainley & Allen, 2010). Acknowledging that many students now commute from family homes to university, Ainley and Allen (2010) suggested that students can fit their HE studies into their existing lifestyles, rather than marking a transition to new ones. Moreover, they argued that the ability to study from home, the increase in part-time HE, the shortening term times, and HE provision in colleges have created a new form of semi-dependancy that prolongs student transitions. In relation to this prolonged period, Bradley and Devadason (2008) described youth transitions into labour markets as *fractured*. They discussed how the lengthened (delayed) transition from education-to-work are becoming less linear and predictable, far removing them from normative pathways that have been previously identified in the literature. Instead they argued it is common for transitions to "meander, fork or peter out" (p. 134). Irregular patterns of transition have particularly been identified as more common within working-class populations and amongst vocational students. Building on this observation, Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) described the *interrupted* trajectories of working-class students through vocational and academic education. They argued that students from a working-class background have extra challenges to remould themselves in order to adhere to the informal structures evident in education and 'skilled' employment.

Although each of these typologies are reflective of the trends in VE and the changing nature of vocational transitions, the term most specific to the vocational context is "messy trajectories" (Atkins *et al*,. 2011, p.6; Wolf, 2011, P.39). Atkins and colleagues developed this typology by shedding light on the unique lived experiences of individual students in their study.

By exploring the depths of the experiences of vocational students going through transitions they suggested that process is mediated "by their unfolding network of relationships with family, friends and others in the community" (Atkins *et al.,* 2011, p.6). Although the term *messy trajectories* is underdeveloped, it powerfully encapsulates the vast potential directions a vocational student can take. It also recognises that, although, students might embark on a particular path this is subject to change in relation to unfolding social factors. Moreover, it indicates that vocational students are constantly exposed to a range of formal and informal learning environments that stretch beyond the confines of the institution. With the brief description of messy trajectories outlined above there is an implication that it is difficult, if not impossible, to generalise normative transitional experiences and pathways. Consequently, messy trajectories implies that vocational students are being exposed to a range of vocational, academic, and industrial environments over their lengthening, hybridised transitions into and through (un)employment. Through these prolonged and unpredictable pathways, every student transition becomes increasingly unique and unpredictable. Some of these vocational opportunities might be actualised in shaping their transitions whilst others may not lead to anything stable. The qualitative research in this section contributes to a understanding that the *processes* of transition have become increasingly messy. The process of transition has become less clear because there are more potential directions vocational students can pursue over longer durations.

In addition to this an inability to accurately generalise the *outcomes* of vocational transitions has also been noted. For example, the *Institute of Public Policy Research* (IPPR) (2013) declared that transitions are an enormously complex phenomenon across Europe. Here they suggested that tracking studies and large scale statistical analysis of transitions are limited, because it is "difficult to generalise about an 'average' transition" (p.8) and by failing to understand, or account for this complexity can result in incoherent conclusions to be made. What the institute acknowledge in this report is that the relationship between the origins of a cohort (i.e. the educational programme they are enrolled on) and their destinations (i.e. what forms of work these students tend to progress into) is a messy one. This complexity of transitional outcomes may be an epiphenomenon of the messy process of transition (as previously described). To move beyond the limitations and inaccuracies in transitional research (particularly in the context

of VE) it has become of prime importance to explore the nature of this complexity in more detail.

Worth understood that it is no longer "enough to say that transitions are no longer neat and linear, or to briefly mention their complexity… a new theoretical option is needed to help explain the dynamic process" (2009, p.1051). In light of this, an increasing number of research projects in a range of contexts have, implicitly or explicitly, responded to the need to explore the depths of the messy process. Importantly, these studies not only generate detailed insight into specific transitions, but also speak beyond their contexts and contribute to the development of a transitional theory that fits with the new kind of transitions that are characteristic of VE in late modernity (Chapter 5 provides a full review of these developments).

Before turning to a review of the contemporary range of transitional theory, and positioning the theoretical framework of the PhD study against these existing perspectives, more specific transitional contexts of the study will be further elaborated. This is particularly important as the erosion of linear pathways makes it less appropriate to discuss vocational education in general terms. Instead, what is needed is the realisation that vocational transitions have become increasingly messy (in process and in outcome). And in response, highly contextualised accounts are needed. Chapter 2 therefore will continue to detail important issues regarding the specific transition of the research in relation to the wider debates outlined thus far. In order to provide this rounded review the next section is structured into three interrelated sub-section covering the three main transitional contexts: the BTEC, Higher Education, and industry.

Chapter 2
BTEC Transitions

2.1. *The BTEC*

BTEC level three qualifications (BTEC) are uniquely situated within the wider tensions and debates identified in the vocational and transitional literature. Formally at least, BTECs have achieved a 'parity of esteem' with academic counterparts. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) recognise BTEC National Extended Diplomas and BTEC National Diplomas as equivalent to three A-levels and two A-levels respectively (Edexcel, 2011). This accreditation enables BTEC graduates to progress to university with an Extended Diploma which has been worth up to 360 tariff points[5] (UCAS, 2013). As such, the BTEC design is reflective of the idea that vocational courses have become a steppingstone (Atkins, 2010; O'Shea, Lysaght & Tanner, 2012) into further forms of education and employment. Indeed, Pearson Education Limited (2014), who have played a central role in the development of the qualification, have adopted this language; implying that vocational transitions consists of a series of stepping stones, until the student finally enters industry,

> [BTECs] share a common purpose of helping people to become occupationally ready to take up employment… this can follow either directly after achieving the qualification, or via the stepping stone of Higher Education (HE) in university or college. By studying the BTEC National, learners develop knowledge, understanding and skills required by the sector, including essential employability skills, and apply them in real work contexts. (p.1)

This dual function of academic progression coupled with occupational preparation prompted Bathmaker (2013) to comment that BTEC level three qualifications break from the traditional conceptualisation of vocational qualifications. For decades those studying BTEC qualifications have been developing their theoretical knowledge of the subject and improving their academic abilities.

The BTEC qualification is also a cornerstone of the changing vocational landscape. Wolf (2011) noted that "BTEC awards have grown particularly fast" (p.48) in recent years, with approximately a quarter of 16-19 year olds studying the qualification. In this fast shifting

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5 The UCAS tariff system is a means of allocating points to post-16 qualifications used for entry to Higher Education qualifications. For further details see http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/explore-your-options/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff : Accessed 29/06/2015

landscape, UCAS (2013) enrolment figures into HE showed clear academic progression value of the qualification,

> In 2009, 11.4% of the UK domiciled applicants who were accepted for HE entry had a BTEC National Diploma and no A levels, and a further 1.7% a BTEC National plus A level… Ten years ago, only 4.9% of acceptances were on the strength of a BTEC National alone (*ibid*, p.68)

In this respect, the BTEC is reflective of hybridisation trends of education provision in the UK. In fact, Davey and Fuller (2010) stated that "the qualification that appears closest to the notion of a hybrid qualification is the BTEC" (p.16). In Davey and Fuller's (2013) later research of UK VET qualifications they noted that providers have 'academicised' their 'allegedly' vocational qualifications in order to present them as equivalents to academic qualifications. In this process, they stated that provision has become "neither clearly academic nor vocational" (p.92). A representative from the examining body told them that BTECs have "been pushed more and more down the academic route" (p.95). Trends to make the BTEC more 'academic' have not, however, been entirely the results of recent policy pressure to hybridise vocational qualifications in the UK. Fisher (2004) documented, in detail, the history of the BTEC qualifications and noted how it has been subjected to constant vocational policy reforms since its establishment in the 1970's. The development of the qualification, therefore, has reflected wider policies and practices that have sought to reconcile vocational and academic binaries (Winch & Hyland, 2007).

This is not to suggest that BTECs are indistinguishable from their 'academic' counterparts, they "differ markedly from A levels in that they all have *a more or less vocational orientation*" (*emphasis added,* Wolf, 2011, p. 50). With this more or less vocational orientation BTEC's are usually referred to as 'vocational'. However, it is not uncommon for them to be labelled as vocationally orientated or vocationally-related qualifications in different texts (for example, UCAS, 2013). In practice, the vocational orientation is often attributed to the course because of its assessment methods. Instead of end of year exams students are continuously assessed through coursework and practical assessments. In this way Bathmaker (2013) suggested that the BTEC is perceived as vocational in as much as it is seen as "a qualification route for learners who find exams difficult or offputting" (2013, p.98). However, in reality, the

BTEC's assessment methods are not traditionally vocational in terms of only emphasising technical accomplishment (Winch & Hyland, 2007), as "assessors need to ensure that appropriate links are made between theory and practical application" (Edexcel, 2011, p.26).

The vocational orientation of the BTEC qualification is also accredited to its modular design; where 'units' are developed to prepare students for work in certain sectors, or vocations, within an industry. The majority of the qualification is designed so it can be derived in the classroom, and there might not be frequent opportunities for work-based learning in every case. Davey and Fuller (2013) discovered that although "providers of BTEC National programmes are encouraged by the awarding body (Edexcel) to build work placements into the provision, it is not a mandatory requirement. This leads to a lack of standardisation and diverse experiences for students following ostensibly the same course" (p.97). Further, whilst industry experts are encouraged to contribute to the delivery of the course, in practice, the content is mostly planned and delivered by FE tutors (*ibid*). Pearson Education Limited (2010) claim that many (not all) tutors "have relevant vocational experience" (p.25), however, it is not uncommon for BTEC tutors to teach different *academic* and *vocational* programmes across the institution in the same subject. It is therefore plausible to question whether, or not, the 'vocational orientation' of the qualification always underpins pedagogical practices. The BTEC modular design does, however, reflect a common theme of vocationalism, in as much as it intends to "allow learners maximum flexibility in selecting optional units, so that particular interests and career aspirations" (Edexcel, 2011, p. 5) can be pursued. However, in contrast to tightly framed vocational qualifications in Germany (see, Brockmann, 2012; Winch, 2012), BTEC's are only loosely orientated towards an occupation.

The flexible design of the BTEC qualification lays the foundations for the 'messy trajectories' identified in the vocational literature (Atkins *et al.*, 2011; Wolf, 2011) as there are, in theory, many pathways graduates can pursue. It remains unclear whether this messiness is a strength, providing students with a myriad opportunities; or conversely, a weakness of the qualification only selling students a mirage of unattainable opportunities. There have been significant benefits associated with studying the BTEC, reinforcing the celebrated rhetoric of vocational opportunity; for example, "individuals in possession of BTEC Level 3 qualifications achieve a

34.0% earnings premium over those in possession of no formally recognised qualifications" (Conlon & Patrignani, 2010, p.*iv*). Conversely, there have been a number of studies that recognise problematic transitional realities associated with the qualification. For example, the qualification has low retention rates. Pearson Education Limited (2014a) identified that in 2013-2014, of the 400,383 student cohort, 19% did not complete the qualification (75,445). Moreover, according to UCAS (2012), entry rates into HE showed that BTEC students are less successful in progressing to more selective institutions. The statistics also showed that BTEC students are more likely to enrol part-time on courses and tend to study more vocationally-orientated courses at HE. London Economics (2013) report concluded that in contrast to A level qualifications "the educational path of those attaining degrees via the BTEC route is typically 'non-linear'" (p.*iii*). BTEC transitions might therefore be described as characteristically messy. With the vast number of education/career paths students might take and the variable timescale possible BTEC transitions into work and/or HE are an enormously difficult phenomenon to understand. While BTEC transitions can be extremely difficult to characterise it does not fit easily into either discourses of vocational opportunity or deception. With limited and conflicting data it is not yet possible to conclude whether BTEC students are 'funnelled' into low-skilled labour, or, are given the skills and opportunities to progress immediately or later in life.

Adding to this current messiness BTEC provision is subjected to continued reformation. Since the publication of the Wolf (2011) report, BTECs have again been modified according to BIS (2014) desire to give employers "greater ownership of occupational standards and qualifications" (p. 6). The effects of these interventions on BTEC transitions are yet unknown. In the most recent round of continued reforms, awarding bodies, (such as, Edexcel/Pearson) are obliged to engage more actively with relevant employers in the design, development and delivery of their vocational qualifications for funding (BIS, 2014). As such, Sector Skills Councils (SSC) have been afforded more powers to help design and approve BTEC qualifications that are included in the QCF. The explicit role of SSCs is to improve educational provision by steering course content and delivery towards a model that promotes skill development in areas that employers value and desire. BTECs, in union with the entire vocational sector then, have become more entrenched in an "increasingly skill-driven

agenda" (Atkins, 2009, p.27). Whilst, enhancing skills, namely employability skills, has on paper at least become central to the function of the BTEC, parallel trends have been noticed for those students that continue into HE.

2.2. *BTEC students transitions into, through, and beyond higher education*

HE has become a more common route for young people, from all backgrounds, to take before making the transition into work. This is an international phenomenon reflected in the rapid expansion of the sector. Brown (2013) reflected that "globally, the numbers enrolled in higher education since the mid-1990s, has more than doubled from 76 million 179 million in 2009" (p. 684). Within the widening participation policy context in the UK, this expansion has aimed to make HE more accessible to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, deprived areas, and from underrepresented demographics. Widening participation is a key educational policy towards "providing an equality of opportunity for groups which are underrepresented in tertiary and higher education" (Crabtree & Roberts, 2007, p.339). Despite the overall expansion of the sector towards this target, Dunbar-Goddet and Ertl (2007) claimed that growth in student numbers remains greatest for middle-class students holding traditional A level qualifications. This stated, according to the WVPC (2014), there has been significant expansion in the numbers of HE students who entered with a BTEC qualification. This cohort's demographic is reflective of students from a widening participation background (*ibid*). In relation to this Wolf (2011) commended the BTEC's contribution towards widening participation by acknowledging that it has become well-respected within certain HE institutions and in particular within certain subjects. The report highlighted that "higher education institutions are familiar with the long-established level 3 BTEC" (p.48) and formally recognise them within their administration processes. With trends such as this becoming noticeable, Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) in contrast to Dunbar-Goddet and Ertl (2007), recognised that widening participation policy "has primarily benefited students from non-traditional backgrounds and yet their experiences within HE are often highlighted as problematic" (p.812).

Although progress towards widening participation targets have been recorded (see, Hoelscher & Hayward, 2008) the highly stratified nature of HE continues to be well documented (for example, HEFCE, 2006). The Cabinet Office (2011) concluded that "young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are… [still] less likely to progress to HE, especially in the most selective universities" (p. 26). In UK cities it is common for prestigious Russell Group

universities to operate alongside more recently established institutions. These institutions tend to be considered as less prestigious and often offer more vocationally-orientated, or technical, qualifications (Brown & Carasso, 2013). Another key change in HE provision has been to encourage more FE institutions to offer degrees, and foundation degrees, at a much lower cost (*ibid*). Foundation degrees have been shown to be "successful in attracting non-traditional learners" (HEFCE, 2006, p.37). Moreover, BTEC students are more likely, than A level students, to move on to foundation degrees before having an option to 'top up' for the honours certificate. As such, BTEC learners, who are proportionally representative of working-class students, are exposed to a range a different transitional experiences that differ from 'traditional' pathways into and through HE.

It is not only social class that shapes the nature of BTEC transitions into and through HE. Significantly, gender inequalities have eroded less in HE for those students who have entered through more vocationally orientated routes rather than traditional pathways. Whilst the Hoelscher and Hayward (2008) report indicated that women have become increasingly 'over-represented' in many areas of HE, they acknowledged that male applicants still outweigh female applicants taking a vocational pathway into HE. In addition to this, London Economics (2013) noted that, of those students who took a BTEC there "is still a very slight gender split, with a higher proportion of men completing degree level qualification compared to women (14% compared to 12%)" (p.7). Although these overall percentages have narrowed, gender imbalances in both HE and VE take different compositions depending on the subject. With some subjects being almost entirely composed of, and delivered by, males or females.

Whilst in some measurable ways HE becomes a more diverse and expansive sector in the UK, opening doors for BTEC students regardless of their background and gender, a number of pertinent phenomena have emerged that might have discouraged BTEC transitions into, through, and beyond HE. Most noticeably, since the implementation of the Browne (2010) report in 2012, funding reforms have impacted on the provision of HE (Brown & Carasso, 2013). Not only can these reforms place heavy financial burdens on students that wish to attain degree qualification, they have shaped students' expectations of HE study. Positioning these reforms in the context of universities histories, Rolfe (2013) highlighted how HE has shifted

from providing a broad education to awarding work-based qualifications. From this process, Rolfe argued that universities have evolved into corporate entities, and students have become consumers that wish to 'cash in' on their qualification. The customer (student) is motivated by the prospect of realising the returns on their large investment in HE with more tangible (often monetary) compensation in future employment. In relation to this, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2014) recognised that course progression statistics and examples have become increasingly important in attracting applicants. This has led to HE qualifications prioritising employability skills in design and discourse. Paradoxically however, while students become more concerned with the market value of their education, HE pathways into industry have become more competitive.

As a result of widening participation agendas there has been direct inflation of degree qualifications. Bathmaker, Ingram and Walker (2013) concluded "a degree is no longer enough [to secure meaningful employment], and students are urged to mobilise different forms of 'capital' during the undergraduate study to enhance their future and social economic positioning" (p.724). Consequently, research has identified that transitional 'success' has become increasingly dependent on the student ability to 'play the game' (Bathmaker, *et al.,* 2013; Hatt & Baxter, 2003). Bathmaker *et al.,* (2013) recognised that in order to *"*'play the game' successfully, students are encouraged to enhance their 'employability' through additional activities" (p.725). They stated that some of these activities are taken-for-granted cultural practices for middle-class students, where their families have involved them in projects that help them succeed in life (*idid*). To some extent then, the value of degrees is not on paper, but is tied up with how it can encourage students to develop successful strategies when playing the game. In turn, as the cultural capital of graduating is no longer enough, the ability of students to mobilise certain forms of capital in the correct settings through reshaping their behaviours, interactions and skills is the key to their transitions.

As this section highlights, notions of employability skills litter documentation at HE (this will be returned to in Chapter 3 in more detail). Coupling this with the documentation and discourse of employability skills identified in the BTEC it is clear that there has been an overall movement in the UK education system. This movement implicitly holds employability skills as

vital for individuals to prosper, whilst at the same time there are many reports that highlight these skills as lacking (see Chapter 3). Bathmaker (2013) argued that this preoccupation with employability skills within VE and progressively in HE has been driven by the straightening relationships between education and industry and employer-led notions of skill.

2.3. *BTEC Transitions into employment*

Transitional timeframes and pathways can vary drastically for BTEC students. 'Destinations' are also variable as students can move into full-time/part-time, temporary-permanent, skilled-unskilled employment within or outside of the industry that the BTEC/HE qualification is notationally linked. Furthermore, the idea of a transitional destination is outdated and misleading when thinking of BTEC transitions. Wolf (2011) noticed there has been a major shift where young people are now required to take on a number of jobs and move frequently between different types of work. This means there are a multiplicity of occupational 'destinations' and as such it is less appropriate to conceptualise BTEC transitions simply as origin-to-destination phenomena. For some, part-time employment might begin during FE studies; whereas, for others, full-time work might be secured either immediately on completion of the BTEC, or, after the 'steppingstone' of HE. Indeed the sheer number and variety of pathways taken by BTEC students into (stable) employment, or (un)employment, is reflective of the messy trajectories discussed previously (Atkins *et al.,* 2011). This messiness can be captured through an exit poll, a snapshot of students when leaving the qualification. Edexcel commissioned Basis (2011) to conduct a progression survey and report their findings; from this small online survey the following immediate pathways were identified,

Table A: Progression Survey results, table adapted from Basis (2011, p.11). Data collected in 2009

	BTEC National Diploma(s)
Sample	n = 686
Will be studying at college	**11%**
I have a place at university	**52%**
Will be studying at sixth form	**1%**
I plan to get a job, but don't have one confirmed as yet	**7%**
I plan to go to university, but don't have a place as yet	**6%**
I have a job confirmed	**8%**
I plan to take a gap year	**5%**
Not sure what I'm doing next	**2%**
Other (please specify)	**8%**

Although the figures shown in this survey should be treated with caution because of the sample size, they identify a number of routes BTEC students intend to take immediately after their

study. This snapshot only indicates their direction upon leaving the qualification and therefore is only a partial set of possible possible pathways; students may change direction multiple times after this initial choice. Although some pathways are more common than others (i.e. increasingly students progress into university study, UCAS, 2012), BTEC students tend not to follow the traditional 'linear' transitions into employment.

While there may be a greater mix of opportunities and constraints for these students, Wolf (2011) recognised that, "today's labour market conditions bear very hard on young people. Underlying structural trends have been made worse by recession." (p.10). In recent times, Wolf argued that it has become increasingly challenging, and rare, for vocational students to make smooth, linear transitions into employment. In conjunction with this, the IPPR (2013) have witnessed that the nature of youth unemployment has shifted towards 'lower-skilled' and part-time temporary labour. Moreover, "youth unemployment rate peaked at 22% towards the end of 2011, following the UK economic downturn in 2008" (ONS, 2014a, p.6). These figures have remained systemically high, with the ONS (2014b) reporting 16.9% (15.8% male and 17.9% female) of 18 to 24-year-olds were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in 2014. Despite these recent statistical improvements, it has been recorded that young people have taken the brunt of the rise in zero-hour contracts (IPPR, 2013). It might be the case that BTEC students' transitional experiences take different directions, pathways and timeframes, however, within the labour market conditions outlined above low employment figures out of the BTEC (8%, see Table A) might be expected.

Even though BTEC to employment transitions (sometimes via HE) might be challenging, student aspirations and expectations are characteristically high. Such is the power of the equality of opportunity discourse in the UK, Byrom and Lightfoot (2013) recognised that students nowadays expect to have the opportunity to get a job higher in status than their parents. BTEC qualifications are advertised to provide such opportunities, they are "designed to provide highly specialist, work-related qualifications in a range of vocational sectors. They give learners the knowledge, understanding and skills that they need to prepare for employment" (Edexcel, 2011, p.2). Wolf (2011), however, argued that the limited occupational opportunities associated with young people, especially those from a vocational background, is often understood in terms of

the young people not having enough skills to meet the requirement of employers. Therefore, reducing the mismatch between young people's skills and employer's needs has driven recent governments' policy (*ibid*). In relation to this the low progression statistics into immediate employment might be seen as BTEC students lacking the skills required for progression directly into employment.

In England, Avis (2007) argued that there has been a significant concern with addressing labour market skills needs, particularly within level 3 vocational provision. As a result, Avis noticed that vocational provision has continually being developed to prepare students in areas where it is assumed that there are skills shortages. The BTEC qualification is directly impacted by this policy as they "are supported by the relevant Sector Skills Councils" (Edexcel, 2011, p.2) and therefore BTEC curricula are developed in conjunction with, and approved by, industry representatives. In relation to this policy agenda, both research and political debates regarding vocational transitions have been reduced to a deficit model of skill shortages in the UK (for example, Bennett, 2002). Rather than hard technical skills the IPPR (2012) concluded that the development of employability skills is the most important factor for employers to meet the immediate skills needs. In this policy context, employability skills include "softer interpersonal and behaviour skills such as timekeeping, eye-contact and teamwork" (*ibid*, p.26). Additionally, Wolf (2011) concluded that to increase the chances of vocational students getting a skilled job in a relevant sector, vocational qualifications should be a priority "to ensure that students have every opportunity to gain the most important and *generalisable skills*" (*emphasis added,* Wolf, 2011, P.10).

Through reviewing the literature that surrounds the BTEC, HE and industry, it became apparent that skills' polices and discourses are now dominant and framing vocational transitions in the UK. Paradoxically, however, in light of strengthening skills discourses, Payne (2010) argued that skill is no longer a coherent term in the UK policy context. In Chapter 3, therefore ,perspectives of skill policies and discourses are explicated in relation to the transitional contexts of the study. Through mapping the changes in skill discourse and policy in the UK it becomes clear that the social and *corporeal* aspect of skill has been overlooked in both research and practice.

Chapter 3
Skilful Transitions

3.1. *Skill in Vocationalism: Policy and Discourse*

> We [the Department for Business Innovation and Skills] are engaged in a project which is aimed at transforming the vocational education and training system, making it fit for purpose in a world where skills needs, and the way that provision can be delivered, are changing all the time" (BIS, 2014, p.4)

A deep connection between skills and vocationalism has not suddenly emerged on the UK policy stage. However, while a discourse of skill has long been associated with VE the *types* of skill demanded for students to be successful have transformed. Payne (1999, 2010) argued that in the 1950s and 1960s skill was associated more with 'hard' technical abilities. Hard skills consist of decontextualised technical capabilities such as being able to operate certain manufacturing equipment. Predictably then, during this Fordist era the distinction between academic and vocational education was even more distinct and prevalent. Referring to this context Winch & Hyland (2007) recognised that vocational policy and practice was more concerned with developing technical accomplishment than is the case in today's hybridised system (see Chapter 1). Acquiring hard skills far from guaranteed opportunities and cultural parity. Becoming skilful through vocationalism could not ensure upward social mobility for vocationally educated students - these skills could however secure them some form of manual labour.

Decades later, in the 1980s, the skill of the general population became a central political focus. In both policy and research endeavours, levels of 'skill' were extensively measured on a national and international scale (Savage *et al,.* 2013). From this skill became the primary indicator of social positioning and were considered as mass determiners of social mobility for both groups and individuals (*ibid*). This inevitably had an effect on academic and public discourse. A skills hierarchy was inevitably produced from this period, where 'high-skilled' workers represented the pinnacle of the UK's industrial structure whilst 'low-skilled' labourers were positioned at the bottom of social/economic frameworks. In relation to this, Goldthorpe (2003) identified that the types of skill associated with upward mobility, and managerial/high-skilled jobs, were predominantly social skills and personal characteristics; such as, "being 'well turned-out', 'well-spoken', 'well-mannered', 'of good appearance', having 'character', 'presence' etc" (p. 16). With this interest on skill, to map and measure mobility (or transitions),

"skill itself came to be redefined" (Payne, 2010, p. 355). The notion of skill began to incorporate much more than the hard technical abilities required for traditionally vocational careers. Consequently in vocational rhetoric, skill began to get tied up with the attitudes and behaviours of young entrants into the labour market (*ibid*).

Into the 1990s, and a New Labour government, the emphasis shifted towards developing generic skills that could be seen as 'meta-competencies'. This lineage of policy cycle has continued into most recent vocational rhetoric. Wolf (2011) for example recommended that vocational provision must addresses the identified skills gap in 'employability skills' and "develop the general skills which the labour market demonstrably values" (p.12). Despite hybridisation trends in the UK, Bathmaker (2013) and Winch *et al.,* (2007) described how knowledge continues to be notationally associated with general education; whereas skill development is more attached to vocational education. This means that policies that aim to 'up-skill' students have tended to permeate the vocational sector more than general education. Policymakers and a range of organisational stakeholders (e.g. DfE, BIS, UCCES, SSC's and the Skills Funding Agency) have become responsible for, and work together towards, reducing the skills gap in the UK. Central to this is the improvement of VE's ability to 'up-skill' the nation (see, BIS, 2014). Similar to what Payne (2010) recognised in the past, against the current backdrop of high youth unemployment, vocational policy and practice has re-emphasised "the need to ensure the 'employability' of young entrants into the labour market" (p.354).

As previously discussed, BTEC qualifications strongly reflect this emphasis on developing employability skills. Unit descriptors list a range of skills that students should learn to pass each module (for example, Edexcel, 2010). In these descriptors, criteria relate to skills such as teamwork that are described as 'needed' in the intended workplace. The central importance of developing employability skills is not only confined to the BTEC or VE, but has shaped the delivery of HE in the UK. Noticeably universities have recently been required to publish their 'employability statements' online (HEFCE, 2010). Additionally, module handbooks normally have a section of employability skills. Employability in HE and FE, however, remains tied to the changing contexts of, and relations between education and industry. These emphasises on employability skills are formal requirements set by OFFA through 'Access Agreements' to

improve transitions from widening participant backgrounds. In fact, Universities must demonstrate how they meet these targets in order to charge the maximum tuition fees. In relation to this, Brown (2013) discussed some of the effects that widening participation educational policies have had on graduates' ability to secure employment. Within a mass system of HE, he argued, credentials [formal qualifications] have lost much of their value in the marketplace. Consequently greater emphasis has been put on skill based recruitment, that gives greater value to "the 'soft currencies' of personality, character and social confidence" (Brown, 2013, p.688).

Movements toward skills policies has not only been confined to the UK, but have significantly gained international momentum proceeding the global financial crisis in 2008. A greater investment and emphasis on skill development in VE and HE has been proposed as the solution to countries' collective futures. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) have led a 'global skills strategy' that is "designed to help [all member] countries build better skills policies and turn them into jobs, growth, and better lives" (p.3). Skill however is poorly defined in these macroscopic rhetorics; for example, the OECD (2012) skills strategy proposed that skills must be developed so that countries and individuals can contribute to an increasingly *knowledge-based* society. The conflation of skill and knowledge within skills policy and discourse represents one way in which the term skill has become problematic for understanding and shaping vocational transitions. As a result of this, Winch and Hyland (2007) highlighted that the "notion of a 'skill', as it is used in too many reports and official documents, is far to impoverished to bear the enormous weight that has been put on it" (Winch & Hyland, 2007, p.50).

Paradoxically then, while a skills driven agenda cements itself into vocational and higher educational provision in the UK, the concept of skill has become 'unbearably light' (Payne, 1999), particularly with the increasing emphasis on student employability. Whilst discourses of skill have become increasingly important in framing vocational transitions, the concept of skill has "expanded almost exponentially to include a veritable galaxy of 'soft', 'generic', 'transferable', 'social' and 'interactional' skills, frequently indistinguishable from personal characteristics, behaviours and attitudes" (*ibid*, p.354). Today, with (employability) skills

meaning something altogether different than hard technical abilities, more social conceptualisations of skill have been developed. In contrast to the idea that skills are measurable technical abilities that pervades earlier research into mobility (Savage *et al,.* 2013), Ainley (1993) proposed that skills are in reality complex social entities. Skills are perceived competencies that are constructed between individual and society. In the field of graduate employability studies Tholen (2015) partially advocates an alternative view of skill. Tholen argued against HE policy presumptions that tends to see graduate employability in terms of an individual's skills. Rather Tholen maintained that "it is impossible to define the content of 'employability' as it is fundamentally socially constructed according to power relations and embedded within social contexts" (p.772).

3.2. *Acquiring Skills? or Becoming Skilful in Vocational Education*

Consistent with the conceptualisation of skills as fixed properties, Wenger (1998) argued that established vocational pedagogies and discourses tend to assume that learning is an individual process, detached from the intricacies of the social learning environment. In vocational rhetoric, and practice, the students' *acquisition* of skill has been noted as the ultimate objective (Schaap, Baartman & Bruijn, 2012). The BTEC qualification adopts this language in its documentation stating that tutors must ensure that learners "acquire the vocational language and skills" (Edexcel, 2010b, p.23). There is also an emphasis on the qualification responding to the needs of local industries and that students develop the skills they demand. In addition to this the growing emphasis on employability in HE has also been based on the notion of skill acquisition. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) work closely with BIS to ensure that students develop a range of employability skills at university (HEFCE, 2013). In policy terms therefore undergraduate students are clearly encouraged and expected to *acquire* the desirable skills for employment through their HE studies.

In thinking of vocational transitions through the metaphor of skill acquisition, important issues are worth raising in relation to the wider debates in VE and this PhD study. First, acquisition of skill is incompatible with alternative paradigms of skill that recognise the continual socially constructed nature of skill (i.e. Ainley, 1993; Payne, 1999; 2010). Instead, acquisition implies that the learning of a skill has a beginning and an end, where successful students move from unskilled to skilled in a linear fashion. In the BTEC, learning objectives frame intentions of skill acquisition by frequently using the phrase to 'be able to demonstrate' (see Edexcel, 2010a, 2010b) a particular vocational skill. From this grading criteria it might follow that skills are acquired through the successful completion of the programme. The attainment of a grade suggested a reflection that the BTEC learner 'skill level' has been tested. Conceptualising skill through an acquisition lens, therefore, could overemphasise the value of formal qualifications; in a context where it has been shown that credentials have lost some of their recruitment value in recent decades (Bathmaker *et al.,* 2013; Brown, 2013). Conceivably, acquisition metaphors therefore prioritises the role of 'hard' technical skills in framing vocational transitions, thus narrowing attention towards the impact of the curriculum. This can be detrimental to the

creation of transitional literature, as more attention needs to be given to importance of the social dimensions effecting vocational transitions (Jephcote *et al.*, 2009).

Acquisition metaphors of learning skill also relies upon skills existing as finite abilities (Sfard, 1998). Based on this assumption certain skills can be accurately measured against defined criteria, and consequently students can be hierarchically positioned against one another. Skill in this sense can be seen to have fixed employability values. For example, students who might have acquired 'good' communication skills would be more desirable in service industries than those that have 'average' communication skills. Communication is an oft cited transferable skill required for employability in vocational policy documentation; however, Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) recognised that communication like other supposedly generic skills are not generic but contextual,

> Communication skills are a core skill for hairdressers since communicating with their clients is part of their client service. This is a different skill from the car mechanic's skill of communicating with their clients which requires mechanics to explain the maintenance and service of a car in lay terms, which is different again from their skill in communicating with technical precision with other mechanics, suppliers and other specialists (p.9)

There is no general curriculum that can meet the communication demands of the range of potential vocations. However, by placing emphasis on the acquisition of *appropriate* skills, in particular generic employability skills, both the BTEC and HE qualifications downplay the role of social participation in framing both learning and transitions. Without taking into account the social factors that give value to certain skills within specific vocational, educational and occupational settings, problematising transitions becomes overly formulaic. As previously stated, the transitional process from this position is in danger of becoming reduced to skills mismatches. Through this reduction the discussion is orientated towards identifying, and quantifying, industrial demand for specific skills to which the vocational and educational systems must respond. From this, educational provision and structures must be adapted accordingly in order to 'turn out' students with the requisite skills. Discounting assumptions that by the time these students graduate industrial demands would have once again changed, this approximate approach might thereby be proposed as a solution to transitional problems that vocational students face. However, if one follows this line of thought, the transitional *process*

loses much of its identified inherent unpredictability and messiness (Atkins *et al,.* 2010; Wolf, 2011) instead becoming reduced to a tick list of skills accomplished, matched against skills identified as needed by industry. As explained, targets to reduce the skills gap are unrealistic.

Acquisition may be seen as a metaphor of learning that is seamless with policies and rhetoric that are concerned with filling in the skills gap. Although this might be useful on many levels, this perspective is also problematic. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that traditional perspectives of learning skill in the vocational context conceive students as primarily 'cognitive' entities, which tends to promote a non-personal view of student development. By extension this propagates a non-personal view of student transitions where attention on the relevant social environments and students' corporeality is largely absent from the analysis. Incorporating acquisition metaphors into transitional studies, therefore, negates the possibility that skill is co-constructed between individual(s) and societies, and the potential this might have for understanding vocational transitions. Moreover, by ignoring the socially constructed nature of employment skill(s), skill development is removed from its intersections with issues of class, gender, ethnicity and so on. However much the established skills discourse in VE is implicitly compliant with this conceptualisation of skill acquisition, vocational learning has also been compared to a process of *becoming* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Colley *et al.*, 2003).

In identifying theses issues, acquiring skill can only be a partial representation of what it means to become skilful in the context of VE and to make a skilful transition through HE and into employment. Indeed, Sfard (1998) warned of neglecting either participation or acquisition metaphors of learning in VE. Acquisition might be a useful analogy to understand BTEC/HE students' development of hard technical abilities, but at the detriment to the understanding of the 'all important' employability skills; as it refuses to acknowledge the social-cultural aspects of skill development that are required to become "the right person for the job" (Colley, 2006, p.25). *Becoming* the right person involves the entire (social) body, not just cognition or the successful completion of certain measurable movements. Held in an intimate dialect with the social environment, the student identities, modes of interaction and social practices emerge as important areas to focus on. In summary, *becoming* 'skilful' in VE, therefore, requires students' bodies to undergo an number of projects, in order to embody the characteristics of, for example,

an engineer, nurse or indeed a Performing Artist. In contrast to acquisition, perceiving vocational learning as a process of becoming brings students' identities, individual and collective experiences, social practices and ways of interacting into the frame. To understand skilful transitions in the context of VE, more attention needs to be paid to students as social bodies situated within of a number of wider communities and cultures.

3.3. *Skill and the Body*

In general educational theory and practice, Ivinson (2011) argued that the predominant "idea of knowledge is often accompanied by a picture of the mind as an empty vessel that has to be filled with content" (p.491). For opposing contours, popular ideas of skill are accompanied by imagery of the body as an empty shell that has to be shaped or filled with correct movement, (verbal/body) language, and postures. Connecting this idea of skill to the expansion of the term that includes anything that enhances employability (Payne, 1999) and the identified skills gap in the UK, vocational students are often seen to have the wrong *bodies* for employment. As occupational cultures are normally (re)created by those that have been within the trade for long time, this is a re-occurring cycle of perception.

Bourdieu (1984) noted that it is normal for 'the old generation' to complain that 'the new generation' lack the competencies needed and do not fit into the workplace; as they have had longer to conform and embody the cultural characteristics of that occupation. In relation to this, students' bodies are perceived to rarely be presented, communicate, or behave, in a manner that it is closely bound with cultural capital in occupational settings. In turn, this might be reinterpreted as industry perceiving young people as lacking employability skills. However, adopting a corporeal perspective endorsed by sociologists such as Williams and Bendelow (1998), Wolkowitz, (2006), Shilling (2012), and Bourdieu (1984), bodies, rather than finite skills act as markers for social distinction, both within and between educational and occupational environments. This approach provides a frame in which the microscopic processes of social mobility and student transitions can be better explored. Bourdieu (1984) summarised this succinctly,

> the real determinants of 'vocations', is less abstract and unreal than is presented by statisticians; it takes into account… secondary characteristics which are often the basis of their social value (prestige or discredit) and which, through the absence from the official job description, function as tacit requirements, such as age, sex, social or ethnic origin… members of the corps that lack these traits are excluded or marginalized (p.96-97)

It is not only crude biological bodily distinctions, such as, sex, age and ethnicity that demarcate individuals and groups whilst tacitly increasing, or decreasing, individuals' chances of

employment within a certain sector. Employability skills are not only connected to narrow aspects of corporeality but are also anchored to wider aspects of *embodiment* (Chapter 7 develops the notion of embodiment in relation to student transition further). This statement is reflective of a what Leberman and Shaw (2015) referred to as the *relational approach* to employability and skill that goes beyond approaches that focus almost exclusively on the finite competencies required to secure employment. Relational approaches are less concerned with identified skills mismatches, instead reflecting on the relations between the individual and the work environment. In doing so, these approaches bring power relations between work, race, gender squarely into the frame. In considering the specific relations between (socialised) bodies and occupational cultures, different forms of embodiment, and presentations of the body, might be seen to command contrasting connotations with employability skills. Wolkowitz (2006) explored a number of these relations through what she presented as the "body/work nexus" (p. 32). In doing so she described a number of workplaces as laden with sets of gender and class conventions. In each of these environments, Wolkowitz argued that employees have to demonstrate the reflexive ability to accurately assess what kind of bodily presentations a particular situation requires and to act and present themselves accordingly. These embodiment processes are not only limited to succeeding in occupational spaces. Bathmaker *et al.,* (2013) noted that vocational student fortune in HE relied upon their ability to fashion, and refashion, the self in order to present their bodies in a way that fits in and/or stands out appropriately. In both HE and the workplace, vocational students' skill level and employability is therefore inextricably woven to their corporality and the occupational/educational cultures. The argument made here is that embodiment processes are directly entangled with particular forms of employability skills that vocational students require when making educational and occupational transitions.

It may well be possible to extrapolate generic forms of embodiment that are synonymous with what might be universally considered as an employability skill. However, being intimately entwined with the specific occupational culture the valued, employable and skilful body must also be located at a microscopic level. At this microscopic level, Vincent and Braun (2011) showed how corporeality was connected to notions of professionalism in the context of early childhood education and care. They argued that graduates' bodies are scrutinised more than their

formal education or their repertoire of knowledge when beginning employment. They suggested that being considered professional is less about being familiar with specific bodies of professional knowledge and more about "what sort of person one is, and how one appears and conducts oneself, and how far all of these behaviours are deemed by others to be appropriate" (*ibid,* p.775). Within this context what is deemed to be professional can both advantage and disadvantage certain populations of young people. On professionalism in office work, Wolkowitz (2006) discussed how "the exercise of organisational power puts women in a damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't position, whereby they are punished for being feminine (unprofessional) and for being professional (unfeminine)" (p.91).

With the body being heavily scrutinised in the world of work, the up and coming generation of young people have responded in becoming attentive to the importance of their embodiment in making the transition into work. The IPPR (2012) identified that students thought that successful transitions into employment required them to cultivate the appropriate body. Small proportions of young Londoners thought that 'the gift of the gab' and 'looking good' were the most important factors in securing employment (*ibid*). Although the manifestation of students' embodiment in the mediation of education-to-work transitions might be a important issue in a range of industries and educational programmes, it is theme that might be more prevalent within certain subject areas and vocations.

Chapter 4
Performing Arts Transition

4.1. *Performing Arts BTEC Transitions and Systemic Inequality*

In 4.1 industry data, BTEC documentation, and the relationship between key industry/ educational stakeholders are reviewed and synthesised. The aim here was to outline some of the generic features of, and influences on, Performing Arts transitions. Transition in this instance broadly refers to where students tend to go after completing their BTEC. Unlike the conceptualisation of transition later (Chapter 6) this overview focuses more on *progression*. In looking at these separate elements a schism between policy and reality was identified. More than this a number of systemic inequalities were identified within trends of educational and occupational progression. To complicate matters, or to reveal messiness of how students progress from the course into more education or work, it was not possible to limit the focus to an easily demarcated zone that is the Performing Arts. A wider net had to be cast over the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs) to come to terms with the opportunities and constraints that typify these transitions.

Edexcel offer a menu of level three BTEC qualifications in the Performing Arts. Within this general subject area there are a range of different qualifications available to learners. Physical Theatre, Dance, Acting, or Musical Theatre provide veritable strands that the Performing Arts diplomas might specialise[6]. All of these qualifications have been designed in-line with the dual function of the BTEC; to provide routes into HE and to develop employability skills in order to help students progress into relevant areas of employment. The National Diplomas intend to provide Performing Arts students with opportunity to move into employment in areas of arts administration, set design, promotion and choreography. In order to allow for these opportunities the qualification has a broad coverage; the diploma can be comprised from a combination of 108 different units. These include, Rehearsing for Performance, the Historical Context of Performance and Classical Theatre Performance[7]. While every one of these units is, by design, geared towards a specific realm of the Performing Arts the programme as a whole had a wider scope.

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6 Explore http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects.html for the full list of BTEC National Diplomas in the Performing Arts.

7 To explore the full range of units that BTEC qualifications can be comprised of at the time of data collection see Edexcel (2010b), for an updated version se Edexcel (2016).

Generally speaking, the Performing Arts BTEC is notationally linked to specific sectors in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI). In its *Statement of Purpose* the BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in the Performing Arts recognised that "The Performing Arts are a major part of the creative and cultural industries in the UK" (Pearson Education Limited, 2014, p.1). Like other BTEC courses "the qualification was designed in close collaboration with industry, it is fully supported by the Sector Skills Council for the Performing Arts sector, Creative and Cultural Skills… [meaning] it is a highly respected route for those who wish to move into employment in the sector, either directly or following further study" (*ibid*, p.1). Consequently this statement reflects the dual purpose of the BTEC brand that has been identified elsewhere in this thesis (Chapter 2). Also it is advertised that by completing the courses, students will have acquired the *skills* needed for progression into immediate employment and education[8]. As such, the official documentation for this course is reflective of the guiding discourses that inform how policy makers and educators view and manage vocational transitions as discussed in Chapter 3.

Those Performing Arts students wishing to break immediately into a relevant occupation face highly competitive markets. It is estimated that there are 148,000 jobs in the 'performing arts industry' currently in the UK (*ibid*). Not all of these jobs are directly related to the types of occupations that BTEC units are geared towards. Moreover the majority of this labour market is *already* supplied with relatively young staff and educated staff (Creative Media and Entertainment, 2012). Each year approximately 36,000 students completed a BTEC National Diploma in the Performing Arts. This is approximately a quarter of the entire size of the industry. In addition to this, many more graduates, from HE or other related forms of education have the potential to attempt to enter these labour markets each year. Graduates (from FE and HE) therefore flood the UK industry at such a rate that many will have nowhere to go. Of course, it is the case that not all of these BTEC graduates wish to immediately move into these competitive industries, but some do. Without recognising these limited opportunities to enter the industry, the BTEC claims that their qualification helps students in this transition as they will become occupationally ready to take up *relevant* employment "either directly after achieving a

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[8] The Statement of Purpose states that learners will acquire the "skills required for direct progression into a broad range of roles within the industry they are going to be a part of… [While meeting] the needs of those who wish to progress first to further study." (Pearson Education Limited, 2014b, p.1).

qualification, or via the stepping stone of Higher Education" (Pearson Education Limited, 2014, p.1). Whether these students are *ready* for relevant occupations or not, these industries are currently characterised by their lack of opportunities - for graduates hoping to secure their 'first gig' in particular.

Another major issue is that paid employment can be sparse in some of the most relevant sectors of CCIs to the Performing Arts. The existing workforce is already highly qualified and poorly paid (Creative Skillset, 2012). Furthermore, large percentages of the CCIs rely upon volunteers (Creative Media and Entertainment, 2012). Oakley (2009) recognised that "the growth of digital technology has led to an explosion of 'free labour'" (p.12). In this context, it is typical for performance artists to have low, unstable income cobbled together from a variety of sources; these realities, commented Oakley (2009) are a reason why there is a saying in the industry, 'don't give up your day job'. For those lucky enough to find paid employment, the financial incentives are not high; "64% of the performing arts sector earns less than £20,000 per year." (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011, p. 123). A lack of monetary income is, however, suggested to be subsidised by the subjective income of the artist. Without detailing the individualised nature of work within the various sectors of the CCIs, a number of key characteristics have been identified for performing artist, who are,

> On average younger than the general workforce, are better educated, tend to be more concentrated in a few metropolitan areas, show higher rates of self-employment, higher rates of unemployment and of several forms of constrained underemployment (non-voluntary part-time work, intermittent work, fewer hours of work) and are more often multiple job holders (Menger, 1999, p.545)

Creative SkillSet (2012) documented the makeup of the CCIs further. The report showed that, although the proportion of women in the industry increased by 9% between 2009 and 2012, female representation remained underrepresented (36% of total workforce)[9]. Moreover, opportunities to work in the UK are condensed to the English capital, with 42% of the work based being located in London. In addition to this Oakley (2009) raised concerns over the lack of ethnic diversity in the creative sectors. Available data note that "94% of the performing arts sector is white" (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011, p. 123). To summarise, Randle, Forson and

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[9] These statistic are based on an industry survey that includes the entire diverse categories that make up the CCIs. Further breakdowns of industries are available, however the BTEC qualification simply states to prepare students for these industries in general terms and there are not enough jobs in areas of 'pure' performance art to accommodate all BTEC students (former, current and future).

Calveley (2015) proposed that the CCIs are dominated by white middle-class men (especially for managerial positions) which raises concerns about lost talent and suboptimal creative output. Therefore, the progression opportunities for Performing Arts students wishing to enter the CCIs might not be equally distributed. Instead the evidence suggests that opportunity is to some extent contingent on the class, gender, race and geographical location of the student. Banks (2017) provided an explanation for the reproduction of inequality within these industries by recognising that recruitment practice rely heavily on informal networks and word of mouth. Under these conditions the currency of qualification is reduced and the role of social capital is heightened. Female, black and ethnic minority, working class, and rural graduates are put at a disadvantage in these opaque conditions.

The competitiveness of the CCIs also means that skilled and paid employment is difficult to attain and is normally reserved for the most qualified candidates with the best employability skills or most *talent*. In this environment BTEC students are less likely to immediately land the type of employed work the qualification is designed for, or advertises. However, as an alternative route, there are reportedly just under one million jobs in the sector when taking into account *unskilled work* (Creative Media & Entertainment, 2012). Jobs within these categories might not be reflective of the careers that BTEC claim to train students for. They may also fail to utilise the 'specialist' skills and knowledges that BTECs in the Performing Arts are geared towards developing. Yet arguably they might act as platforms for students to move towards more desirable lines of work in the future.

With many different pathways into these crowded labour markets, there are low employment figures for students directly after their BTEC studies. There is very limited data publicly available yet Basis (2011) showed that 0% of Performing Arts students had a 'job confirmed' having just completed the course[10]. With dismal progression statistics into partial employment documented, industry (in the form of SSCs) has been encouraged to help design Performing Arts BTEC qualifications (BIS, 2014). Specifically "these BTEC qualifications in Performing Arts have been designed in consideration of the Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) for creative and cultural industries. Skills gaps identified in the SQS include professional

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[10] This is from survey data with a sample size of only 127 students.

development and *employability skills*; units that address these shortage areas have been revised to encourage the *acquisition* and development of these competencies" (emphasis added Edexcel, 2016, p.5). Therefore, this qualification is designed to promote 'skilful transitions' (see Chapter 3) through the acquisition of employability skills. Improving traditional opportunities from this perspective therefore buy into the necessity of closing the skills gap and "provide learners [with] the opportunity to develop a range of skills and techniques, personal skills and attributes essential for successful performance in working life" (*ibid*, p.5).

This is part of a major reform because now the respective council approval is needed for the BTEC to be included in the QCF and therefore receive funding contributions from the skills funding agency or qualify for UCAS tariff points. These reforms contend that greater involvement by industry in VE will help to address skills deficit and generate opportunity for students while increasing national competitiveness/productivity (Wolf, 2011). These changing relationships between relevant stakeholders can however be situated within the overall framework that formally structures these BTEC transitions. Table B below provides more detail on these structures and stakeholders, outlining their key responsibilities regarding provision and progression.

Responsibilities	Organisations or institutions
Government Departments Responsible	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; Department for Education
Regulation and Standard Setting	Qualifications and Credit Framework; The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OfQual); UK Commission for Employment and Skills
	SSC = Creative Skillset; SSA = Creative Media and Entertainment (2012)
Funders	Skills Funding Agency
Development	Pearson Education limited; Edexcel
Providers	Colleges
Education Progression (Admission Frameworks)	UCAS; UCAS Tariff Advisory Group; University Audition Panels
Education Progression (Programmes Available)	Related Degrees in HE; Conservatoires/Drama Schools; BTEC level 4-7

Responsibilities	Organisations or institutions
Notationally Linked Industries	The Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI's), this includes; advertising; craft; cultural heritage; design; literature; music; performing arts; visual arts (Creative and Cultural Skills, 2011).

Table B. Formal Stakeholders of BTEC Performing Arts Courses. n.b. *this table is refined to UK stakeholders/frameworks and the level 3 Extended Diploma, in 2014, at the time when fieldwork commenced.*

This map of stakeholders provides a snapshot of institutions and organisations. Together these form a structure that distributes a number of roles and responsibilities that shaped student transition at the time of data collection. Institutionalised roles and responsibilities are subject to ongoing reforms and have changed in various ways since the fieldwork. With relationships between stakeholders undergoing constant reform it would have been challenging to try and quantify the extent that individual elements have in influencing and shaping transition. The impacts of closer collaboration between industry and vocational provision, for example, remains unclear (Bathmaker, 2013). Exploring these questions however were never within the main scope of this research project.

Through mapping out the relevant stakeholders a few areas of interest arose that shed light on progression for these students. With the difficulties of securing employment immediately on completion of the BTEC already exposed, the only remaining option for students is to continue in education. Subject to admission, there are three option to 'progress' at this juncture, do a related degree, progress through the BTEC's vocational programmes, or attend Conservatoires/ Drama Schools. Uniquely, auditions can play a role in admissions for these three options. Stratification occurs at this point. The Basis (2011) figures suggested that 38% will continue to study in 'College' or 'Sixth Form'; a proportion of these students may be progressing onto a higher level of qualification (e.g. the BTEC level 4) but some may not. 36% secure a place on a University degree (*ibid*), and of the remaining students, 28% were unsure of their 'next step' and 8% stated 'other'. This 8% may represent the progression to a specialist academy in the performing arts. There are some private scholarships for this minority available (particularly for *talented* students). However, the student loans system does not support students who wish to attend these specialist schools. Admission can be highly selective and competitive, where a small percentage are filtered by talent and/or whether the student can afford the tuition. Some options are therefore more possible to some than others.

4.2a. *Creative Transitions and Opportunities for Talent?*

According to O'Connor (2010) 'The Cultural Industry' has transformed over 60 years and ended up as 'The Creative Industries'. The main theme in this transition has been the tension between culture and economics, art and the market. The Creative and Cultural Industries, he argued, "emerged from new neoliberal economic discourses which argued for the end of mass production and a rise in cultural consumption" (*ibid*, p.9). The end of mass production was replaced by a post-Fordist ethos whereby individual workers and small business would have to respond to new consumer markets. Their successes and failures depended on their "ability to respond to quickly changing demand through a more flexible production process" (p.34). This has led to what Florida (2002) named 'the creative class', a class that in the UK is concentrated in London (Clifton, 2008). With both of these shifts in culture and economics Nixon and Crewe (2004) claimed that the CCIs have been held "as exam class of the process of individualisation and reflexivity characteristics of a new epoch of 'reflexive modernity' unfolding across social life" (p.131). It against these changing backdrops in which Performing Arts students are now making their transitions.

In recent years, rhetorically at least, the *creative* elements of the Creative and Cultural Industries appears to take precedence over culture. Creativity is seen to act as an engine that can power economic growth in current times. The commercial value of creativity rests on the notion that it can spur innovative production. Accepting these assumptions the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) embedded a drive towards *creativity* within the heart of its agenda for education (2008). This drive towards 'creativity' was reflected through statements such as: "There is a growing recognition of the need to find practical ways of nurturing creativity at every stage in the education system: from the nursery through to secondary school; whether in academic or vocational courses; on apprenticeships or at university. In a world of rapid technological and social change, creativity extends well beyond art or drama lessons. It is as much about equipping people with the skills they need to respond creatively and confidently" (2008, p.13). From this the department have consistently suggested that the creative engine needs a kickstarts in order to lead the nation through the economic challenges that lie ahead where "global competition is growing as other countries recognise the economic

value of creativity" (*ibid*, p.6). And education is the means to do this harnessing the potential of creativity. This drive therefore translates into a nurturing of creative skills throughout education (including vocational education); this is illustrated through "a growing recognition of the need to find practical ways of nurturing creativity at every stage in the education system: from the nursery through to secondary school; whether in academic or vocational courses; on apprenticeships or at university. In a world of rapid technological and social change, creativity extends well beyond art or drama lessons. It is as much about equipping people with the skills they need to respond creatively and confidently" (*ibid*, p.13).

In this green paper there is an emergence of 'creative skills' to add to the mix of transferable, generic, soft and employability skills that have already been presented as solutions for vocational transitions (see Chapter 3). Moreover, Oakley (2009) recognised that art as a discipline has been associated with a specific sort of skill, an imaginative or creative skill. This reflects the drive towards harnessing creativity skills in education (of which the BTEC in Performing Arts is a natural beacon) through pinning hopes on "helping creative *talent* flourish" (DCMS, p.7). Apart from being an empty concept like these other categories of skill (Winch, 2007; Payne, 2010) policy statements of this ilk connect 'creative skills' to a notion of 'talent'. Talent however has more innate connotations than skill; in the world of art it "is often understood as innate; a kind of 'natural aptitude' or biologically endowed capacity - or even a gift from God" (Banks, 2017, p.68). It is through the idea of talents, talented bodies and talented individuals, that the CCIs often portrayed as a meritocratic hub of opportunity (Banks, 2017). But the reality is more complex that the rhetoric would imply.

Bille and Jensen (2015) recognised that "in artists' labour markets, unidentifiable features such as talent and artistic creativity apparently contribute more to success or higher rates of payment than education and training" (p.1). The industry therefore prides itself on the ability to spot talent , or to "discover talent where it may otherwise have laid hidden" (DCMS, 2008 p.12). There are inherent assumptions that the most able and most creative occupy the most desirable positions. Furthermore, Creative and Cultural Skills (2011) appreciated that "the dominance of 'talent' as the raw material on which the sector depends is often perceived as transcending educational processes such as examinations, qualifications and training" (p.121). The role of

education here is to "give every child and young person the opportunity to develop their creative talent to the full" (DCMS, 2008, p.12). It is therefore an equality of opportunity that is the end goal of creative education. Talent is "far from the level-playing field that many assert it to be" (Banks, 2017, p.8). A creative meritocracy is a farce (*ibid*). An abundance of sociological analysis has suggested that both are tied to what is deemed culturally valuable and modes of cultural production - these analyses will provide the focus for the next section.

4.2b *Cultural Transitions and Societal Constraint?*

The production of Performance Art (and other products/services that the CCIs trade on) is not simply a 'creative' undertaking, it is based within wider fields of cultural production (see for example Bourdieu, 1993). It is through these cultural mechanisms that 'cultural consumption' and 'cultural production' have been shown to constrain some groups of people. This section is devoted to briefly exploring some of these issues in the contemporary context. Oakley and O'Brien (2016) generated a detailed account of such inequalities recognising that "cultural consumption is socially differentiated and there are differences along lines of class and social status, educational level, age, gender, ethnicity and disability" (p.474). In mirror image, "the cultural industries workforce is less ethnically diverse, more male and skewed towards those of a higher socio-economic background than most other sectors of the economy" (*ibid*, p.72). While the CCIs are increasingly presented as a site for meritocratic opportunity (Banks, 2017), the usual suspects continue to be advantaged.

This reflects what Conor, Gill and Taylor (2015) coined the paradox of the CCIs in the UK. On the one hand, the creative class has emerged and thrived in this nation (Clifton, 2008) whose characteristics are of openness, diversity and tolerance (Florida, 2002); yet on the other, "fields like film, television, the music industry and the arts more broadly, are marked by stark, persistent and in many cases worsening inequalities relating to gender, race and ethnicity, class, age and disability" (Conor, Gill & Taylor, 2015, p.1). In many of these sectors a vertical stratification is rife. In relation to gender for example "men outnumber women by more than 10 to 1 in decision-making roles in media companies" (*ibid*, p.7). Additionally there are horizontal imbalances where women dominate in some roles (for example, wardrobe, hairdressing and make-up) but systematically underrepresented in key 'creative roles' (such as, screenwriting, cinematography and directing) (Creative SkillSet, 2012). Evidence of this nature implies that professions that are based on artistic production and performance remain stratified and unequal

(e.g. Friedman et al., 2017; O'Brien *et al.,* 2016; 2017; Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; O'Connor, 2010[11])

Typecasting is one recognised mechanism via which an unequal workforce is reproduced. According to Friedman and O'Brien (2017) typecasting "delivers an oversupply of leading roles for white, male, middle-class actors while ensuring those who deviate somatically are restricted to largely socially caricatured roles" (p.359). This inevitably has a knock on effect on the career trajectories of 'othered' actors. Taking a critical stance they describe typecasting as a process whereby work is offered "based on an individual's embodied characteristics - i.e. that the roles they are encouraged to audition for, and that they tend to get, follow a set of social 'type' that reflects demographic characteristics of age, gender, ethnicity, region, disability, sexuality and class" (p.361). The initial phase of typecasting draws on existing stereotypes that are associated with particular types of bodies. This acts as a sorting mechanism for the labour market, skewing "the quantity, size and nature of the roles available to different types of actors. And this, in turn, structures who is able to succeed" (*ibid,* p.360). In other words it gives some privileged actors more opportunities while constraining others. This inevitably leads to the exclusion of certain types of bodies from certain types of roles.

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[11] A testament to the attention these issues have attracted is that in recent years there have been two special edition journal articles that were dedicated to understanding the persistent nature of inequalities within the 'Cultural Industries'. The Journal of Performance Research published, *On Labour and Performance* in 2012. The scope of this publication was to explore how the production of performances have shifted "in the course of neoliberal politics and post-Fordist working conditions within the context of a globalized economy of the 1990s and since" (Klein & Kunst, 2012, p.1). The second dedicated journal was published by Cultural Sociology in 2017. This special edition was titled, *Producing and Consuming Inequality: the Cultural Sociology of Cultural Industries*. This issue was concerned with discussing persisting problems or race, class, and gender inequalities within the performance industries.

4.3 *Bodies in the Performing Arts*

> It is *this* body, and *these* bodies, that require employment… as well as a sense of a future that is not a future of *unpayable debt*; it is this body, or these bodies, or bodies *like* this body or these bodies, that live in the condition of an imperilled livelihood, decimated infrastructure and accelerating precarity (Butler, 2015, p.10)

In this quote Butler was describing bodies that assemble to protest against political and social systems that, they believe, marginalises their existence and limits their futures. While Butler was not talking about BTEC in Performing Arts students directly, CCI workers have been described as the poster children of precarity and iconic exemplars of Beck's (1992) risk biographies (see Conor, Gill & Taylor, 2015). Specifically in the Performing Arts sectors[12], an industry report from the Creative and Cultural Skills (2011) showed the precarious nature of the work. In the UK, work in the Performing Arts is characterised by short term contracts, portfolio working, seasonal income, zero hours contracts, working for free (including volunteering and unpaid internships), informal recruitment processes and "a lack of career structures or paths to support progression" (Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011, p.123). Their futures lack predictability and security. It is therefore arguable that bodies in the Performing Arts live with conditions of risk and accelerated precarity.

The risk that these bodies live in are also symptomatic of the economic and political context where individualism has taken grip of bodies in many post-Fordist workplaces (McDowell, 2009). The need to become an *individualised body* is particularly intense within the CCIs (Nixon & Crewe, 2004). Allen *et al.,* (2013) suggested that the sails of individualisation creates an image of the 'ideal' creative work. Becoming an individual, the right type of individual, they argued is very important for graduates attempting to progress into the CCIs. This they argued is because "student employability in the creative sector tends to focus on individual dispositions or personal attributes" (*ibid*, p.434). They concluded that these conceptions of the ideal creative

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[12] For this report the Performing Arts consist of the following 'occupations': Actor; Agent; Artistic Director; Arts Administrator; Choreographer; Circus Performer; Costume Designer; Dancer; Entertainer; Hair, Makeup and Wigs; Lighting Technician; Makeup Artist; Props Maker; Puppeteer; Rigger; Sound Engineer; Sound Technician; Special Effects; Stage Manager; Stage Hand; Studio Manager; Technical Manager; Theatre Director; Wardrobe Assistant.

worker marginalises certain bodies that are not "utterly committed, individualised and unemotional, reinscribing the masculinised model of the thrusting, 'rational' neoliberal subject" (*ibid,* p.445). The neoliberal subject, the individualised body, is geared to be productive in a neoliberal economic and cultural system. However, this is not the only form of cultural production associated with the arts.

On the surface there are parallels between the artistic mode of production an the post-Fordist work ethic that models "a new labour process formed around projects, creativity and flexibility" (Shukaitis, 2012, p.54). Yet the artistic production is not always best served through an adoption of these work ethics and rhythms. For example, O'Connor (2010) recognised the plight some artists faced in the new neoliberal market conditions. He stated that under these pressures the artist no longer produces 'art', instead an artist needs to become a market professional. An individual must produce cultural commodities that have direct market value, otherwise they cannot afford to maintain production and will no longer exist. This is unless the individual independently has the economic capital to keep them afloat. This portrays a market where the only art that can be produced is the art that has a market value - a consumer demand.

An alternative way of putting a value on artistic production is to consider its worth in critiquing social, political, and institutional structures (Klein & Kunst 2012, Lesage, 2012). The defence of public spending on art is that it provides a 'public good' through culture, entertainment and politics. In a 'time of austerity', however, the current UK government subsidises these public goods at a reduced rate year on year; for example, real terms expenditure for Arts Council England fell by 3.6% in 2015/16 (House of Commons Library, 2016). This 'alternative' or critical form of artistic production is needed more than ever according to Lesage (2012) but just when it is needed most it has become more difficult to produce because of the precarious conditions of the industry. Kunst (2017) offered a seductive manifesto for artists when "in the defence of art: do less, precisely when confronted with the demanding assumption to do even more" (p.125). The call to arms, or the persistence to do less is attractive to those artists who can become tired, disillusioned and alienated as the result of their experience of contemporary labour market conditions. But this manifesto for laziness is meant to be more than just a romantic seduction. Rather, it is proposed to an alternative form of *productivity*. Kunst (2017)

proposes a method that is more radical than just a work ethic to create, or produce, different forms of art by sleeping all day, dreaming, and making art from those dreams. Instead, by encouraging bodies to be lazy she is setting out a politically revolutionary manifesto that is a critique of modern ways of working, like those long hours typical of the Creative Class (Florida, 2002) or the exploited performer that is not paid for their time (rehearsing and practicing) but only for their appearance in a performance (Lesage, 2012). What Kunst is providing is an alternative direction for new relations between labour, production, and time; "doing less can be understood as an exceptionally important affective shift that can significantly influence the *rhythmic* and *flexible* atmospheres of contemporary life" (emphasis added, Kunst, 2017, p.125).

Conclusion to Context and First Set of Research Questions

Chapter 1 reviewed the vocational landscape within the UK and some of the main discourses that frame how student transitions are currently discussed in public forums. The BTEC was then positioned as one course that is uniquely situated within these wider debates. Some key themes from these two Chapters were the relative opportunities and constraints these students face across various stages of their lives. A discourse of skill was unavoidable in an examination of policy documentations (at national and awarding body level) in these reviews. Skill was offered as a solution to national economic challenges of the contemporary era as well as a necessity for individuals transitions; or in giving students "the chance to progress, immediately or later in life" (Wolf, 2011, p.20).

Chapter 3 therefore investigated how skill is connected to vocationalism, learning, and the body. The intention here was to better understand what skill is but also how a discourse of skill frames student transition. Finally, Chapter 4 narrowed the focus to explore some the identified themes within the context of the Performing Arts. There were some themes that reappeared in each of these contexts. These crosscutting themes can be converted into a set of research questions.

- What are the *opportunities* and *constraints* that BTEC in PA students face?
- How are discourses of *skill* created and transmitted within the learning environments. Does this begin to frame transitions in any way?
- To what extent are these transitions framed by gender, and class?

These questions were intentionally generic. They relate to the main themes of interest that cut across the four separate reviews. It was not the aim of this research to provide definitive answers to the questions set - instead their function was to provide direction for the emergent design (see, 7.5.). The continually evolving nature of the ethnography meant that I would generate subsets of questions inline with these wider areas of interest in response to the data collected. Also further theoretical reviews and reflections helped to refine the set of questions above. Before arriving at these refined themes (or research questions), Chapter 5 and 6 will seek to situate this research within the wider theoretical context.

PART 2   THEORY

Introduction to THEORY

Within the last decade there have been a number of attempts to review theoretical frameworks and orientations that have contributed to the field of transitional research (e.g. Crafter & Maunder, 2012; Colley, 2007; Gale & Parker, 2012; Brockmann, 2012; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Roberts, 2013; Field, 2010; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010; Seifried & Wuttke, 2013). Some of these accounts have sought to map the historical, theoretical and political developments within the field (e.g. Brockmann, 2012; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Roberts, 2013) whilst others have developed typologies of contemporary conceptualisations regarding student transition (e.g. Colley, 2007; Gale & Parker, 2012). Whether structured thematically or chronologically, these reviews have exposed theoretical, conceptual, and political tensions within the literature as well as projected the likely future direction of transitional theory.

The following structure is designed to explicate these important theoretical tensions in order to arrive at, and build upon, "the most theoretically sophisticated" (Gale & Parker, 2012, p.1) account of student transition, 'life-as-transition' (Colley, 2007; Gale & Parker, 2012). To achieve this, Chapter 5 initially provides a retrospective account of the intersections between social theory and the study of student transition. This chronological account illustrates how sociological paradigms have impacted on the way transitions are thought of and researched (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). In parallel with these paradigmatic shifts the concepts structure, agency and identity have framed scholars' understanding of transition (Ecclestone, 2007; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010; Brockmann, 2012). Exposing these tensions within the literature is necessary because different 'theories of transition' have produced contrasting ideas of how transitions should be researched, managed and supported (e.g. Gale & Parker, 2012; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010).

Against this background, theoretical reviews by Colley (2007) and Gale *et al.,* (2012) are then drawn upon to discuss contemporary 'typologies of transition'. Whilst it is recognised that transitional theory remains diverse, the momentum of current scholarly thought favours a view of transition as "a perpetual series of fragmented movements involving whole-of-life fluctuations in lived reality or subjective experience, from birth to death" (Gale & Parker, 2012,

p.4). This emerging theoretical option is offered as having the most potential to explore the messiness of transitions experienced by vocational students today (Atkins *et al.,* 2010; Wolf, 2011). However, this typology remains mostly propositional and underdeveloped. Attention in the later sections of Chapter 5 is therefore directed towards defining and unpacking this conceptualisation of transition. Following this, Chapter 6 will extend this theory of transition by fully articulating *bodies-in-transition* as the working theory for this ethnography.

Chapter 5
Theories of Transition

5.1. *Intersections between social theory and transition: A retrospective review*

Goodwin and O'Connor (2005) argued that a series of paradigm shifts have occurred over the last 40 years that have impacted how transition is theorised. Multiple sources suggested that very different theoretical perspectives have been applied to the study of transition and that each broad approach is associated with an age (Brockmann, 2012; Goodwin *et al.,* 2005; Furlong, 2009a; Furlong, 2009b; Roberts, 2013). Each of these accounts argued that structuralist analyses of transition were most influential between 1960 and 1980. Here transitions normally were presented as *pathways* and then *trajectories* (Goodwin *et al.,* 2005; Furlong, 2009b). The central issue concerned exposing the *structures* that stream students into either privilege or hardship (Roberts, 2013). However, for many researchers cultural, educational, and occupational changes towards the end of the twentieth century reduced the applicability of these modes of analysis. Consequently, alternative conceptualisations and metaphors of transition emerged. By the 1990's Furlong (2009b) argued that postmodern accounts had became prevalent within the literature, giving rise to the metaphor of *student navigation*. In this turn, more emphasis was placed on student agency and identities.

Both structuralism and postmodernism have framed empirical contributions from across this timeframe and are still very present in both research and practice today. Whilst only touched on in this Chapter, there have also been notable influences from structuration theory (e.g. Giddens, 1984; Stone, 2005) and situated learning theory (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Research rarely fits neatly into one of these categories, and a range of competing concepts and arguments coexists within each broad perspective. Nonetheless, mapping the main theoretical developments within the field shows the transitional literature to be fragmented between disciplines and theoretical orientations (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010). Charting the role of diverse social theory within the field of student transition provides a useful background from which contemporary conceptualisations of transition can then be positioned and critiqued. Furthermore, by outlining the evolving academic context begins to illustrate the theoretical momentum toward the notion of 'life-as-transition' (Colley, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010).

5.1a. *1960 - 1980: Structured Pathways and Trajectories*

During the period in which structuralist forms of analysis dominated the transitional literature (1960-1980), Brockmann (2012) argued that researchers "suggested that young people experienced continuous and smooth transitions as they had been socialised into accepting particular social positions through socialisation processes in the family home, neighbourhoods and school contexts" (p.26). The resulting academic discourse (re)produced powerful arguments of structural constraints and inequality. As expanded upon in Chapter 1, a discourse of (educational, occupational and social) structure that restricts vocational opportunities remains powerful and substantiated today. Whilst the majority of scholars accepts that transitions between 1960 and 1980 were more 'smooth' and less 'complex', Goodwin and O'Connor (2005) contested these accepted assumptions. They suggested that the theoretical perspectives and conceptual resources of the period affected this analysis and neglected sustained examinations of "individualized, subjective, [and] complex transitional experiences" (p.217). Furlong (2009b) developed this argument further by suggesting that researchers tended to seek out stratified pathways within their data that highlighted the commonality of class-based struggles.

For the purpose of this Chapter, it is not imperative to discuss whether or not transitions were as simple and straightforward as is often portrayed during this age of transition (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Roberts, 2009). Instead, it is important to acknowledge that researchers were mostly interested with macrostructural issues and inequalities such as class, race, and gender. These foci remain both useful and very much alive today. Immeasurable changes to education and labour markets have occurred since the 1960s (see Furlong, 2009b; Ainley & Allen, 2010 for a detailed commentary). Nevertheless, many structural inequalities remain persistent and in many cases have worsened. For example, despite significant policy shifts towards *Widening Participation* (see Burke, 2012; David *et al.,* 2010), students from low socioeconomic groups remain, in policy terms, disadvantaged at each stage of the 'student lifecycle' (HEA, 2016). The table below summarises some evidence that supports this.

Table C: Illustrations of how transitions might be negatively impacted for students from low SEGs

Stage of Lifecycle	Students from Low SEG's are…	Potential Reasons
Access	three times less likely to access higher education (BIS, 2015)	Smith (2011) argued that students from low SEGs have less access to 'informal' knowledge of HE and less means to digest 'formal' information. This can result in poor decision making when selecting universities and can develop unrealistic expectations of HE.
Retention	more likely to drop out of University (Crawford, 2014)	Due to a mixture of cultural and financial reasons, students from low SEGs are more likely to live in their parental home during their study (BIS, 2014). Clark *et al.,* (2014) detailed how this reduces opportunities for students from low SEGs to form social networks and access support services. They added that these students tend to be less confident of their skills and competencies to succeed in HE (*ibid*). Furthermore, Quinn (2010) argued that these students are more inclined to dropout because they are more inclined to try and cope on their own rather than seek support.
Attainment	less likely to progress directly into postgraduate study (Wakeling *et al.,* 2013)	Students from low SEGs tend to work more alongside their studies and this can negatively impact on their degree outcome (Reay *et al.*, 2005; Malcolm, 2015).
Progression	less likely to progress directly into employment (Bridge Group, 2016)	Whilst a combination of the above inevitably frames progression opportunities for low SEG students, the notion of employability skills has also been criticised. Brown (2013) discussed how in recent years labour markets have giving greater value to "the 'soft currencies' of personality, character and social confidence" (Brown, 2013, p.688). In congested labour markets Brown argued that this generates more employment opportunities for those with 'middle-class' dispositions.

Further examples of educational and occupational inequalities in the UK have been provided within CONTEXT that highlighted the intersectionality of social class, gender, race and forms of Vocational Education, with special attention paid to the Performing Arts. Given the weight of the evidence, efforts to expose the mechanisms and structures that help (re)create persistent inequalities cannot be abandoned. In this respect, forms of structuralist analysis continue to have a political function to expose transitional *pathways* that lead to disadvantage - so that they can be eroded or redirected.

A number of theoretical frameworks developed during this period (1960 - 1980) are still utilised to this end. This is particularly the case in research that explores transitions in relation to wider issues of social mobility (e.g. Bathmaker *et al*., 2013; Burke, 2012; Reay, Crozier & Clayton,

2009a; Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2009b; Reay, David & Ball, 2005) or in relation to Vocational Education (e.g. Bates *et al.,* 1984; Ainley & Allen, 2010; Colley, 2003, 2006). Two ethnographic texts published during this era have had a lasting legacy shaping subsequent interrelated work into education, mobility, and transitions. Willis's (1977) *Learning to Labour* provided a detailed analysis of the transition made by 'lads' from school to work. In this thorough ethnographic venture Willis mapped out 'how working class kids get working class jobs" (1977, p.1). Although Willis suggested that "social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures" (1977, p.175) his analysis tended to illustrate the power of social structures in the reproduction of class transitions. Brockmann (2012) noted that countless studies since this publication have sought to further explain types of 'occupational socialisation' by examining the effects of culture and counter culture on transition.

Willis's (1977) concept of resistance featured heavily in Riseborough's (1993) research into Vocational Education (Youth Training Schemes) in the context of rising youth unemployment in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. Criticisms of 'new vocationalism' continued with Bates *et al.,* (1984) drawing on Willis's theoretical contributions in *Schooling for the Dole?*. More recently, Willis's work was revitalised in an international collaborative publication of studies in *Learning to Labour in New Times* (Dolby, Dimitriadis & Willis, 2004). In addition to these studies, Willis's work has been influential in explaining how young people from rural coastal villages in Nova Scotia 'learn to leave' (Corbett, 2007). These brief examples show that concepts like resistance and counter school culture have a contemporary relevance in a range of educational and cultural contexts. They also show that Willis's *structuralist* contributions continue to influence how academics theorise transition as "differentiated by the social divisions of society: by class, gender and race… differentiated in its starting points, the experience of transition itself, and in its destinations" (Clarke & Willis, 1984, p.7).

In my view, Bourdieu's (1984) seminal text *Distinction* has had a greater lasting impact on transitional theory and research, offering a more sophisticated lens from which to theorise transition. In this extensive project, Bourdieu sought to critique processes of social stratification across France. This theoretical work can be interpreted as being less about viewing transition *pathways* but more in relation to how individual and collective *trajectories* are formed within

society. Bourdieu's prolific body of work (e.g. 1977; 1984; 1990) attempted to explain these processes through a grand sociological framework that describes the relationships between interrelated concepts such as *habitus*, *capital* and *field*.

In *Distinction* Bourdieu (1984) added to his already influential sociological framework, by developing the concept of *taste* with sustained empirical rigour. Bourdieu described taste as "an acquired disposition to 'differentiate' and 'appreciate'" (p.468). In its dispositional form, taste constitutes part of the habitus, and therefore - due to the nature of habitus relations with society - taste can be characteristic of a field and relational to forms of capital. Whilst Bourdieu's theoretical work has contributed to the field of education in a myriad of ways, Reay (2004) argued that habitus has become one of the main concepts employed by educational researchers. With researchers applying habitus like 'intellectual hairspray', Reay suggested there has been a tendency to incorrectly reduce habitus to a form of structuralist determinism. It is arguable that Reay's assertions mostly hold true in the field of Vocational Education research.

The *vocational habitus* was developed to explain forms of occupational socialisation in Vocational Education. This concept remains very relevant to how vocational transitions are currently understood within the literature. According to Brockmann (2012) the vocational habitus is defined by "the (highly normative) set of dispositions with which students are expected to respond to meet the demands within the vocational culture" (p.41). Each vocational habitus consists of tastes for vocational pedagogies, gendered practices and, most of all, tastes associated with working class relationships with labour markets (see Vincent & Braun, 2011; Colley *et al.,* 2003; Colley, 2006; Colley, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007). Dispositions, tastes, and practices are constructed in this context not only through engagement with educational environments but also through a student's position within a range of fields. This has unfortunately led to analyses and conclusions that focus almost entirely on social 'structure' at the expense of making the role of 'agency' all but redundant. For example, Vincent and Braun (2011) concluded that 'early years' students are highly constrained by the need to acquire a version of professionalism as part of the vocational habitus. Whilst there are many examples of reproduction and assimilation towards the vocational habitus (e.g. Colley *et al.,* 2003; Vincent

& Braun, 2011), there are fewer counter examples of agency and transformation within their literature.

The extent to which Bourdieu's powerful theoretical framework limits the potential for agency has been open to debate and (mis)interpretation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2004; Crossley, 2001). In my view, Bourdieu's (1997) description of 'socially informed bodies' refuses to accept deterministic structuring processes and accounts for forms of agency (see Barker & Bailey, 2015). Nonetheless, Bourdieusian studies have been criticised often for providing overly deterministic accounts of student transition (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010) where the "scope for individual agency is limited and only extended to constructing and reproducing existing learning cultures" (Brockmann, 2012, p.41). As discussed, these criticisms may have some merit in the case of some applications of the vocational habitus.

Based on the criticisms outlined above, relying too much on the role of social, educational, and occupational structures have in framing transition can underplay how students *navigate* their own futures. If it is accepted that transitions are inherently *messy* in terms of their processes and outcomes (see Chapter 1), then the idea of transition as pathways or trajectories is undermined. Exposing the structures that funnel students into either privilege or hardship alone may therefore be unsatisfactory in explaining the transitional realities of young people today. In response to this, theories of transition have evolved to better highlight the role of agency and identity. According to Goodwin and O'Connor (2005), the focus on occupational socialisation was less dominant from the 1990s onwards. S*tudent navigation* and *structured individualisation* emerged as powerful metaphors that diverted attention from pathways and trajectories (*ibid*).

5.1b. *1990 onwards: Student Navigation and Structured Individualisation*

The focus on social reproduction and structure, detailed above, contrasts with more individualistic perspectives that have become more prevalent since the 1990s (Brockmann, 2012). Individualistic perspectives emerged in response to the widely held assumption that fundamental shifts had taken place in British society that catalysed in an erosion of traditional pathways. This was symptomatic of 'late modernity' (Giddens, 1991), in which citizens became more engaged in reflexive projects, replacing the reliance on structural certainties to help determine their existence. Here "we all have to construct our lives more actively than was ever the case before" (Giddens, 1996, p.243). Beck's (1992) thesis of the 'risk society' and Bauman's (2000) notion of 'liquid modernity' both exemplify the uncertainty of modern life in theory of this period. Consequently, in this context it may be argued that researchers have had a reduced political function to expose unequal transitional pathways. Instead their focus turned towards explaining the diversification of educational experiences that were assumed to be increasingly characteristic of transitions. Whilst Goodwin & O'Connor (2005) and Furlong (2009b) sided with the notion that the individualisation and increased complexity of transitions were overly exaggerated, new theoretical perspectives took hold within the field. Furlong (2009b) argued that,

> By the 1990s, with the rise in postmodern perspectives, structural explanations fell out of fashion and new metaphors were introduced that revolved around the idea of 'navigation' (p.2)

In thinking of transition as navigation, scholars rejected sociological models that ultimately reduced transition to an analysis of social structure. The individual agent came more into focus. In this context, Furlong (2009b) suggested that those of a postmodern persuasion argued that it was no longer useful or accurate to predict an individual's opportunities or trajectories using information about social class, gender or other structural variables. In this sense, the term navigation was an attempt to translate the abstract concept of agency into the transition terminology (Heinz, 2009). For the purpose of (re)theorising transition Ecclestone *et al.,* (2010) defined agency simply as "the capacity for autonomous, empowered action" (p.2). When navigating transitions, the enactment of agency was seen to have secondary effects. For

example, students were seen to be actively engaged in shifting from one identity to another (*ibid*). Therefore, navigation described a process in which the student has the capacity and autonomy to make voluntary decisions. These choices result in actions that, in turn, form identities. This process empowers the student to alter her pathway, for better or for worse. These underlying assumptions prompted Furlong (2009b) to suggest that, within the discourse and conceptualisation of navigation, prominence is given to factors such as judgement, choice and ability.

Yet, agency continues to be bound within structures in navigation metaphors. Generally speaking, pathways exist but students have the ability (and agency) to deviate from them. This description is apparent in Heinz's (2009) view that "transitions have become more individualised, but still occur in the context of social inequality, which is evident in unequal access to promising pathways" (p.7). This general view is one that leads to what Roberts *et al.,* (1994) eventually termed *structured individualisation*. In education, structured individualism implies that while "social backgrounds and family histories may not lead to particular forms of occupations and jobs, the type of opportunities available to young people will be limited by the structures around them" (France, 2007, p.71). Since its inception, structured individualisation has been an influential metaphor in educational studies, such as Vocational Education, transitions and social mobility.

Ball *et al.'s* (2000) research is located within the fields above and adopts structured individualism as a key theme running throughout their analysis. Here they suggested that young people see themselves as individuals who are able to make choices and have control in carving out their own transitions in a meritocratic society. Nevertheless, the young people in this study still recognised that classed and gendered inequalities constrict the opportunities that they encounter, access or chose in some familiar ways. At the turn of the millennium, the work of Ball *et al.,* (2000) provided empirical examples of the discord between neoliberal discourses and the reality of social mobility that Brown (2013) has recently critiqued at length.

It may be important, however, to not place too much emphasis on navigation to explain the complexity of transition, not least because it has been argued that "contemporary researchers

have perhaps *overstated* the significance of processes of reflexivity and life management" (Furlong *et al.,* 2005, p.14). Similar to the excessive tendencies of structuralism, the findings of postmodern approaches can be distorted due to the theoretical lenses used for analysis (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). In spite of these caveats, a corpus of 'postmodern' critiques has compiled persuasive empirical evidence that students do exercise agency over the course of their transition (e.g. Atkins, 2009; Quinn, 2010). On balance, the argument is compelling that all students - no matter their background, no matter their position in the educational system or within the labour market - have some capacities to shape their present and future. The extent and the contextual parameters of this remain unclear within the literature – for transitions are not only complex in their outcomes, they also appear to reflect an inherently messy process.

In addition to this, directing the spotlight towards the role of agency in shaping transition raises some sociopolitical anxieties for me as a researcher. As Goodwin and O'Connor (2005) and Furlong *et al.,* (2005) have implied, postmodern approaches might well be susceptible to obscuring the effects of objective regularities in the social milieu. If transitions are understood to be founded on an individual's own making, discourse of a meritocracy in action can be established, in which students' successes and failures are seen to be entirely a result of their own actions and innate abilities. Whilst this might raise the opposite criticism than that of structuralist approaches, together, these approaches bring to the surface a core tension within the literature on student transition. Field (2010) referred to this reappearing tension as the impasse of structure and agency in which a theoretical balance must be achieved to accurately understand transition. This seems unlikely, however, given that the structure-agency debate is one of the longstanding areas of contention within sociology (Tholen, 2015; Shilling, 1999).

It is my view, however, that exploring the respective roles of structure and agency in transition is only one important aspect that the sociology of education should take into consideration. Transitional processes have been shown in many contexts to be influenced by differentiations in education and society *and* by the voluntary actions of individuals. The varying degrees regarding the role of structure or agency, however, might have set the conditions for circular debates to permeate the literature. For example, debating whether *Learning to Labour* (Willis,

1977) showed that social structures set the conditions for forms of resistance, or showed that the lads exercised ""agency" by choosing to "fail"" (Arnonowitz, 2004, p.*ix*) becomes an irrelevance that might never be resolved. Partly inspired by Giddens (1984), it might therefore be more useful to explore the processes that both enable and constrain individuals and collectives within particular times and spaces[13]. An alternative approach would be to look at understanding how students are always exposed to a multiplicity of opportunities and constraints in all aspect of their social lives.

This view has implicitly featured within the literature, with structuration theory making an impact on the field. This is consistent with Shilling's (1992) account of the sociology of education, in which he argues that many attempts have been made to reconcile structure and agency, most notably with the application of structuration theory. The structuration theory espoused by Giddens (1984), however, can be criticised as being too abstract to form an appropriate methodology for empirical work (Stone, 2005). To examine the transition of newly qualified teachers, Aldous *et al.,* (2012) utilised Stone's (2005) quadripartite cycle of structuration. This enabled Aldous *et al.,* (2012) to highlight students' transitional experiences as "complex, multidimensional and interconnected with the wider social and cultural structures" (p.14). Whilst this might therefore have the potential to provide a new lens to look at transition - one that is more congruent with the idea of messy transitions - Shilling (1991) argued that structuration theory fails to fully articulate a fully embodied notion of students. The importance of this criticism will become clear in Chapter 6, when the working theory of the thesis is developed. Before that, the following section(s) will unpack contemporary 'typologies of transition', in order to arrive at and extend the notion of life-as-transition.

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[13] The critical lens that underpins my theoretical approach to transition will be elaborated on fully in Chapter 6 - where the idea of processes that enable and constrain individuals and collectives will take shape.

5.1c. *Towards contemporary 'typologies of transition'*

One intention of providing this historical view is to briefly highlight the contributions of structuralism, postmodernism, and structuration theory within the study of transitions. Another is to highlight both the possibilities and the inherent limitations of each. It is important to outline these theoretical perspectives, because, according to both Ecclestone *et al.,* (2010) and Goodwin *et al.,* (2005) the theoretical underpinning of empirical studies governs which aspects of transition will be explored, understood and emphasised. It is also important to reiterate that this retrospective review is based on the main sociological contributions to transition and as such includes a broad definition of transition. To reflect this diversity, empirical examples have been provided from a wide range of contexts. While each study focusses on different transitions (e.g. school-to-work Willis, 1997; class trajectories Bourdieu, 1984; and post-16 pathways and choices Ball *et al.,* 2000), each makes explicit attempts to transcend the educational connecting it to wider social and occupational issues. This background therefore provides an intentionally broad overview of theoretical debates in the transitional literature.

Each perspective can and does still offer desirable contributions to the analysis of vocational transitions in the UK, but they also prove only a partial and potentially distorted representation of reality. In relation to this, Ecclestone (2007) understood that the guiding concern has been to develop new theoretical perspectives that avoid giving too much weight to either structure, agency or identities. By unpacking this tension, 5.1 aimed to provide the academic context from which contemporary typologies of transition emerged and can be located. The limitations and potentials highlighted within opposing theoretical perspectives also provide a sound lens from which these typologies might be critiqued. The contemporary typologies of transition that will be expanded upon next have been developed with a narrower remit. In particular, they are mostly concerned with describing transitions through educational systems.

## 5.2. *Typologies of Transition: Contemporary Perspectives and Debates*

In contrast to these historical accounts, two systematic literature reviews examined the implicit and explicit conceptualisations of transition (Colley, 2007; Gale & Parker, 2012). In doing so, they produced typologies of transitional theories. Colley (2007) and Gale *et al.,* (2012) organised their review in terms of common themes within the current international literature. Colley's (2007) review focuses predominantly on transitions over the life-course whilst Gale *et al.,* (2012) concentrate on student transitions into, through and out of Higher Education. Despite these differences, both reviews identified very similar theoretical approaches. Colley (2007) identified four general types of approaches: (*1*) institutional transitions, (*2*) institutional transitions with a 'layering' of experiences, (*3*) transitions of a broader social and cultural nature, (*4*) and *life-as-transition*. Whilst these four typologies are useful, Gale and Parker (2012) merged and redefined elements of Colley's (2007) characterisations, thereby more succinctly producing three typologies to enclose the entire range of conceptualisation in the 'fragmented' and contested field (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010). These were labelled induction, development, and becoming[14].

Gale and Parker's (2012) review had a narrower focus on student transition between educational and occupational contexts and therefore was more relevant to BTEC transitions. As such, their three typologies of transition will structure the following discussion. Gale and Parker's (2012) final category of transition-as-becoming incorporates Colley's (2007) notion of life-as-transition. Colley's (2007) term 'life-as-transition' will be favoured over becoming because it encompasses the contradictions, multiplicities and messiness of transitions. Contributions from other sources will be used to further develop each category and illustrate the potentials and limitations of each approach.

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[14] See Appendix b for a table outlining the characteristics of each of these categories.

5.2a. *Transition-as-Induction*

Gale and Parker's (2012) first category is an *inductionist* perspective which they claim is "primarily institutional and system-serving" (p.2). Induction approaches to transition have parallels with Colley's (2007) notion of 'institutional transitions' and what Rose-Adams (2013) termed 'intergrationist' models of transition. Both Colley and Rose-Adams stated that these perspectives take the foreground in UK policy and applied literature regarding transition. From these perspectives, transition is seen as the responsibility of the relevant institutions, such as colleges, universities or companies. Not only are institutions seen as accountable for breaking barriers to participation and overcoming social exclusion, they are also seen as the main instigators for change. Institutions therefore must ensure that students follow smooth and successful *pathways* that pass through demarcated phases. Smoothness refers to a linear progression of the transition, in which students encounter few barriers, and success is defined in terms of the student's ability to adapt to the expectations and demands of institutions. From this perspective, key *phases* have been highlighted as crucial to the likelihood of students making a 'successful' transition. A good visual representation of this for FE to HE transition is Burnett's (2007) figure,

The Student Experience Model (with a focus on First Year Experience)

© Burnett, 2007
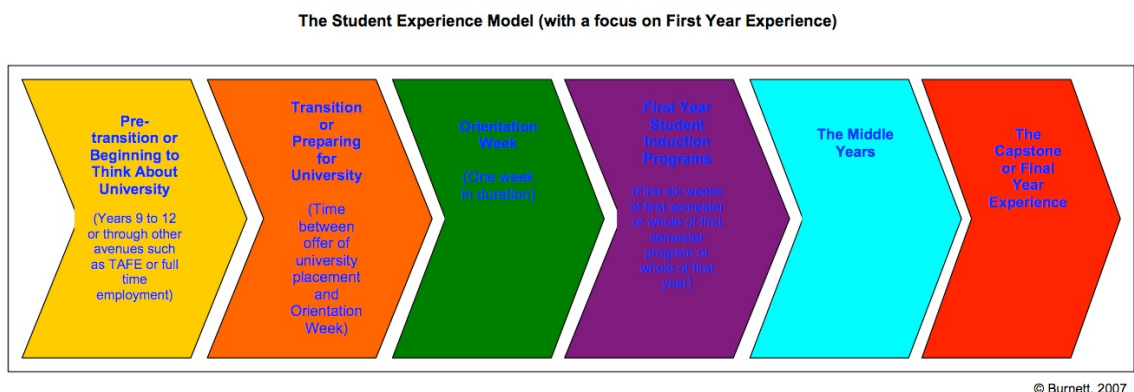
Models such as these emphasise pivotal moments of student transformation and change (such as induction week) where the structure of the educational environment must enable the students to adjust effectively to the new settings. There is a large literature suggesting that the first year is the most problematic phase of HE transition (e.g. Cashmore, Green & Scott, 2010; Kift, 2009; Wilson, 2014; Yorke & Longden, 2008). During the first year, a number of educational and social transitions occur simultaneously that often conflict with one and another. The first year

has been shown to be particularly problematic for those students from 'disadvantaged' groups. Whilst transition-as-induction highlights key phases when certain students might need extra 'support' to meet to institutional expectations, this conceptualisation of transition has limitations.

Induction theories of transition limit researchers' gaze to the student's journey across phases, without paying significant attention to influences outside of these times and spaces. Therefore, these conceptualisations of transition underplay the effects of socialisation processes that occur beyond the official parameters and defined timelines (Gale & Parker, 2012). Confining analysis to the times and spaces across student pathways condemns inductionist approaches to only partially understanding how students experience their transition, because it neglects the full range of factors that might inform the opportunities and constraints which students encounter. In doing so, this typology overlooks the importance of informal learning environments both within and outside educational settings. Moreover, Gale and Parker (2012) argued that this approach struggles to provide a detailed account of student agency and the ability they have to negotiate their transition. A critique from the perspective of *structured individualism* would be that transition-as-induction paints a picture of the student as hollow and passive. Inductionist accounts, on the other hand, attribute little to how students can engage in and shape the learning environments, nor do they show how individuals have the capacity to reject, reform, and mediate institutional codes.

Finally, the treatment of transition as sequential periods of induction accentuates normal *pathways* that can be neatly mapped out, showing linear progression from one phase to the next. This constructs a notion of ideal pathways. Given all of the limitations listed here, inductionist perspectives are predisposed to miss the messiness of vocational transitions, that are rarely neat or linear in process or outcome (Chapter 1). This might inadvertently silence nonlinear transitions which marginalise those who do not follow the norm.

5.2b. *Transition-as-Development*

The second typology Gale and Parker (2012) described were *developmental* models of transitions, in which "transition is about students' transformation or development, from one life stage to another." (p.8). Brockmann (2012) stated that developmental perspectives of transition focus on the *stages* of 'growth' young people were assumed to have achieved by certain junctures. This model is rooted in developmental psychology (Gale & Parker, 2012) and is attentive to internal dimensions of student transitions, such as learning and motivation. Student transformations are also seen as linear and non-reversible, and therefore could be subject to many of the criticisms raised in the previous section. However, the main difference from the induction category is that developmental approaches do not require transitions to occur over 'periods' but in 'stages' (*ibid*). From this approach, students do not move across set pathways over time, but rather signal a new *trajectory* on completion of a development stage. There is commonality here, as Gale and Parker (2012) noted, given that both inductionists and developmentalists highlight particular moments as problematic to transitions. However, they recognised that each perspective produces different explanations of these difficulties,

> Whether period or stage… research approaches concur that the first year can be difficult for students… However, for developmentalists, the difficulties tend to be internal to individuals rather than external [as normally arrived at by inductionists] (p.10)

This internal gaze generates explanations missed in induction approaches. It allows the student to emerge as an active agent within, and the main driving force of, their transition. It also places emphasis on students developing the 'correct' identity for education and employment. Whilst these approaches can be attentive to the external conditions that facilitate or hinder 'development', they are less critical about what type of development is required and at what stage. In this respect they implicitly draw from the ideas and ideologies of institutions as a guide. They do, however, place more emphasis on the student's active transformation than inductionist perspectives (Gale & Parker, 2012). Although this typology emerged from educational psychology and not sociology of education, these perspectives share similarities with the transitional metaphor navigation.

A main critique of transition-as-development, then, is that it puts too much emphasis on the role of students' agency, abilities and identities to make a successful transition. Connecting linear processes with a timeframe also marginalises those students who do not 'keep up' with the required developments. Therefore, I agree with Gale and Parker (2011; 2012), that both inductionist and developmental approaches achieve only a partial representation of transition. These typologies fail to locate transition within wider social and cultural processes, as well as the individual's unfolding life: one which must always take into account the past, an experience of the presence, and multiple potential futures.

5.2c. *Life-as-Transition*

Colley's (2007) typology *life-as-transition* was renamed *transitions-as-becoming* in Gale and Parker's (2012) review. Gale and Parker (2012) defined becoming as "a perpetual series of fragmented movements involving the whole-of-life fluctuations in lived reality or subjective experience, from birth to death" (p.4). This notion of becoming is not to be confused with Lave & Wenger's familiar notion of "becoming an old-timer with respect to newcomers" (1991, p.56) through Legitimate Peripheral Participation. In situated learning frameworks, *becoming* implies more linearity than this typology. Lave & Wenger (1991) described the process of becoming through a framework of social participation rather than more complex focus on lived experiences. Becoming an 'old-timer' within this framework can be mapped onto normative 'pathways' and 'stages' as students move between Communities of Practice. Unlike Lave & Wenger's (1991) notion of becoming, *transition-as-becoming* is not preoccupied with the development of identities within educational and occupational contexts. Its distinct differences are drawn from a notion of becoming that has a rich tradition in social theory and philosophy (see, for example, Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Grosz, 1999).

If, on one hand, the typologies of induction and development show transition growing from firm roots, becoming on the other hand, portrays the dynamics of transition as rhizomatic (Gale & Parker, 2012). Grosz (1994) reflected this dynamic when describing the process of 'becoming women' in which "Becomings are always specific movements, specific forms of motion and rest, speed and slowness, points and flows of intensity; they are always a multiplicity, the movement or transformation from one "thing" to another that in no way resembles it" (p.173). In this sense, becoming is "the operation of self-differentiation, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality or a system that emerges or actualizes only in duration" (Grosz, 2005, p.4). When underpinned by this notion of becoming, transition is therefore intimately connected to the entire duration of a student's life as well as the emergence of difference and multiplicities.

This theoretical literature has been drawn upon in many ways to "depict transitions as something much more ephemeral and fluid, where the whole of life is a form of transition, a permanent state of 'becoming' and 'unbecoming', much of which is unconscious, contradictory

and iterative" (Ecclestone, 2010, p.8). This contradictory and fluid notion of becoming and unbecoming was initially developed into a perspective of 'life-as-transition' (Colley, 2007; Colley *et al.,* 2007; Ecclestone 2006, 2007, 2009; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010; Quinn, 2010). Both transition-as-becoming and life-as-transitions are suitable terms for expanding this typology. However, to avoid confusion, to direct attention away from Lave & Wenger's (1991) notion of becoming, and to emphasise the extended spatiotemporal dimensions of transition the later will be adopted from this point onwards.

Gale and Parker (2012) suggested that the propositions contained within life-as-transition are in many ways a rejection of 'transition' as a useful concept, at least in how the term is often understood within HE (as induction or development). Following this line of thought, life-as-transition cannot be aligned with one of the established metaphors, pathways, and trajectories. Although it would be correct to trace this typology back to postmodern and poststructural traditions (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010), the unconscious and contradictory nature of transition it espouses means that the terms navigation and structured individualisation do not neatly fit either. This is a view Quinn (2010) partially outlined by suggesting that this perspective replaces the idea of pathways with a notion of *constant flux*. Ecclestone *et al.,* (2010) also distanced the theory from the notion that transitions are trajectories, stating that it challenges the idea of transition as a rite of passage and movement through developmental life stages (*ibid*). None of the previous metaphors are suitable to this theory of transition. Instead, transition must be "understood as a series of flows, energies and movements and capacities, a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together in ways other than those that congeal it into an identity" (*ibid*, p.8).

Whilst life-as-transition rejects these established metaphors, it accepts transition as a perpetual state of flux in which young people imagine multiple futures and experience contradictions throughout their life. Complexity, crisis and contradictions are not, however, necessarily considered problematic (Quinn, 2010; Gale & Parker, 2012). These elements are instead considered to be a symptom of transitional experiences. All transitions are complex, encounter moments of crisis and produce contradictions. Moreover, transitions are seen to have no tangible start or end points. Instead, transition is an "unending and fragmented process, which is neither

linear nor simplistically circular: while one contradiction may be resolved, a new one will surface" (Colley, 2007, p.438). Grounded in her qualitative data, Quinn (2010) argued that transition is a process that "involves a number of zigzag or spiral movements within a web of contradictions" (Quinn, 2010, p.122). Worth (2009) added "it is important to see time as more than linear chronology - time can be difference, time can be past, present and future at once" (p. 1055). This theme of the temporalities of transition will be discussed further in 6.2d.

Life-as-transition is therefore better equipped to explore messy processes and outcomes of transition (see Chapter 1). It recognises the multiplicities that are present in any transitional periods or stages throughout the duration of students' lives. In this sense, life-as-transition does not narrowly restrict the transitional process to segments of change within tightly bounded times and spaces (Colley, 2007; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2009). Rather, it challenges implicit notions of linearity, chronology, time and change that are built into inductionist and developmentalist perspectives (Gale & Parker, 2012). Three tenets summarise this challenge: (*1*) transition does not occur during a phase or at a stage; (*2*) transition is not a linear progression towards a unified product; (*3*) change is a symptom of everyday experience and not the result of a singular transition - transitions are always situated within the students' life and wider cultural/ educational environments. Each of these claims "undermines assumptions that 'becoming somebody' involves a unified subject capable of being transformed" (Ecclestone, 2007, p. 5). Students are not entities that can be moulded to change through transition, but rather they are seen as fluid *processes* that are themselves always in transition. In developing a critical stance, I would also argue that these processes are always *enabling* and *constraining* in contradictory ways.
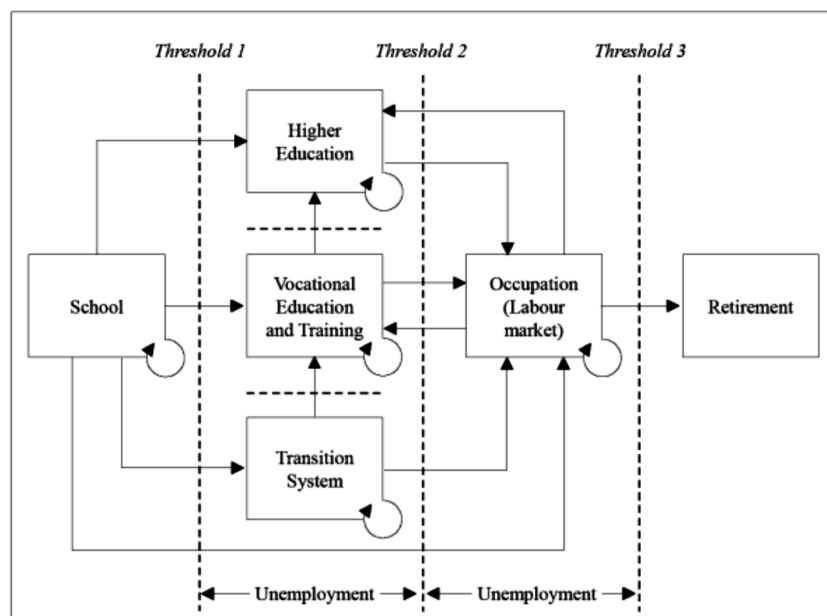
5.2d. *The Spatiotemporal dimensions of transition*

Transition has been theorised in many different ways within this Chapter, yet not succinctly defined. Partly this is because there is "no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a transition" (Ecclestone, 2010, p.5). Houston, Lebeau, and Watkins (2009) speculated that this might stem from the expansive dictionary definition, in which transitions are broadly defined as either "the process or period of change from one state or condition to another" (Stevenson, 2013, n.p). From this transition could refer to a number of phenomena in education providing little boundaries of what can, or can not, constitute a transition. Learning, for example, fits within these parameters because it denotes a student moving from one state of knowledge to another. In a similar light, acquisition of skill marks a transition due to the fact that at one moment students are unable to perform the skill and at the next moment they are able to. Given its various usages in the field of educational and sociological research, Colley (2007) suggested that "it is impossible to arrive at a single definition of transition that might gain consensus" (p. 428). In order to generate a suitable definition of transition for this study, it was crucial to unpack the temporal dimensions in which transition (change from one state or condition to another) occurs. This also invoked considerations of the spaces or locations in which transition is situated.

For most educational practitioners, transition is a simple and unproblematic term. Gale and Parker (2012) announced that in the realms of policy, research, and practice, understandings of transition usually draw "on taken-for-granted notions of what constitutes a transition" (p.1). The word transition in education is used most frequently to describe the "*period* between completing compulsory education and entering the world of work" (emphasis added Atkins, 2009, p.10). On the surface, Atkins's description provides an adequate approximation to underpin this research, as the project aimed to investigate the transitional period between the BTEC and Higher Education or employment. Yet, as Stevenson definition suggests, it is not only a period of time that is of importance to transition but also the *process* that brings about change. As postulated by life-as-transition, this process (or these processes) may stretch out across time, and yet these processes may not necessarily be confined to any given timeframe or a set of bounded contexts. Unfortunately, from this perspective the process of transition inevitably extends beyond any

observable period placing transition outside of any possible longitudinal research design[15]. Responding to these issues, Colley (2007) presented the need for research in transition "to be underpinned by a dialectical… theory of time that accounts for both its objective and subjective aspects in a relational way" (p.428). In articulating this, Colley drew attention to two competing theories of time: 'social' and 'natural' times that, when combined, help to define educational transitions.

As alluded to by Atkins' (2009) definition, the colloquial and uncritical view of transition equates to a period of change over a given timeframe. According to Colley (2007) this perspective of transition is underpinned by a theory of 'natural' time in which events unfold in a chronological/linear sequence. Natural time is an objective and observable time rooted in Newtonian physics. Defined as a period of change over time, transition therefore tends to be reductionist by neglecting everything but the movement of students between contexts and/or between developmental stages. To focus on transitions in these terms is useful in illuminating specific and important phenomenon. Doing so, however, tends to reduce transition to tightly bounded timeframes and spaces. Seifried and Wuttke's (2013) template can be included here to reflect how reductionist models of vocational transitions have been built upon the definition of transition as periods of change over time (see figure below).

Transition in this figure is demarcated by a chronology of time and space. The model is designed to explore how students change over time and therefore can be useful to visualise "typical transition paths between school, higher education, work life and recruitment" (*ibid*, p. 11). Still, the model remains subject to many of the criticisms outlined in relation to transition-as-induction and transition-as-development (Gale & Parker, 2012). According to Colley (2007), the problem is that transition, when defined as a period of change over time, provides an impoverished, static, and one-dimensional understanding of transition. Instead, she demonstrated the importance of getting to grips with the 'social' dimensions of time to show how transition can also be viewed as within particular time(s).

Intellectually wrestling with the social dimensions of time have not been limited to the narrow remit of transitional studies. Lingard and Thompson (2017) opened up a discussion for the sociology of education to reimagine and reflect upon 'timespace' to pick up on the "multiplicity and dynamism of time" (p.1). They argued that incorporating a more sophisticated vision of both time and space are essential to how the discipline thinks about the social. 'This social' is not bound to just 'clock time', as they called it. There is a rich tradition of social theory attending to the theme of multiple temporalities and spatialities[16]. In a longitudinal 'Making Futures' project, Mcleod (2017) focused on "young people as they move through the final three years of secondary school and into the world beyond, and it seeks to address temporality in a number of ways" (p.18). In this project McLeod pioneered longitudinal methods to capture the multiple temporal dimensions in which transition unfolds, thereby offering- to offer unique insights into those student experiences embodied and situated within time(s) (*ibid*). For the purpose of this PhD, Colley's (2007) social time will be used hereafter to encompass any theorising that steps beyond the view of transition as only a rubric of nature time. To this effect, a wide range of social theories may be applicable (see footnote 16 for some examples). Attending to social time, held in opposition to natural time, therefore indicates a commitment to

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[16] Some examples might include the following: Bourdieu (1977) outlined the importance of a tempo of action that follows seasonal and daily rhythms that contain social structures and meanings; Giddens (1984) referred to 'abstract time' or 'reversible time', that is, a dimension in which the *longue durée* of human society spans; Hein (2013) developed a concept of 'ontological time' that functions outside of chronological time, "it consists of a past that never took place and a future that can never arrive" (p.1). This, he argued, provides a way to create ruptures in the dominance of chronological time in social analysis and makes linages across multiple time-space dimensions; Jordheim (2014) unpacked how time is 'layered' and that the temporal dynamics of regimes, narratives and technologies often merge and produce an oversimplified discourse of histories.

capture the ways in which students' transitions unfold within, and across, multiple times and spaces.

To account for the social dimensions of time is to define transition as a *process* of change *within* times and spaces. No longer set within a period, transition is located across dimensions of time and space. This requires transition to be understood as a process or amalgamation of processes that, unlike periods, are not necessarily confined to particular timeframes or contexts. This is not to say that attention can no longer be directed towards a clearly observable transition (in this case, transitions out of the BTEC qualification). But as Colley (2007) argued, thinking of transition as processes of change situated within time "enables us to understand transitions beyond the all too often asymmetric rubric of change-over-time" (p.440). Here, transition can only be defined as a process of change within "particular epochs, periods or moments, and mediated by the gendered, racialised and classed practices which engender those times" (p.440). This invites researchers to extend their gaze beyond immediate times and spaces. Attending to processes of change (that cannot be confined to a single period or place) requires theory to respond to transition as a complex nexus rather than a neat sequence. Here transitions do not grow over time out of roots, through stems before flowering and then eventually wilting; instead transitions emerge through a rhizomatic process that spreads out in time and space. Defining transition as a process of change within time and space is therefore based on the assumption that transitions are both multidimensional and fluid phenomena. Approaching transition in this way therefore has scope to make difference, complexity and messiness more visible.

Defining transition as processes of change within times and spaces raises one obvious question. What is it that is changing? Looking at this complex network, interested observers may see a plethora of changes occurring across multiple educational and occupational levels. Some of these transitions have been unpacked within CONTEXT, such as: reforms in educational policies; shifts in political discourses that encompass VE; the rapidly altering landscape of HE, VE, and labour markets; and transformations in performance cultures. Yet to study student transition (rather than educational transitions more broadly) is to be concerned ultimately with how *students* change as they make their way through these networks. And the system of networks is not static but is framed within these fluctuating times and by these wider contexts.

While life-as-transition encourages researchers to unpick these processes and make sense of student transition, it fails to adequately expand on what a student is - and therefore how they may come to change. Students are, as I will argue in the next chapter, their *bodies*. And these bodies are always undergoing a multiplicity of transitions. In this way, my focus will become to understand bodies in transition or - to substitute back in the adopted definition of transition - to understand bodies in processes of change within time. This agenda initiates a reconceptualisation of transition as a corporeal process.
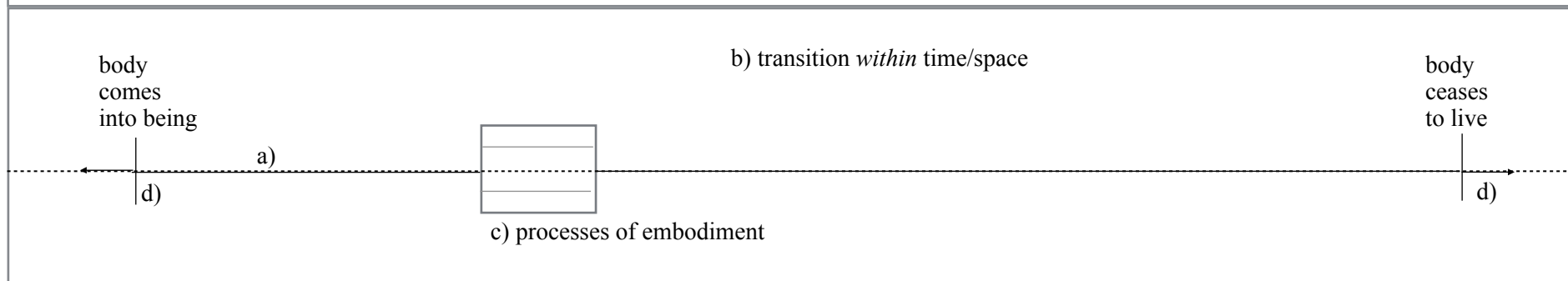
Chapter 6
Bodies-in-Transition

Many commentators (e.g. Worth, 2009; Gale & Parker, 2012; Colley, 2007; Quinn, 2010; Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010) have shown the importance of building on theories of transition that recognise its multidimensional and fluid nature. When the prevailing perception is that student transition has become messier (especially in VE see Chapter 1), these efforts can be considered timely. They promise to respond to this messiness and develop educational policies and practices accordingly. The thrust of evidence implies that it is increasingly less appropriate to recognise and treat transition only as a series of events, or stages, that successful students progress through unproblematically. Rather, in the contemporary context it is more accurate to view student transition as "a perpetual series of fragmented movements involving whole of life fluctuations" (Gale & Parker, 2012, p.1). Adding to this momentum, Chapter 6 further articulates the working theoretical lens of the study - *bodies-in-transition*. In this case, the working theory refers to a theoretical framework that emerged from a 12-month ethnographic case study on BTEC in Sport transitions conducted in 2012-13 (Barker & Aldous, 2014). In effect, this study acted as a pilot for the PhD research. The pilot, like this study, was framed by Shilling's (1999; 2005; 2008; 2012) Corporeal Realism (CR). From this three significant 'processes of embodiment' that mediated student transition were identified.

The theoretical framework discussed within this Chapter framed the initial nature of data collection, interpretations and analysis. The working theory, however, remained open to challenge throughout the research process. As such, the theoretical musings recalled in this Chapter should be read as a historical text that accurately reflects a flexible theoretical framework that shaped my initial research design and methodology (Chapter 7). Outlining the origins of *bodies-in-transition* makes it possible to demonstrate how the ethnographic process prompted theoretical responses from which the working theory was adapted (Chapter 9). My active role in this research process cannot be written out of the thesis. Therefore, the more passive voice that I have adopted thus far will be abandoned. While it would have been a disservice to down play my input within the text, the theoretical developments will be shown to be firmly grounded within the empirical data. Subsequent refinements of this working theory, I contend, contributes something original and important to the field. In a more practical way it allowed for analyses that uncover important findings in relation to the BTEC Performing Arts student transitions.

6.1. *Introducing Bodies-in-Transition*

Introducing and pursuing *bodies-in-transition* reflects my preference for a perspective of transition that is underpinned by "a critical sociology of education… and critical social theory more broadly" (Gale & Parker, 2012, p.2). In a very specific way, beginning to conceptualise transition as a corporeal process reflects my interests in what Williams and Bendelow (1998) termed "embodied sociology" (p.3), the agenda of which is to "put minds back into bodies, bodies back into society and society back into the body" (p.3). While students' 'bodies' are implicitly present in life-as-transition, a conscious shift in attention towards the embodiment of students constitutes a concerted bid to extend this theory of transition. In developing this novel approach, I adopted central features of life-as-transition as an established typology (see 5.2c). For example, I have assumed that students' bodies are always in transition, continually changing *within* and *over* both 'social' and 'natural' time. This led me to take the position that transitions do not occur only during certain events or at particular stages. I also recognised that bodies-in-transition may never be confined to illusionary periods (i.e. School-to-Work, Childhood-to-Adulthood or 16-to-19). As such, students' bodies are engaged in unending and fragmented processes that are neither linear or predictable from life to death. These processes are both multidimensional and fluid, as well as potentially contradictory and iterative (Ecclestone, 2010). Within this working theory, student transitions are therefore an inherently complex phenomenon. Although complexity lies at the heart of this perspective, bodies that are in transition should not necessarily be seen as problematic (i.e. unstable, unknowable, unmanageable, failing or dangerous). By way of contrast, the vicissitudes contained within this complex system should be interpreted as nothing more than a symptom of bodies or of being a body. Moreover, as Csordas neatly put it, "the body should not be understood as a constant admits flux but as an epitome of that flux" (2003, p.2). Figure A below attempts to illustrate these abstractions in order to form the foundation of bodies-in-transition,

Figure A: An illustration of the abstract propositions that underpin bodies-in-transition

b) transition *within* time/space

body comes into being

body ceases to live

a)

d)

d)

c) processes of embodiment

a)   A solid line (from the creation of life to death) represents 'the body' perpetually in transition. This may be thought of in the singular - one body goes through life forever changing both subjectively and objectively. It may also represent cohorts of *bodies* that are connected through some shared features. In day-to-day life the world appears to this body, or these bodies, chronologically. On this plane transition can unfold as sequence of events and experiences that continually lead and blur from one moment to the next. Despite this bodies can not be plotted onto a single point on this line as they are always moving and never static. In this sense bodies-in-transition always occupy liminal spaces.

b)   Transition cannot simply be equated to a period of change over time, as it is chronologically experienced and observed. Bodies-in-transition are tangled to processes of change that stretch out in time and space. Time here is seen to have stratified ontological dimensions (see 5.2d.) in which bodies are, have been and will be located. On a social plane these locations can be categories with reference to the prevailing epoch.

c)   Informed by Shilling's CR three processes of embodiment were identified through the pilot study. These were: (*1*) processes that order (normally practices that narrow students potential trajectories towards particular pathways); (*2*) processes of the experiencing body (where students experiences reshaped how they see the world, their place in it, and the direction they intend to travel); (*3*) situated processes (these were either interactions that occur within localised contexts or interactions within broad educational/political/cultural movements that became important in shaping identities and recalibrating reflexive projects). The three processes of embodiment are expanded on in 6.5.

(3) (1) (2)

d)   Bodies continue to physically change after death and before birth. More importantly unborn and deceased bodies continue to be connected to processes that go beyond themselves. For example, even before a body is conceived it can shape the transitional experiences, choices, and actions of others (most notably the potential parents). Also, when a body dies it may impact a number of other bodies in a range of ways. This points in the direction of the interconnectedness of all bodies-in-transition.

n.b. The intention of this visual representation is only to illuminate the foundational principles of bodies-in-transition as a working theory. How each of these elements (a to e) interact with one another will be fleshed out further.

This illustration rejects a notion that in order to understand student transition researchers need only attend to a selection of demarcated times and spaces, or 'thresholds' as Seifried and Wuttke (2013) suggested. Instead, bodies-in-transition have a past, a present and futures, and these spatiotemporal dimensions need to be accounted for in some way. No*body* can ever be static, trapped in one moment, caught in one place, stuck in one state. Always in motion and always transforming, bodies-in-transition do not belong to thresholds. This also means that they do not have fixed properties or impermeable boundaries. Rather, being *in transition* implies the liminality of the body. While never stationary, bodies find their form between moments, between stages, and between states. They instead define their existence in processes of relative change and continuity. A body can never be the same as in its past, it will never be the same in the future; it is in constant flux. Bodies are always (re)created anew in different times and spaces.

In this ever-changing and volatile landscape, bodies-in-transition draw on their immediate and distant pasts to act in and experience their unfolding present. Meanwhile, the same bodies project a future that may impact upon them imminently. These projections may be thought of as *imaginary trajectories* where bodies anticipate possible futures. The anticipation of taking a sip of water, the anticipation of speaking to somebody, or the anticipation of applying for a degree in the Performing Arts, for example. In summation, during any given moment students imagine, desire and work towards many potential future transitional 'outcomes' through their bodily being. This is a body that is never static. This constant flux is set against the proposition that bodies-in-transition are always situated, experiencing and being ordered (6.5. unpicks these processes further).

The reasoning above is founded on the idea that to be a body is to be in transition. Frank (1991) implied this when pointing out that to be a body is to be a fleshy mass that is "formed in the womb, transfigured through the life course, dies and decomposes" (p.49). Bodies do not make these 'biological transitions' in a vacuum. Rather, in reality they form and inhabit a social world with others - and this too is a vital assumption my thesis is built upon. Intimate symbiotic relationships between a body, other bodies and the social world were also clearly important in Leder's (1990) phenomenological reflections,

> One's body first arises from that of another, is composed of the same stuff as the surrounding world, and lives by ceaseless metabolic exchanges with it. As such, we form one body with the universe we inhabit (Leder, 1990, pp.157-8).

Leder noticed that bodies exchange particles with the outside world relentlessly through a number of mechanisms, such as eating, sweating and breathing. The fluidity of the interaction between flesh and the world make it difficult to assign a fixed identity to bodies even at a nanoscopic level. Therefore, even this biological body, roughly bounded by skin, can only be captured in its *processual* form, across time and space. It was this general line of thought led Blackman (2012) to suggest that "bodies are not considered stable things or entities, but rather are *processes* which extend into and are immersed in worlds" (*emphasis added*, p.1). These processes are not solely physical and material flows or connections. Importantly, when student transition is the subject matter these processes are fundamentally social and symbolic as well.

So while on this basis I may propose that to be a body is to be in transition, I add that to be a body is to be connected to other bodies and the world in very intimate and social ways. It follows that to be a body is to be in multiple transition(s) simultaneously. These might be labelled as biological, social and educational transitions to categories but a few. It was my sociological lens and review of the literature that led me to contend that bodies-in-transition do not only change physically but more importantly socially. At their very core, bodies are shaped by others and vice versa. Of course, proposing that 'to be a body is to be in these transitions' says little about the nature of student transitions in itself. Nonetheless, the body was cited in many (physical, social, & educational) ways to play a significant role in shaping vocational transitions, especially in the Performing Arts. Whilst there was a dearth of research on the body in these settings, there were no studies that focused on both transition and corporeality in such explicit terms. Paving a new way to recognise simply that to be a body is to be in transition seemed a good starting point from which I could explore the role of corporeality in student transition.

I argue that the preliminary statements contained within this section are not merely abstract conjecture but constitutes the basis from which student transitions are formed and experienced. Uncovering the ways in which particular bodies-in-transition become (socially) educated may

go some way to demystify the messiness of student transitions in both its processes and outcomes. In order to make this case and *flesh out* the intricacies of this working theory, it is essential first to propose what I consider 'the body' in a more precise way, and then to outline the specific ways in which I consider bodies to be transformed by society and education, while reshaping both. This will be done by drawing on Shilling's (1999; 2005; 2008; 2012) CR. After this, I will unpack the three processes of embodiment that were central to the ethnographic design, implementation and initial analyses. In doing so, a range of sociological concepts will be sketched, equipping my 'conceptual toolbox' (Wright, 2007) to analyse each of these processes of embodiment. Together, these discussions will provide more substance to bodies-in-transition as the working theory for this study.

6.2. *Conceptualising Bodies: the Embodied Student*

Bodies have been a reappearing theme throughout this thesis. In Chapter 3 bodies emerged as a central focal point to explore an *alternative perspective* to the dominant skills discourse that pervades both vocational and transitional policy in the UK (e.g. Payne, 1999; Ainley, 1993). Bodies were also discussed as important symbolic, physical, economic and cultural resources within the occupational and educational contexts within the Performing Arts (Chapter 4). It was suggested in Chapter 5 that directing empirical and theoretical focus on bodies would have potential to expand and enhance the most sophisticated and promising contemporary typology of transition: life-as-transition (e.g. Colley, 2007; Gale & Parker, 2012). At this juncture (Chapter 6) the term *bodies-in-transition* was introduced, exposing my motivation to directly explore the role of corporeality in student transition. In this introduction the body was vaguely understood not as a physical substance but rather as the amalgamation of ongoing social and biological processes (Blackman, 2008). My rationale for positioning bodies at the centre of the transition process is to better explore the poorly understood messiness of transition in VE (see Chapter 1).

Despite the attention that bodies have received in the various reviews, a concrete definition of the 'body' has been deliberately avoided until now. In part this was because I see value in understanding bodies-in-transition from a wide range of competing perspectives. Mainly, however, it was because throughout the thesis the range of studies cited contained different (implicit and explicit) ontological convictions regarding what the body *is* and what its *relations* are with society. In the context of the Performing Arts, for example, artistic bodies were seen as:

(1) *precarious bodies*, or to "live in the condition of an imperilled livelihood, decimated infrastructure and accelerating precarity" (Butler, 2015, p.10);
(2) *productive bodies*, or to be connected within wider fields of cultural production (e.g. Bourdieu, 1993);
(3) and as *individualised bodies*, or to "stand as examples of the process of individualism" (Nixon & Crewe, p.131).

Each of these brief characterisations assumes the body to be shaped by and act in society through relations. It is not only in the reviewed fields (such as transitional theory, VE, skills discourse & performance cultures) where a cohesive, fixed or tangible description of the body is lacking. Scholars have argued that the body has been, and remains, one of the most elusive and

contested concepts in sociology (e.g. Williams & Bendelow, 1998; Shilling, 2005)[17]. This is not to imply, however, that there were no suitable foundations to build upon. Whilst I found it challenging to pin down what the body is and how it may act as a focal point from which student transition can be explored, a broad notion of *embodiment* provided a stable enough basis to begin theorising on bodies-in-transition. The working theory espoused in this Chapter, therefore, was built upon a general notion that students are not merely a composition of fleshy tissue but "*embodied,* with pasts and futures, habits and beliefs, emotions and identities, hopes and fears [and so on]" (Barker & Bailey, 2015, p.42). Clearly, then, from this perspective an image of the *embodied student* is not one of a biological body stripped of emotion, thought and ties to the world. Bodies-in-transition are not mouldable empty shells or some sort of transforming sinewy vehicle that the student gets in and drives. Simply put, students are not just thinking things but bodies that also move, do, experience and become.

A theory of embodiment makes available important paradigms in a number of academic disciplines, such as anthropology (Csordas, 1988), psychology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and sociology (Shilling, 2005; 2007; Howson & Inglis, 2001). Within and between each academic tradition, embodiment encloses multiple insightful theoretical perspectives (Evans & Davis, 2011) and has not been confined to homogeneous subject matters or disciplines. In sociological terms, embodiment was defined "as the mode by which human beings practically engage with and apprehend the world" (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2006 p.128). Within this definition, embodiment represents the experiences, expressions and actions of people as they participate in educational, social and occupational milieus. Yet the specific method and the conceptual apparatus from which social scientists make sense of embodied individuals and the embodiment of collectives remains highly contested (Shilling, 2007). In acknowledging the lack of agreement regarding how to bridge gaps between minds, bodies and society, embodiment might be best described as general ontology of the body. That is, an ontology anchoring a variety of social theories.

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[17] For example, in sociology the body has been described as "a fleshy organic entity and a natural symbol of society; the primordial basis of our being-in-the-world and the discursive product of disciplinary technologies of power/knowledge; an ongoing structure of lived experience and the foundational basis of rational consciousness; the wellspring of human emotionality and the site of numerous 'cyborg' couplings; a physical vehicle for personhood and identity and the basis from which social institutions, organisations and structures are forged" (Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p.2). Empirical work substantiates each of these conceptualisations of the body and many more.

Accordingly, a theory of embodiment has been influential in a variety of sociological subdisciplines which shed light on the relationships between corporeality and culture. While I see little benefit expanding on this here, scholars have sought to map the role of embodiment within strands of structuralist, post-structuralist, phenomenological and feminist thought (see Shilling, 2005, 2008; 2012; Grosz, 1994; Sheets-Johnstone, 2009). Distinct strands of thought can contest one another occasionally in incompatible ways. Since the corporeal turn in the 1990s, the elusive nature of the body has only intensified when examined by sociologists (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009). The useful but inconsistent ways in which branches of sociology have come to understand and treat the embodied subject reveal "the 'problem' of human embodiment" in social theory (Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p. 9). Despite this, one ontological assertion transcends the diverse strands of thought. Expanding on this assertion can help to paint a picture of the *embodied student*. Properties that by extension can be assigned to bodies-in-transition.

Fundamentally, the notion of embodiment starts with a rejection of Cartesian dualisms (Williams & Bendelow, 1998) and continues to work towards collapsing dualisms between subject and object (Csordas, 1988). As a general ontology, embodiment is uncomfortable with conceptual dualisms preferring instead dualities, pluralities and multiplicities. Whilst noting that this is consistent with the foundations of bodies-in-transition as illustrated in 5.1, these ontological commitments require an imagination that requires researchers to think beyond established binaries in sociology. It was this type of theorising which enabled a number of properties to be assigned to the embodied student.

The first of these characteristics is that the mind and body of the embodied student are not distinct, nor can they be disentangled analytically. As such, this student does not merely exist as a thinking thing, *res cogitans*, that has and controls its physical form, *res extensa.* The embodied student does not put her body to use in various ways throughout her transition. A hierarchy between students' mental capacities to 'think', 'choose' and 'understand' set against their physical abilities to 'act', 'move' and 'feel' cannot be established. Alternatively, students do not

have a body but *are* their bodies[18]. The embodied student thinks as they feel, moves as they understand, and acts as they chose and so on. These are not separate and distinct elements of embodiment. Furthermore they are intimately entangled with collective socio-material process beyond that individuals' skin[19].

In returning to a more sociological concern of the embodied student, Shilling's (2012) conceptualisation of the social body bears fruit for this study of student transition. From a position that is entrenched in the paradigm of embodiment, Shilling conceptualised 'the body' as,

> a socio-natural phenomenon possessed of emergent properties and capacities which over time constitutes an ongoing source of society as well as being a location for the structures and contours of the social environment (*ibid*, pp. 249-250)

This statement, as well as Shilling's wider writings on embodiment (e.g. 2005, 2008, 2012), provided some substance from which to understand 'the body' - that is, the type of body at the centre of bodies-in-transition. His notion of the body avoids thinking of corporeality in terms of an entity as such. Instead, he favours an understanding of the body as a socio-natural phenomenon. In this respect, Shilling offered a view of the body in which it is both a "medium" and "location" for society simultaneously. The flesh as a medium, location and unbounded phenomenon means that bodies are "processes which extend into and are immersed the world" (Blakman, 2012, p.1). At this point of confluence the body truly is in transition. Therefore, by paying sustained attention to students' embodiment equates to a rigorous examination of their transitions. To illustrate these processes of embodiment is to depict the entire student in transition: their mind, their body, their senses, their emotions, their pasts and their futures. Shilling's broad and encompassing view of the body enables a realisation of transition (that is absent within the field, see Chapter 5) because "it is by living in, attending to, and working on our bodies that we become fully embodied beings" (2008, p.2).

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[18] This line paraphrases Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenological reflections regarding what the body is. In one such reflection Merleau-Ponty came to realise that we do not *have* a body but "we *are* our body" (p.239).

[19] Leder's (1990) reflections on the lived body (drawn upon in 6.1. to introduce bodies-in-transition) provided details that made clear the intimacy of these entanglements. So too did Figure A in this section.

The conceptualisation of the body above is one that is able to house various analyses of the embodied student. It constructs a stable enough foundation to explore the body in transition whilst avoiding biological reductionism and inverted Cartesianism representations (Shilling, 2012). In building upon these foundations, the body cannot be understood as a substance (or entity). Instead it must always be recognised as "a multi-dimensional medium" (Shilling, 2012, p.210) or as a meeting point for multiples processes of embodiment. Determinism and an unbounded lightness of the body without external influence have to be rejected here as well because both societies and bodies are possessive of 'emergent properties' (*ibid*). These can create directions anew or change the determined course of transition. Change and continuity over time are built into these embodied arrangements, and therefore so is a notion of transition. It is in these theoretical spaces where the embodied student lives; it is where bodies-in-transition come into life; it is how they remain in the world after the body ceases to materially exist. These are spaces afforded through a Corporeal Realist approach.

6.3. *Corporeal Realsim*

From the outset of this study, Shilling's (1999; 2005; 2008; 2012) Corporeal Realism (CR) represented a best–of-all-worlds approach when navigating the "problem of human embodiment" (William & Bendelow, 1998, p.x) previously outlined. This is because with CR Shilling sought to bring together insights from diverse sociological thought around their "partial complementarities between their conceptions of the embodied self" (2012, p.232). Also, as covered in detail in Chapter 5, there is a strong case for continuing to value, and be cautious of, the strengths and limitations of a range of sociological perspectives in the study of transition. However, Shilling reiterated that the point here is not that general social theories (from structuralism, poststructuralism, interactionism, and structuration) "are compatible, but that they share certain elements in their analysis of the body within their distinctive visions of social life that can be framed within corporeal realism" (*ibid*, p.254). Being able to accommodate these alternative perspectives set me free to analyse transition as a multidimensional and complex (or messy) process (see Chapter 1).

There are three central tenants of CR (Shilling, 2005). The first is that it recognises not only an ontological stratification of bodies and society, but also the relation between them. This does not contradict embodiment's commitment to the rejection of dualisms (e.g. between mind and body or subject and object). It is possible to perceive strata of the body-society nexus (Shilling, 2012) without pulling them so far apart that elements rupture and dualisms establish. The second commitment of CR is that it has to have a temporal dimension to the analysis of the body (Shilling 2005). Like bodies-in-transition (see Figure A), CR understands that bodies are situated in and stretch out across time-space (see 5.2d). The final defining element of Shillings approach to 'body studies' (studying the body in society) is that *criticality* is needed. For this study the critical lens was built upon working towards an environment in which more opportunities exist for bodies-in-transition with fewer constraints. This critical position is further elaborated in 6.4. Through these three epistemological commitments CR helped to moved bodies-in-transition away from life-as-transition and its poststructural bearings - these orientations were critiqued in Chapter 5; e.g there are far more "limits to the plasticity of the body that lots of poststructuralist theory implies" (Wolkowitz, 2009, p.18).

Having pinned my ontological foundations to Shilling's broadly encompassing conceptualisations of the body (see 6.2), the pilot study attempted to explore the ways in which embodied students change and remain unchanged over their BTEC course. In reflecting on this pilot study nine aspects of CR were considered important for this study into transition,

1) It allowed me flexibility to look at multiple processes of embodiment and utilise a range of sociological concepts to do so (see 6.5 for a more detailed outline): a best-of-all-worlds approach.

2) It offered a way to distance my analysis from the theoretical excesses that have characterised the history of transition theory (Chapter 5). This was noted as the field's core problematic.

3) CR spoke to my ontological beliefs as an embodied researcher. I connected with the account that there is something real about the body and its relationship with other bodies and society.

4) It facilitated me in forging connections between my disperse and sometimes inconsistent political stances through encouraging a tightly constructed critical position (6.4) These positions do not have to be fixed within CR and, indeed, through a process of ethnographic reflexivity they may remain in transition. For me this continues to be a journey and my critical positions evolved through the realities of the bodies I encounter (see Chapter 9).

5) The attention to the process of embodiments (that were categories that emerged through the pilot study) subverted a theoretical impasse within the literature. As reflected in Chapter 5, the primacy of structure-agency debate reproduces style and cynical accounts of transition. CR affords a different approach whereby it is the process of embodiment and not the actions of agents or structures that take precedence. Yet even with a different emphasis there remained scope to weigh in on these debates by proxy.

6) It gave me permission to explicitly focus on 'the body' at the centre of student transition. This was a novel approach that can offer an original take on the realities of transition that have previously been unaccounted for.

7) It stimulated an avenue of theorisation that had wider contributions to make. Therefore, the theoretical reflections on this ethnography have been put into conversation with a range of social theory at large. Moreover, the commitment to explore body-society relations may lead to a generation of an important framework that addresses broad issues within the Sociology of Education.

8) CR provided me with the scaffolding from which the three processes of embodiments emerged during the pilot study.

9) Shilling's inclination to pragmatist traditions encouraged me as an ethnographer to approach my data (and data collection) with social theories that are equipped to make sense of that encounter or those events. This made it possible to apply concepts in a relatively superficial manner, returning by default to my critical lenses. A thin approach to drawing on concepts such as docility and creativity, performativity and perception allowed me to illustrate taken for granted aspects of transition in novel ways.

6.4. *Developing my Critical Lens: Towards Social Justice in the Performing Arts*

Shilling (2005; 2008; 2012) was consistently clear that CR should be *critical.* Beyond this, there were limited clues regarding how criticality should frame empirical work. The only directions were based on passing references to his reading of critical realism. Here, Shilling contended that critical realism is concerned ultimately with the valuation of *cognitive truths* "and of uncovering those institutions and conditions that give rise to false beliefs or that undermined the individuals capacity to engage in the process of communication and the pursuit of truth" (2005, p.15). From this, Shilling extended the lines of critical evaluations to the body - in this case the embodied student. This has some potential relevance to a study of vocational transition because it can encourage a juxtaposition of the discourses of transition (as sets of beliefs or contended truths) with the reality of these transitions as experienced by the students themselves (as an alternative truth based in reality). Through this, criticality can emerge through attempts to understand how institutions (e.g. Colleges, Universities and Governments) and conditions (e.g. social backgrounds, gendered stereotypes, economic resources and geographical locations) can shape the organic, or *truthful*, pursuits of individual, embodied students. Essentially, this concerns an examination of the interplay between institutional practices/discourses and individual intentions/ realities.

To me this provides a limited and partial critical lens. This form of criticality is *limited* to work within a paradigm of structure versus agency that has dominated the transitional literature to date (see Chapter 5). It is *partial* mainly because it seeks a valuation of truths in which transition is made not out of 'truths' but rather from and through directions, changes and continuities across time and space. This version of criticality alone therefore cannot provide an entirely rounded basis from which to develop judgements regarding embodied students and their transition prospects. Shilling's (2005) subsequent interpretations of critical realism (that ultimately inspired his formation of CR) might however provide a more useful benchmark from which to evaluate the opportunities and constraints that bodies-in-transition face at both individual and collective levels,

> While it may be difficult to agree on a specific notion of human flourishing, the minimal principles underlying the critical criteria for informing corporeal realism involve the avoidance of harm to the embodied subject (Shilling, 2005, p.15)

A corporeal realist ethics of student transition is therefore concerned with maximising *human flourishing* while minimising risk of harm to the embodied student. Both within the Performing Arts and in society more generally there may be many competing notions of what a flourishing body may look like over the course of their transition. Consequently, I am compelled to set out the initial critical criteria from which transitions will be judged. This first requires a clarification of what is meant by opportunity (a potential for human flourishing) and constraint (a form of a harm to the conditions of the embodied subject) with reference to bodies-in-transition. To do this, the critical criteria and political anchors that bound this study need to be made explicit. Within this study my judgments and commentary were based on how these bodies, and the educational environments in which they were situated, may be moved towards a vision of social justice in the Performing Arts.

Social justice acted as a reference point to discuss the relative opportunities and constraints that Performing Arts BTEC students encountered or could encounter over their transitions. It is the closest position that reflects accurately the social and political underpinnings of bodies-in-transition. The four criteria below make transparent the way in which I approached the analysis and demonstrate where my critical commentary originates. A concern with social justice reflects my deeply embodied utopian vision of wider society and the types of bodies-in-transitions we may hopefully come to see in the future of the Performing Arts. This is a world where:

(1) progress is always defined as a more even distribution of roles within the cultural creative industries;
(2) any(body) will have adequate (and similar) opportunities to flourish in any sub-genre, associated careers and lifestyles within the Performing Arts;
(3) individuals are able to express themselves freely (within limits[20]) and contribute to cultural fields while engaging in the democratic polity[21];
(4) each body is seen to possess talents that can be enhanced and that can contribute to valuable forms of production in the Performing Arts.

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[20] These limits are to be understood such that their corporeal actions and interactions do not directly limit the opportunities of others or infringe upon their transitions, constraining the types of futures they can achieve.

[21] Within a democratic society there must be tolerance for a spectrum of difference. Bodies-in-transition can be located on this spectrum of difference without being seen as necessarily problematic, excluded or failing if they are located towards the extreme poles. I celebrated difference of bodies and difference of transitions as central features of this system.

These four areas provided standards from which to measure and critique the transitional realities for students and education/cultural phenomena. In each of these areas a partial accord with an equality of opportunity can be teased out (see Chapter 3), but so too can a partial alliance with an equality of outcome. For me equality is the common denominator. Justice would require a continual movement toward expanding opportunities for bodies as they go through life, but also more evenly distributed transitional outcomes (see 1.4.). Therefore, like Banks (2017) my concern is with a form of social justice that supports fair and equal distribution of both opportunity and outcome. There should be no uneven barriers to accumulate a fair share of the wealth (cultural, personal and economic) within the CCIs or access to the field. This vision of social justice within the Performing Arts aligns educational/occupational/cultural systems harmonically whereby parity is enjoyed by collectives and individual bodies. As Chapter 8 will show there are many sites (e.g. gender, class, sensuality, expression & skill) where bodies-in-transition are not moving towards this end.

To bring this working theory together, 6.5. will take forward the central pillars of this position. It shall do this by incorporating the diverse strands of ontological, epistemology and political thought into a model: a model that consists of three process of embodiment. The section examines what is meant by each of these processes through brief reflections on the pilot study and by bringing together a range of social theories into a theoretical framework. I took this theoretical framework into the field and used it to frame data collection, analysis and representation (see 7.5. for more details). It was a model that was literally integrated into the abstract assertions of bodies-in-transition (6.1.), both of which remained open throughout the fieldwork.

6.5. *Three processes of embodiment*

During the pilot study three processes of embodiment emerged. When trying to understand how BTEC in Sport students' bodies changed within time it became evident that three different levels could be addressed. For certain phenomena the body was clearly becoming ordered - their bodies were being shaped in various ways. On a different level, each body was seen to be experiencing and perceiving their educational and social environments in very intimate ways. Finally, these bodies were always situated within contextual parameters that position the body within a space or within a prevailing discourse. From findings that related tentatively to these three areas, a multi-dimensional picture of embodiment was sketched out. On a more generic level of reflection, it is across these three planes which bodies-in-transition move. Their motion takes place in natural time (their bodies were born, have grown, will become old and die) and social time (in which the processes of embodiment unfolds, and where collectives of bodies and society are also in 'transition'). There were some further preliminary observations that pertained to these bodies-in-transition.

The processes that order embodiment had a clear role over the transition of these BTEC students. In the reflections from this study I concluded that: student bodies fall into a habit; they become what they do; through this an order emerges that the students' actions and reactions tended to follow. Processes that order are powerful forces that tend to reproduce embodied across times and spaces. These regularities were observed through watching these sporting bodies in practice[22]. The form of power that orders embodiment was not limited only to practices and performances, but also extended through their disciplinary techniques. Together, these processes that order embodiment draw one line that sculpts bodies into something, into somebody. This line was represented as (1) in Figure A.

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[22] Practice, in various sociological texts, has been employed to describe how bodies became 'ordered' in predictable ways. Maller (2007) provided an eloquent description of this process of embodiment: "As performances are repeated over time, bodies are continually shaped by and through practice… these include mental patterns and corresponding bodily developments of muscles, tissues and bones" (p. 72). The thickening of muscle, the tearing of tissue, and the increased speed of reaction were all evident within the BTEC in Sport education context. What is more, the bodily processes that were tied to what the body does was also tied to social meaning that ordered the students' social bodies.

Figure B: A enhanced image of bodies-in-transition, the processes of embodiment, taken from Figure A.
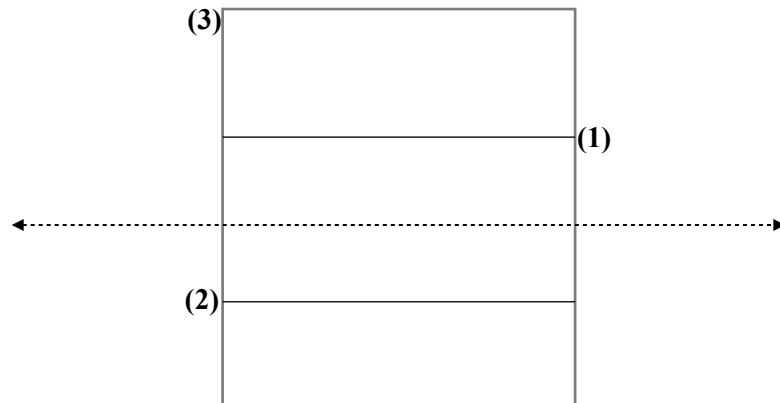
On a different line, there were processes of the experiencing body, as marked by (2) in Figure B. A researcher concerned only with what the body does and how it behaves and responds, is condemned to miss how the body lives. The BTEC students within the pilot study were alive. Their bodies 'possessed emergent capacities' (Shilling, 2012) that respond in creative and unpredictable ways. Even if their behaviours were predicable through observations, through interviews it became clear that each student experienced and intimately perceived the learning environment. Intense experiences of their past and present stayed with their bodies. These students' experiencing bodies also formed imagined trajectories (see 6.1). These consisted of visions and anticipations of their further educational and occupational prospects. These experiential aspects were seen to be the source of the students' 'control' over their bodily destinies. Importantly, this process was not to be conflated with agency, it is not to be held in direct reference to structure. It is to be in service of gaining insight into how students apprehended the world they inhabit (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). It is concerned with how bodies engage with the world through their corporeal senses and physical presences as a body. The processes of the experiencing body still unfold within the same physical and social times than those of the ordering processes, but they are somewhat detached from their direct power and control. Therefore, these processes can come to the explanation of different phenomena that arise when paying attention to bodies-in-transition.

Missing from this picture are the situated processes of embodiment - visually represented as 3) in Figure B. These are the demarcated zones in which these bodies are located in a time and in a space. Some of these situated zones could be on a sports field, on a stage, within a labour market that demands 'employability skills', and at a 'threshold' of an educational system. The body can be situated across many different levels. Not only is this situatedness of the body a position where processes of experiences and of order collide. Each situation contain their own internal dynamics, as well as their own mediating processes - be it, for example, through the shape and size of the physical location or the inertia and speed of change in a discourse or in a system.

From the pilot study I began to develop "a reflexivity about the theories that could be used" (Wright, 2007, p.9) in order to make sense of bodies-in-transition. These were not set in stone. I began to construct an open document of theorists that could have assisted me in coming to terms with a particular dimension of the body, or of transition. A refined version of these records are presented in Table D. In this table, the properties of each individual process of embodiment (as outlined above) is endowed with more substance through linkages with existing conceptual apparatus that have/had scope to illuminate each of these lines.

Table D: A conceptual toolbox to view the three processes of embodiment			
Process of Embodiment	Theorist	Meta-Concept	A Body of Concepts
Processes that Order Embodiment	Butler; Bourdieu; Marx; Foucault	Power	Performativity; Field; Production; Surveillance
Processes of the Experiencing Body	Merleau-Ponty; Leder; Sheets-Johnstone; Rodenburg	Phenomenology of Bodily Sensations	Incorporation; Perception; Absence-Presence; Evolutionary Semantics
Situated Processes	Goffman	Interactions	Front Region; Back Region

Table D offers only some of the conceptual tools that sharpened my analysis. The initial possibilities were far more numerous than could be neatly represented in a schematic. The import of the model outlined in this section could not be understated. My experiences of ethnographic research (in the pilot and in the PhD) have only been made possible through a

growing awareness of how social theory can be effectively utilised to understand the realities I have faced. In 7.1. a full defence is provided of the central role that theory played in this study. Nevertheless to bring this Chapter to a close, I reflect that,

> Without my conceptual toolbox I would not be able to work; it has provided guidance in conceptualising research problems, in framing research questions and in developing an analytical framework to interrogate the data (Wright, 2007, p.10)

Conclusion to THEORY and Second Set of Research Questions

The main benefit of reviewing transitional theory in Chapter 5 was that it assisted in identifying the pitfalls of different theoretical traditions. Against this, the working theory for the study was positioned. Concerted effort was given to adapting reflections from the pilot study conducted in 2012-13 into a substantial theory from which the ethnography was conceived and proceeded. The bodies-in-transition introduced in Chapter 6 consisted of theoretical musing that reflected my positions and thinking before going into the field. Importantly, this working theory remained open though this 'ethnography of the opportunities and constraints of BTEC Performing Arts student' (Chapter 8).

The exercise of reflecting on both the transitional literature and my forming framework helped me to generate a second set of research questions. These additional questions complemented the first set of questions that brought CONTEXT to a conclusion. The development of bodies-in-transition helped to refine methodologically how I could begin to go about approaching those broad areas that were identified previously. The second set of research questions were:

- how do students' transitions become ordered?
- how do students experience transition?
- how might the situatedness of transition mediate transition?

Again, similarly to the first set of questions, these acted as a guide. The emergent nature of the ethnographic design meant that I would generate subsets of questions according to these wider areas of interest and in response to the data collected. It is to a more detailed explanation of this methodological approach and the fieldwork that I now turn.

PART 3　FIELDWORK

Introduction to FIELDWORK

A brief recap of the thesis may help to set the scene where the fieldwork may now take centre stage. By way of introducing this study a clear aim to '*articulate the opportunities and constraints BTEC students encounter in the Performing Arts*' was set out. In an attempt to articulate what different fractions of literature may tell us about this subject, five contextual and theoretical aspects of transition were reviewed critically (Chapters 1-5). Chapter 6 then took forward this mantel in outlaying the working theory that formed the foundational framework from which the research embarked. It was through these undertakings that two sets of research questions were generated. Taken together these two elements provided refined directions for the research project to pursue empirically.

Each of these elements provide important backdrops against which the following methodology and research design was built in Chapter 7. It was however outside the scope of this Chapter to detail considerations for alternative methodologies and designs that potentially may have brought a different cocktail of strengths and limitations to this research terrain. Instead the justification will rely on the forthcoming conversation between the potentials of the attempted ethnographic approaches and the specificities of the research agenda. Chapter 7 will also outline the research design in a way that accurately reflects what was actually *done* over the course of this emergent project. In order to cover the main components, methods and stages of the research sections of this Chapter will necessarily be brief. Chapter 7 also presents a collage of reflections from the field in the form of vignettes and discusses these in relation to the methodological challenges encountered *in-situ*. Excerpts from fieldnotes and reflective diary entries will provide the material for these important deliberations. This will show the labouring qualitative character of multi-sited ethnography that required more considerations and adjustments than can ever be captured by a discussion of general methodological orientations. After this, Chapter 8 will provide analyses and discussion of bodies-in-transition in the context of the Performance Arts. This is a significant Chapter consisting of three Plays and therefore it is introduced in more detail at a later stage.

Chapter 7
Fieldwork Orientations, Designs and Reflections

7.1. *Methodological Overview: Ethnography, Theory and (Corporeal) Realism*

The previous Chapter has already gone some way towards establishing the ontological and epistemological positions for this research. I will not seek to return to these abstractions at length again. The immediate discussion turns towards translating these positions into a methodology and then a concrete research design, both designed to shed light on the research questions while keeping to the spirit of the stated aim of the thesis. To this end I begin by claiming that utilising a combination of ethnographic approaches held the greatest "potential to study the embodied self" (Thomas & Ahmed, 2011, p.8), or in this case to study the *embodied student.* Not only because ethnography has a reputation for offering vast "insights into educational structures, lives and processes" (Pierides, 2010, p.179) but also because the approach had great potential to study bodies-in-transition. To make this second claim two related tensions were carefully navigated. First of all the ethnographic process was aligned with Corporeal Realist commitments. This posed further, secondary, considerations regarding the ways in which my working theory would be incorporated throughout the research process. These very brief discussions outline a refined methodological foundation from which more specific ethnographic modes of enquiry overlay.

All forms of ethnography follow some basic fieldwork principles. Hammersley (2017) recently summarised key features that define ethnographic work within the field of education research. For example, he recognised that the methodology usually consist of a "relatively long-term data collection process" that takes "place in naturally occurring settings" (p.13). The researcher predominantly relies "on participant observation" with an intention to document "what actually goes" while emphasising "the significance of the meanings people give to objects, including them-selves, in the course of their activities" (p.13). It is "holistic in focus" and requires the research to put to use "a range of types of data" (p.13). Similar descriptions can be found in the editorial of *Ethnography and Education* (Troman *et al.,* 2006) and these principles are elaborated further in *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). There is insufficient room, or reason, to provide an extensive review here regarding the generic practices that define ethnographic research. It is important, however, elaborate upon

ethnography's historical, and current, relationship with realism and (social) theory in order to accurately outline the *type* of ethnography undertook in this instance.

The defining features outlined above depart little from earlier publications where Hammersley realised that an important goal of the ethnographer is "to discover and represent faithfully the true nature of social phenomenon" (1992, p.44). This aim has always been essential to ethnography because much of the practice was founded on, sometimes naïve, *realist* doctrines (*ibid*). Realism in this context is "the view that entities exist independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them" (Philip's, 1987, p.205). As such, during the birth of ethnography researchers mostly subscribed to the view that to write about a culture is to accurately reflect the realities of those people (Maanen, 2011). Residue from this history can be traced to a flagship characteristic of ethnographic research, namely that it takes place in the *field* where "people's actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3). To a large extent then ethnographic methods are geared towards getting closer to social phenomena in order to capture and explain these in their own terms. Yet, in the social sciences a wide range of variations provide less positivist epistemologies while accepting realist ontologies: these include, critical realism (e.g. Archer *et al.,* 1998; Bhaskar, 1989), corporeal realism (Shilling, 2005, 2008, 2012) and subtle realism (Hammersley, 1992).

Like many ethnographers, I remained intent on generating authentic representations of these social worlds yet I recognised that "the idea that ethnographic accounts can represent social reality in a relatively straightforward way… has widely been rejected" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.30). This does not mean that my desires "to paint a picture of the world more accurately… [or to] provide a glimpse of the kind of underscaffolding that might make for the possibility of a better three-dimensional picture" (Willis, 2004, p.170) were completely abandoned. Instead my Corporeal Realist Framework (6.3) was aligned with more *subtle* forms of realism that have largely been adopted in ethnography[23] (Hammersley, 1992). Therefore, the

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[23] CR on one level retains an ontological commitment to realism while excepting a form of epistemological interpretivism. The epistemological position of Shilling's framework maintains that insights can be generated from applying existing theoretical approaches but refuses to accept their theoretical imperialism. This means that, in reality, bodies-in-transitions may be partially understood in terms of selected interpretations of observable phenomena. Importantly for this research Spencer's (2015) concluded that CR allows social scientists to examine human subjectivity and embodiment in general, but also investigate the realities of "socially located, socially related, and interacting bodies"(P.11).

specific ethnographic methods of data collection, analysis and writing associated with "subtle realism" (*ibid*, 1992, p.52), acted as points of reference.

Approaching fieldwork within both of these traditions therefore created a space where I could recognise that my accounts were "selective constructions without abandoning the idea that they may represent phenomena independent of themselves" (*ibid*, p. 5). In this space I was free to explore the processes of embodiment (that were identified within the pilot study) and develop critical positions in relation to the ways in which the students are enabled and constrained through these processes (see Chapter 6). Although I approached this with systematic rigour, I avoid naïvely claiming that the final text represents a complete reflection of students' transition in their own terms. Findings were inevitably partial and mediated.

Intentions to show particular processes of embodiment and dimensions of transition meant that findings were partial on the basis that the accounts consisted of "selective representations" (Hammersley, 1992, p. 54). Even these selective representations were mediated on at least two accounts. First of all, LeCompte (1987) recognised that educational fieldwork is always mediated through the researchers "personal human history and experience" (p.44). This may be thought of as the "bias of biographies" (*ibid*, p.52). I attempted to account for these biases throughout the research process (see 7.4). Secondly, as I have already shown in Chapter 5, analyses of transitions are also mediated through the theoretical and political orientations of researchers (Ecclestone *et al.,* 2010). I was no exception to this.

Indeed it may have already struck the reader that I have strongly framed this ethnography in relation to a working theory that was developed through an ethnographic case study conducted in 2013. This may raise concerns that I fell into the same trap as those critiqued in Chapter 5 and presented the *'reality of transition'* in a way that confirmed *my* experiences and presumptions. In addition to this the reader may believe that going into the field equipped with pre-formed 'theory' is at odds with ethnography. A critic may go further and argue that the approach I followed was reductionist and may have blinded me to the nature of what I witnessed. Consequently, they may express their worry that an 'over reliance' on social theory may have detracted from the actual experiences of the students that support my academic argument.

Although I anticipated some of these potential conflicts could arise, there were just reasons to incorporate theory into the heart of my research and methods were built in to reduce the above risks.

To justify the role of my working theory throughout this study I refer to two lines of defence. Firstly, it has been argued that it is a common myth "that ethnography is - or should be - a-theoretical" (LeCompte, 2002, p.286). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) suggested that the infiltration of grounded theory methodologies within ethnography has propagated this myth. Atkinson (2015) continued this critique arguing that "a recurrent emphasis in some quarters on so-called grounded theory has proved limiting" (p.55). The idea that ethnographers could ever engage in participation-observation empty of theoretical preconceptions is misleading - the fact in a more generic sense "it is impossible to do research without theory" (Wright, 2007, p.8). But even if it were possible "there has never been a plausible suggestion that ethnographic research should be thought of as a purely inductive undertaking" (Atkinson, 2015, p.57). Writing on this necessity, Sikes (2006) argued that social theory has an essential role in making "the familiar strange and strange familiar, [and] to challenge the taken-for-granted" (p.45). The second line of defence was to clarify the role of my working theory and draw attention to the checks put in place that protect bodies-in-transition from becoming detached from empirical scrutiny. Bodies-in-transition was not applied and tested in a purely deductive sense, it was held in conversation with data over the duration of the fieldwork and writing. Therefore, the working theory remained open and flexible throughout.

This iterative process was made available by CR refusal to accept theoretical imperialisms (Shilling, 2012). So rather than being applied in static sense conceptual apparatus were (re)integrated from a variety of sources to assist my analysis. In the name of transparency I acknowledge that my "conceptual baggage" (Nisbet, 2005, p.37) long preceded the pilot study and continue to be reformed over the course of this research. Reflecting on the process, there have been ongoing reciprocal relationships between my fieldwork, engagement with the world (including continued reading), and my theoretical understandings of transition. To make certain that participants' experiences occupied the foreground, I actively took steps to counterbalance some of the risks associated with 'over theorising'. Mainly this was done by routinely engaging

in a 'reflexive journal' (see 7.4), and basing my findings on the 'deep writing' that had amassed (see 7.5a.). But also to incorporate *my* voice, or my critical narration, to the crafting of texts. This was a concerted effort to make transparent my lines of thinking and range of interpretations of the 'events'.

Instead of problematising my working theory as interfering with desires to represent student transitions in their own terms I came to value it for enabling me to "challenge taken-for-granted assumptions" (Hammersley, 1990, p.600) while presenting transition in novel and insightful ways, that remained true of the transitional experiences of students. Moreover, without having a theory of bodies-in-transition, and applying it as outlined above, I would not have necessarily considered taking into account the multiple spatiotemporal dimensions of transition, for example. Nor would I have seen the need to devise novel ways to explore the role multiple senses have in student transition[24]. It is to these issues I now turn.

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24 Without bodies-in-transition guiding the analysis the entirety of the ethnographic findings presented in Chapter 8 would have been structured in a different way and focused on other phenomena.

7.2. *Multi-Sited Ethnography*

The were some very specific demands when researching BTEC bodies-in-transitions. This section demonstrates how a 'multi-sited' ethnographic approach address some of these demands. After explaining what multi-sited ethnography is, and how it was drawn upon, a few methodological challenges associated with this approach will be reflected upon. To reiterate, this approach follows in the footsteps of the broad ethnographic orientations outlined previously. Indeed the pursuit of multi-sited ethnography is not entirely new and it does not require a radical reorientation towards fieldwork. Rather, Marcus (1999) described the methodology as a logical extension when studying people that are increasingly in motion and where cultural spaces have become fragmented. LeCompte (2002) added to this by suggesting that the conventional meaning of 'the site' is gone. The location alone can no longer serve as the 'case study' (*ibid*). In what has been described as late modernity, meanings and bodies can move and change so rapidly and fluidly between physical and digital settings that to understand the case of transition researchers have to be prepared to become more mobile. The wider social and cultural trends in which bodies-in-transition have been situated in CONTEXT and THEORY reflect these increasingly mobile and fluid sites.

It was possible to cast a wider net over these sites because multi-sited ethnography redefines the traditional 'field', eroding its boundaries, in order to seek the ways in which cultural processes are interconnected between different physical and temporal locations. Whilst it is acknowledged that transitions do not occur in bounded times or locations (5.2), in the wake of Chapter 2, three formal settings were contextualised to give a core focus to the phenomenon of 'BTEC transitions'. Broadly defined these were the BTEC, HE, and Employment. Many informal spaces and *other* important contexts may lie beyond these locations but to retain a manageable focus these three locales provided the nuclei for this study. In practice this was effectively multiplied by two as fieldwork was carried out in both Performing Arts and Sport (see 7.5. for a more detailed breakdown). This was never meant as a comparative study *per se* and for the purpose of this thesis the Sporting contexts do not feature, more explanations for this decision are provided in 7.5.

Practically it proved too difficult to access the volume of potential locations listed above. Some decisions had to be made. A selection of carefully identified sites provided as broad a coverage as pragmatically possible (7.5. for more details). Those locations in which fieldwork was conducted and that feature in the thesis are: Journeys College and City University. It was also deemed as potentially ethically problematic to accompany some of the students in their places of work or in locations outside of the educational setting; such as social locations, dwellings and family environments. I attempted to partially *access* these sites through a range of interview techniques instead. For example, life history interviews were incorporated into the research design. This method attempted to draw out some information and experiences from these other times and spaces through some semi-structured activities. These included, drawing a timeline of formative experiences and projecting into their futures (see Play 2 Act 3 Scene 2 for an illustration of a timeline) and probing students to elaborate in detail on these experiences (see Goodson & Sikes, 2009; Atkinson, 1998).

There were other challenges associated with this approach that were pertinent to this methodology. The perceived anxiety with multi-sited ethnography is spreading yourself too thin (Marcus, 1995). Ethnographic practice has been built upon a notion of immersion; to involve oneself deeply and meaningfully in the culture of the field. This inevitably requires time, to build up rapport and become used to the local customs and practices. In other words, the ethnographer cannot become an insider overnight. To consolidate my efforts in one location was not an option because the subject matter for this study travelled across multiple sites almost by definition. To make sense of these bodies 'on the move' the immersion into a defined singular location had to be sacrificed. In its place, immersion for the study meant for me to attend to the (transitional) processes that "are entangled across multiple sites of knowledge production that remain partial and emergent" (Pierides, 2010, p.188). And it was with this commitment to immersion that I approach the fieldwork. Through following the empirical thread of social and cultural phenomena that interacted with bodies-in-transition, sensory dimensions of the multiple sites became intriguing. Therefore a multi-sensory ethnographic orientation was also required.

7.3. *Multi-Sensory Ethnography*

'Going Dark'. 22nd October 2014: The educational environments that I have become used to tend to be flooded with artificial lighting. When in the field (across the multiple sites) where these Performing Arts students were being educated, I frequently found myself plunged into darkness, or into an estrange assortment of colours. Architecturally speaking, the main rooms had no natural lighting. Other rooms that were used had thick blackout material that could be drawn to stop light from entering through the windows. Someone would always shout "going dark", as is the custom, before the house lights were switched off. It would become so black that even faint silhouettes would disappear - our eyes would be rendered useless.

While this is normal and expected practice for the students, it was strange and unfamiliar ethnographic territory to me. How do I collect data? More fundamentally what does data consist of? I can't see what is going on. I cannot be sure who is talking, and who they are talking to; my senses are impaired; my window into the field diminished; my fieldnotes unconfident. But just because I can't see what is going on doesn't mean their is nothing noteworthy happening.

Darkness certainly raises difficulties for traditional emphasises implicit within the term ethnographic *observation*. In these scenarios the visual environment was manipulated to literally show the social scene in a different light. There would often be dark spaces for students to retreat to, outside of my visual awareness. But also lighting could act as a frame, providing a centre for my attention to naturally fall. More than this, 'moods' or 'atmospheres' (as the students in City University described it) were created. These were central to the learning experiences and social dynamics that unfolded in that space. This should also be taken seriously in my methodological reflections. As a response to lighting conditions my awareness to 'soundscapes' and other senses were enhanced.

The movement of a curtain, the tone of a voice, the positioning of an object, and the feeling of the cold all became meaningful sensory dimensions that added to the landscape of experience. A multi-levelled landscape that I was becoming more familiar with over time. I took these awarenesses, that do not rely exclusively on sight, into other settings where the artificial lights shone bright. In fact on occasions, I have recently found myself closing my eyes to help me see.

This reflexive diary entry highlights the importance of multi-sensory awarenesses in this research project. Indeed Stoller (1997) had emphasised that ethnographers need to be sensually immersed in their settings. In describing the need for a multi-sensory ethnographic turn Stoller argued that comprehension of the social "demands the presence, not the absence, of the ethnographer… It demands… that ethnographers open themselves to others and absorb their worlds. Such is the meaning of embodiment. For ethnographers embodiment is … the

realization that … we too are consumed by the sensual world, that ethnographic things capture us through our bodies" (1997, p. 23). 'Going Dark' provides one of many critical reflections from the field in which my embodiment is explored to understand the world of that these bodies-in-transition are educated.

Developing these methodological sensitivities were of particular importance in this study for two reasons. Firstly, because the *embodied student's* window into the world is through its multiple senses, and therefore to capture the entire body in transition required me, also an embodied subject, to not rely exclusively on visual and language based data. The second was that, according to Pink (2015), traditional methods of ethnographic observations have assumed the importance of light and from this darkness has been "sidelined in the quest for a bright space" (p.96). However, much of the Performing Arts spaces relied heavily on darkness, blackouts, spotlighting and evoking other senses as part of their praxis. A responsive ethnographer should therefore realise in this environment that the prioritisation of the visual may neglect "the aesthetics and atmospherics of darkness and shadow… [and] the possibilities for looking at the world otherwise and apprehending it through other senses" (*ibid*, p.96).

Trying to redress this balance was important because "not all the senses have been represented with equal care and attention in the field of ethnography in general" (Sparkes, 2009, p.24). I attempted to pay attention to the soundscapes, tastescapes, smellscapes and touchscapes, as far as was possible and relevant. This was methodologically challenging but rewarding. Like Sparkes (2009), I found that through these engagements I was able to begin to illustrate how bodies connect to the environment in an intimate way. In addition, this practice enabled me to better understand how these bodies were tethered to times and spaces beyond that context and can be transported to between them in an instance (e.g. through imagination).

The awareness of multiple senses outlined above were pivotal to begin to exercise 'deep writing' (see 7.5a for the role this praxis played in the development of text). This means that an ethnographer must first be prepared to engage in a deep listening (*ibid*). A 'deep listening' is needed to re-think "the meaning, nature and significance of our social experience; our relation to community; our relational experiences, how we relate to others, ourselves and the spaces and

places we inhabit; and our relationship to power" (p.25). A deep listening, that involves listening to the senses was challenging because it relies on the ethnographers' body to be acutely attuned to the sensations that fill that space. And these are probably different for many of the bodies present. To navigate through many of these difficulties Pink (2015) argued that "reflexivity is central to sensory ethnography practice" (p.12). Specifically the reflexivity of the sensory ethnographer should aspire to is twofold. He "seeks to understand other people's ways of being in the world" while simultaneously being "aware that her or his involvement is part of the process" (*ibid*, p. 143). In the next section I will unpick some of these reflexive endeavours.

7.4. Reflexive Ethnography

"You look like an Ivory Tower Student". 2nd of October 2014: Having mulled over the previous day's fieldwork I awoke this morning with a subtly revised approach to fieldwork. Dark colours and chequered shirts seemed to be a very common clothing choice for the students I met yesterday. So, opening up my wardrobe I gravitated towards a black/white checkered shirt - one that I seldom wear. Today I will make strides towards becoming an insider I thought as I buttoned up my shirt.

I feel comfortable yet different as I jump onto the early morning train, coffee in hand. On one level I think that my appearance is *authentic*; these are *my* clothes, they fit *my* body, they have *my* smell. The shirt even has a signature coffee stain, as so many of my possessions do. Equally, however, I am anxious that this choice of clothing may be nothing more than an attempt to camouflage my researcher identity. I record these ethical tensions in my diary: 'is presenting myself in this way merely a fabrication to *exploit* rich data? is this soft method of misleading participants moving towards a *covert and unethical* operation? The unease had not evaporated as I stepped off the train to make my way to 'the hut' where I am to meet a new group of Performing Arts students.

I arrive early and wait outside. I strike up casual conversation with a student (who coincidently also came on the same train) and 'the technician' George (who is having a quick smoke before the students arrive). After a while, around six animated young adults turn into the street - they are laughing, nudging each other, and talking loudly. So buoyant are the bunch that George commented jokingly "they look like some young eager Performing Arts students!". The moment the group get into range the girl in the centre of the group, Gabby, asks if they are allowed in yet - "not yet there is a class going on at the moment" replies George. Acknowledging this, the group stop in the road and continue their animated conversations. We go back to ours.

Unexpectedly, a large male student calls out to me directly "what course are you doing?". My unease returned as I explain clearly "I am actually a researcher…" providing the crowd with an exhaustive explanation of my presence here and other important information. Instantly I became the centre of everyone's attention. I am aware however that, for now at least, there is little interest in the nature of the research and their possible roles within it. Instead students are looking at me analysing what they see. Responding to me introducing myself as 'a researcher' the large male said, "Ahh, I thought as much when I saw you. You look too posh to be a student here". In agreement another girl added "Yeah I was thinking that you look like an Ivory Tower Student[25]". I notice a few nods of agreement.

My body appeared too posh, it stood out in this encounter. I was mistaken as a student before conversation but it was later revealed that my body did not fit into *this* University or with *these*

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[25] Ivory Tower is a prestigious Russel Group University within the same city.

bodies. I was marked with signs that gave away my class and education. These markers were perceivable even when I had ignorantly taken steps to present a version of myself that would make me appear more of an insider. Whilst 'Going Dark' presented challenges for traditional conceptions of ethnographic observation, 'You look like an Ivory Tower Student' revealed challenges for ethnographic participation in this setting. Having only had a little exposure to this field I got it wrong - I looked out of place. The wariness of the students to my appearance reflected a barrier to becoming an insider within that community. One that was never overcome. It was not a question of fitting in *per se* but a question of being able to position myself at the heart of the action. Positioning myself physically, of course, but also positioning my body in ways that do not alter the behaviour of the participants too much, and consequently, to distort the findings. Moments like this however revealed that much of the communications I had with these students were framed through my outsider position. This is ordinarily the case in educational ethnography because researchers are rarely enrolled or personally invested in that educational programme. As a consequence they are usually considered as outsiders from the student perspective. Inevitably this impacts upon the type and depth of data that educational ethnography can yield. Being an outsider did however have its advantages because students would not speak to me as if I understood taken-for-granted aspects of that environment, they would often explain things to me in simple terms.

Over the course of the fieldwork I attempted to understand the implications of emerging themes such as these in my reflexive diary. This diary consisted of private notes where unrefined thoughts and contradictions could be aired without fear of academic scrutiny. Selected entries do feature in this thesis, but in a more polished form. These reflexive spaces served a number of methodological purposes, including[26]:

- forging and sustaining suitable field relations;
- managing bias;
- acting as a site where issues around data interpretation, analysis, and representation could be considered (instrumental in the deep writing practice elaborated on in 7.5a).

Forging, maintaining, and managing field relations is a complex social process where researchers have to navigate the particular landscapes of *their* social context (Hammersley &

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[26] Examples of each of these strands cannot be provided in this section due to word limitations. Short excerpts will be given to make explicit some of these methodological considerations from the field.

Atkinson, 2007). It is a component of research that methodological textbooks cannot fully prepare you for. To be effective *in-situ* requires a level of reflexivity and an ability to shape your research practices in response to the situations that the ethnography finds themselves (*ibid*). In my attempt to foster appropriate and productive field relations a number of issues emerged across the multiple sites. The reflexive diary entry below demonstrates one of these challenges. This challenge was related to the methods from which I took my fieldnotes.

Writing Fieldnotes on my Phone: 12th of November 2014. I am finding that apart from a series of brief moments I am more often than not watching interactions from a distance. I can study them from afar but rarely am privileged to be insider in conversations - people tend to be explaining to me what is going on rather than me being part of the participation. The main exceptions so far have been brief encounters that happen before or outside of lessons - or importantly if I am joining in with a group on a task. But for the main my time is spent observing and writing. And while I am doing this there are little opportunities to talk to the participants, they keep their distance. There has been some improvements this week since I have exclusively made my records on my Iphone©.

The students are noticeably less intimidated by the sight of me on my phone than writing in a book. A more fundamental hurdle however remains my 'standoffishness'. This is far from a lack of social confidence though, it is mostly due to not wanting to interfere with the session that the students are engaged in and that the lecturer has planned. The majority of their activities are being assessed, or are mock-rehearsals for an assessment. And because I am not actually a student I feel that it would be ethically problematic for me to participate in some of these collaborations. It is possible that my presence may affect the group dynamics and inadvertently impact upon their grades. So in these cases observing from a distance remains my only option. With these contrasting agendas I need to keep finding a medium from which I put myself forward for pockets of participation but in the whole remain the observer. I am trying many different methods to ensure that I do not become merely a passive observer but in this context. On this occasion, putting away my pen and paper and moving around with my mobile phone has being useful.

From this point on, the iPhone© became an instrumental piece of equipment for recording fieldnotes (including photographs and sound recordings). This did not mean however that my body was less of an instrument of ethnographic practice. This is in line with Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) who noted that in ethnography the researcher "is the research instrument par excellence" (p.17). LeCompte (1987) acknowledged that bias comes with being a body and having a history. In this project that there was a particular area in which I was cautious of. I

graduated from a BTEC in Sport in 2008. On one level this might have given me some insight into the transitions of BTEC students. But on another it also exposed me to inadvertently viewing these students' transitions through my own experiences. In attempting to manage this bias I frequently wrote about my own transitional experiences in my reflexive diary. My aim in these entries was to distance my experiences from those of the students I was observing.

7.5. *Research Design*

The methodological orientations changed little throughout the research process, providing some needed stability. The research design on the other hand was intentionally emergent (as is inherently the normal case with ethnography). From the outset there was a flexible design. The maximum potential longitudinal frame was set from the beginning so that the thesis could be completed within the four year timeframe allowed. The full period of data collection accounted for over 18 months. Yet by strategically targeting cohorts of students the equivalent of 30 months of a 'linear' transition from BTEC to HE was captured. For pragmatic and ethical reasons I was unable to incorporate BTEC to employment progressions into the initial design. Moreover, no opportunities were presented to follow students into their employment over the course of the study. Apart from this element of transition, the preliminary design was carefully developed to ensure that the research questions could be explored.

There were many ways in which the original vision for the project subtly evolved over the four years, from its inception to data collection and to submission. The emergent design was mostly directed in response to the data collected. The most radical element of this emergent design resulted in the eradication of an entire subject, Sport, from the final thesis. When writing complete drafts of the findings Chapter it became apparent that depth was being sacrificed in the service of breadth. Given the emergent nature of this ethnography 7.5. is therefore limited to outlining what was done and when. The intention of this section is to render down the complexity of the emergent design to outline concisely and briefly the methods this ethnography drew upon. The many decisions throughout the process that reshaped the research design in a number of ways have been rendered. Crudely speaking there were two distinct phases of data collection between September 2014 to April 2016.

April 2014: Ethical Approval

Phase one of the ethnography was approved by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee at the University of East Anglia.

Purposive sampling of prospective institutions took place before the fieldwork could commence. There were four main criteria that guided the selection of City University and Journeys College as the two educational sites for this ethnography. The first step was to filter eligible educational institutions across the United Kingdom. To be eligible the FE institution had to be running a BTEC in Performing Arts course; the HE establishment had to deliver a degree in the Performing Arts where a sizeable percentage of their intake comes from former BTEC students. From this long list of institutions the second stage was to narrow institutions via their profile. For the purpose of this study I was interesting in HE institutions in Urban locations. Also it was considered beneficiary if the University was not a Russel Group or a Red Brick University because it was assumed that more eligible students would attend these Universities (see Chapter 2 & 4). Then the pragmatics of a multi-sited ethnography were taken into consideration. The four institutions (including the two sporting sites) had to be geographically close, so that I could travel between them during the week. Finally, having contacted a number of potential gatekeepers across the UK I met with those that were willing to participate in the study. We discussed the research at length and their involvement in the project. After which I considered the totality of the four criteria above and the selection was made. Below is some background information on the two institutions that provided the base for the fieldwork.

Journeys views, and advertises, itself as a specialist sixth form College with systems in place that are designed to enhance students' opportunities to progress to either University or Employment. The explicit emphasis of the College was on student transition (or progression more specifically). This meant that the gatekeeper was especially attuned to the potential value of this research and consented to allow me access. The College ran BTEC in the Performing Arts but not the Extended Diploma. Instead they offered a level two qualification (made up of 12 units). Therefore the four students in this course were also required to enrol on an A-level alongside in order to be accepted as a full-time student.

City University is a former polytechnic and it is located in the same city as a Russell Group University (Ivory Tower). It is also a specialist institution for the Arts, it has it own purpose built performance studio and a public theatre on campus. Not all of the students who were

enrolled on the Performing Arts programme at City University (n = 62) had previously completed a BTEC in Performing Arts. For some optional modules students from Drama and English pathways accompanied the Performing Arts students. I spent most of my time observing one of the three cohorts. In this group, ten out of usually twenty, had previously completed a BTEC qualification, these included: BTEC in Performing Arts (n = 6); BTEC in Musical Theatre (n = 2); BTEC in Dance (n = 1); BTEC in Art and Design (n = 1). Of those ten students who had completed a BTEC qualification seven were now on the Performing Arts BA(Hons) programme (1 did not declare their status).

September 2014 to February 2015: Phase One

I began fieldwork on the first day of the new semester at City University. Having reviewed transitional theory (Chapter 5) I was aware of the importance of these first few weeks for new students. In total I spent four months with Performing Arts BA(Hons) students at City University (September to December 2014). On average, I spent between one and two days a week shadowing the students'. The Performing Arts students were spread across three different cohorts and not all of these students had completed a BTEC qualification. After meeting all of the Performing Arts students, who were spread across three mixed cohorts, the majority (but not the entirety) of my ethnographic participation was with one group in particular. This was a strategic decision because the group had the highest percentage of former BTEC students and was therefore most relevant for my study.

The intention with the BTEC students was to observe them towards the end of their course and track them beyond that environment in their next steps. Therefore I spent two months with second year Performing Arts BTEC students at Journeys College (December 2014 to January 2015). These students were coming towards the end of their two year course. There were only four students in this cohort so I was able to become familiar with each of the students and the learning environment in a relatively short period. In total over 100 hours were spent collecting data from these sites in phase one (inclusive of the Sports courses that are not included here).

<u>April 2015: Sampling Individuals</u>

In order to show how individual bodies experienced their transitions and to capture their life histories it was important to bring some individuals to the fore. At this juncture therefore I decided to invite a limited number of students to participate in two interviews[27]. These students were selected again through a purposive sampling method. First, I highlighted all of the eligible students. In City University these were all of the students that had progressed from a BTEC in Performing Arts and were enrolled on the BA(Hons) in Performing Arts. Then from this pool I narrowed the potential candidates by trying to achieve a sample that was gender balanced. Furthermore, I prioritised potential candidates that featured heavily in the data collected in phase one. The intention was also to reflect the national average and for half of FE sample half to be participants who were now in full-time employment. Yet this proved much more difficult to achieve in practical terms than anticipated. For example, three of the four students at Journeys moved away and I lost contact with them. The final criteria was a subjective judgement regarding how willing the student would be to participate further in the study for the twelve months. The students were then sent an email with the information sheets and consent forms.

After this sampling process I invited twelve students to participate in phase two of the ethnography (three from each of the four sites). This number was more than was required because attrition was expected due to the anticipation that contact with these students would need to be maintained over twelve months. This was considered a suitable sample size for this phase of the study. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) argued that lower than double figures "offers an opportunity to learn a lot about the individual, his or her response to a specific situation, and consider connections between different aspects of the person's account" (p. 9). Once attrition was taken into account the final number was eight. For the Performing Arts this number was three. The three male Performing Arts students that I approached initially agreed to participate yet did not continue in the study. Therefore, the final sample consisted of three female students only. In addition to this I thought that it would be revealing to formally interview key members

[27] More details of the nature of these interviews are provided in the following subsection. Moreover at this point I was considering the possibility of conducting interviews but I only had ethical approval to keep in contact with (12) students via email. In December 2015 phase two of the ethnography was approved by the School of Education and Life Long Learning Research Ethics Committee at the University of East Anglia.

of staff to get a better understanding of their perceptions of these student transitions. I arranged an interview with the two programme leaders. For more details on these participants see Appendix d.

April to September 2015: Keeping in contact with students-in-focus

During this period I kept in contact with the 12 students-in-focus via email. The aim of these correspondence was to establish and manage rapport while asking the student to keep me updated with their transitional experiences. The students were not obliged to respond to my emails however on average we exchanged emails approximately once a month over this period.

December 2015 to April 2016: Phase Two.

This phase consisted of two interviews with the students-in-focus. One life history interview and one interview that focused on some of their experiences of their current educational environment. Drawing on Reissman's (1993) methods the life history was semi-structured. In the interview I employed a range of question techniques to allow vivid experiential accounts to be told in narrative form. This included the participant constructing a timeline that connected their past, to their present and into their imagined futures. This timeline then acted as a reference point from which I could probe their transitional stories and encourage the students to recall their experiences in depth. The second interview was also semi-structured. These interviews were individually tailored to the participant, consideration was given to:

- the themes that emerged from their life history
- the email correspondence and informal conversations I had had with that participant
- the themes that had emerged from phase one

The intention was to encourage the student to describe how they experience the current educational setting in which they are situated. Related to this the questions were designed to prompt the student to consider how their participation in these learning environments was shaping and reshaping their transitions. For the generic interview schedules including those with the members of staff see Appendix d. All the interviews were approximately an hour long, were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

7.5a. Methods of data collection, analysis and representation

With a methodology already framed, and the basic research design outlined, this section consists of very brief descriptions of the methods used. Roughly these will be covered in terms of data collection, analysis, and modes of representation. In reality, these three elements could not represent independent or distinct stages that were completed in turn from the moment I entered the multiple fields to the time when the thesis was submitted. Nevertheless, the following approximations provide an accurate outline of the ethnographic labour that was invested in the production of the final submission. This was labour devoted to the craft of ethnography writing (Emerson *et al.,* 2011).

Stage 1: Recording Events and Interactions.

In the field I always carried on my person the following recording tools, in my bag:

- An assortment of pencils and pens (various colours)
- An A5 booklet with no lines so that I could draw and write on it in an unstructured manner.
- An A4 booklet with lines that I used for my reflexive diary entries.
- An Ipad© and Iphone© with Evernote© software installed. I could create electronic fieldnotes on these devices. Using Evernote as a platform pictures, video/audio recordings and text could be stored with ease.
- A Dictaphone as a secondary method of recording sound. Recording on this was quicker and more discrete to set up during a conversation.

Ordinarily while in the heat of the field I would make bullet points in real time on either my phone or on paper. More so on my phone as this was perceived as less threatening to the students and consequently they appeared more at ease with this method. These bullet points may have recorded a sentence *verbatim* or series of events. As soon as there was a lull in the action I would elaborate on these points. While the memory was still vivid I would endeavour to add the exact details I could recall. I acknowledge in this process there is scope for a small amount of miss recording to occur. But in cases where I was not sure on the accuracy of a phrase I omitted it from the note. On other occasions, however, normally during an 'conversation of particular interest', I would ask the participant if they would mind if I could switch on my dictaphone so that the exact conversation could be recalled with total accuracy. Here I acknowledge that this may have affected the *natural* course of the conversation - if there is such a thing.

Stage 2: Deep Writing.

For Sparkes (2009) 'deep writing' supersedes the ethnographic standard of 'thick description' because of its emphasis on the sensory dimensions of the field (8.1b expands on this). Thick description has traditionally been the staple enterprise of ethnography. Geertz's (1993) showed how thin descriptions merely recalls what was done, and what was said. Whereas thick descriptions makes efforts to imply what this means within that moment while tracing its cultural significances. This is naturally complex yet the measure of these descriptions is to "present phenomena in new and revealing ways" (Hammersley, 1992, p.30). In relation to this I attempted to provide 'deep writings' on the bodies-in-transition I encountered. Therefore, in order to describe and make sense of what was going on within particular situations I strained to continually locate happenings within broader social/educational processes and within the context of students' lives.

As a daily practice I would attend to these raw fieldnotes once I left the site. Because the data collection happens in real time it is a ongoing battle to keep up with the action therefore a large proportion of my raw fieldnotes were partial. They consisted of fragments of conversations or small observations of interest. After the day of fieldwork I would spend time elaborating on them. I would add as much detail around an encounter as I could accurately remember. In doing so I would rely on my senses of the field an the observations I had made through 'deep listening' (Sparkes, 2009). A key target of deep listening is to redress the balance between the different senses that define a field. My raw fieldnotes were prone focus too much on what was said and by who. It was therefore important when attending to these raw note to take into consideration the other sensescapes (Sparkes, 2009) in which these bodies were situated. I would also consider the days events in relation to previous observations from my immersion in the multiple fields (see 7.2 for a detailed explanation of the type of immersion I was committed to). Writing around the fieldnotes in this way was an exercises of deep writing; this was an early stage of analysis and representation as I converted student realities into crafted texts.

Stage 3: Mapping Themes from Corpus of Data.

This was primarily an organisational exercise, to seek an appropriate structure while making linkages between fieldnotes and interview data explicit. Before this process could begin the

interview data went through a process of focused coding. This stage of analysis did draw on coding practices but somewhat reluctantly at times as I wished to avoid fragmentation. For Atkinson realised that coding "too readily conveys an analytical culture of 'fragmentation'" (2015, p.59). While coding data is, of course, relevant to ethnographers (and that is why I incorporated focus coding here), analysts should certainly avoid more procedural tasks of coding found in other forms of qualitative studies. For me then "building theory by successive acts of linking codes and themes, is profoundly limiting" (such as grounded theory) because it pays "insignificant attention to the pervasive nature of speculation and theorising that is embedded in the ethnographic enterprise" (Atkinson, 2015, p.62). Moreover, it implies a incorrect view of the periodisation of fieldwork whereby data collection proceeds analysis - instead of being mutually dependent. By the time I had come to explicitly mapping themes much 'analysis' had already taken place.

According to Emerson *et al.,* (2011) "having decided on core themes, and perhaps having sorted the fieldnotes accordingly, the ethnographer next turns to focus coding" (p.191). The 'core themes' so to speak were still under construction but through the process of maintaining a reflexive diary and spending the time to develop deep writings on many incidents directions of interests were emerging. This directions were thematic in nature as they consisted of:

- In relation to 'processes that order'. Specifically themes around gender, time/artistic production and sexuality were seen to be important aspects of these communities.
- In relation to 'processes of the experiencing body' an emerging theme was that of a hidden curriculum for expression.
- In relation to 'situated processes' unpacking a discourse of skill became the sole focus.

With this as a guide the interview transcripts were coded and organised into a table format where quotations could be grouped together under a theme. Although this process did draw on the principles of focused coding the core themes were left open to revision throughout. The textual fieldnotes and extra data collected within the field (such as video, audio and photographic recordings) were also organised into a series of matrices. It was from making connections between and within these refined data sets that an initial structure for the findings was composed. Even with the coded data neatly in tables when writing Chapter 8 I returned to the uncoded data frequently to facilitate further analysis.

Stage 5: Writing as Analysis.

A lot of qualitative work in education including those claiming to be ethnographic in nature tends to prioritise what was spoken as what counts as supporting evidence. In this research culture contemporary ethnographic work is all too quick to give primacy to direct quotation, from recorded interviews. No doubt these transcripts are a vital source of example, but they do not replace the other various means of 'data collection' as I have already outlined. In this study I have sought balance in the final texts and to work towards these ends the process of writing and crafting the ethnography was imperative. Indeed as Atkinson noted *writing* has a place "at the core of ethnographic research… the act of textual construction is regarded as constitutive of the work of the analyst" (2015, p.157). Handling multiple materials and judging their relative meanings and merits in the pursuit of representing the (multiple) fields in a way that does justice to the participants' experiences is a complex task that is fundamentally a task of writing. As the previous stages demonstrate various types of 'writing' had been central to the analysis long before I began to draft and craft Chapter 8. But this 'final' stage of writing required a set different research skills.

The ethnographer, come writer, must be cautious of many potential pitfalls to ensure they meet the rigour expected to contribute knowledge, theory and ideas to the social science. One such hazard was eloquently raised by Lecompte (2002), "In the absence of details of analysis, the vignettes and thick description [in my case deep writings] which are stock in trade for good evidence in ethnography can be criticized as mere 'story telling'" (p.287). It was therefore essential in writing the 'findings' in the form of Plays to accompany these narratives of bodies-in-transition with my critical commentary, which is *my analysis.* For this critical commentary to meet the academic standard that my work will be judged upon, I was conscience to apply social theory from an overt critical position (this is set out in 7.3). At the same time through this commentary social theory was being generated, through the developments of *bodies-in-transition*. This reflects the inductive and deductive nature of ethnographic analysis. Moreover, through these conversations I have attempted to abandon a fictitious identity where my ethnographic recollections provide the only authoritative voice in the scenes. I consciously included the participant's theoretical and contextual understanding of the unfolding events to

complement or contradict my conclusions (see for example, P1 A2 S3 & P2 A1 S2 in Chapter 8).

Much of the intellectual work of making connections between empirical themes and generating theoretical positions occurred in the space of reflexive diary entries and fragmented writings, sketches and recordings. These practices provided me with spaces to think through messy thoughts and messy text in order to make sense of the context and theory that I was working with. Importantly, for me, these entires were private records that allowed me to explore muddled thinking, contradictions and sensitive issues in a safe zone, away from forms of public scrutiny. I acknowledge that hiding these thought processes places some aspects relating to interpretation, trustworthiness and rigour behind a veil - yet it is arguable that most forms of qualitative analysis (especially ethnographic work) relies heavily on these tacit, unwritten, unpublished modes of data analysis.
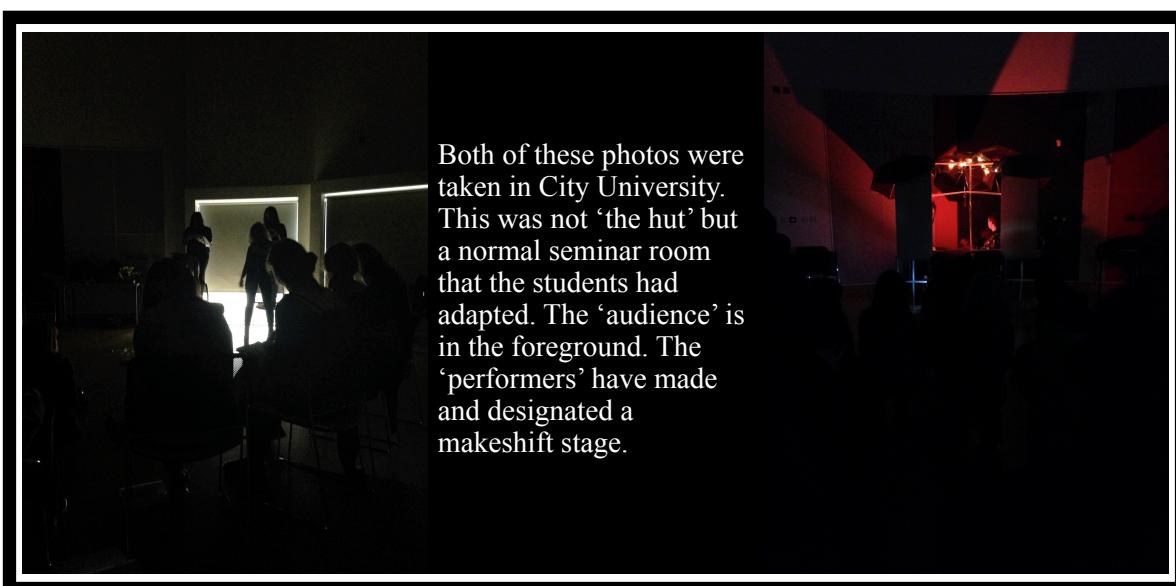
Chapter 8
Bodies-in-Transition:
an ethnography of the opportunities and constraints of BTEC performing arts students

Prelude: the Arena for Performing Arts Transitions

To begin to describe the multiple locations that I encountered, a metaphor of the *arena* will be evoked. I would like to bring this imagery forward to draw attention to important aspects of these contexts. The arena shares characteristics with key aspects of the Performing Arts spaces that I witnessed first-hand (in a specific time and place) or was told about (that lay beyond the immediate confines of the 'field'). Arenas are known for (1) being physical flat spaces that are surrounded by seating where public performances are held,; and (2) as a place or scene of activity, debate, or conflict - such as a political arena. In both a literal and metaphorical sense, as will be illustrated, the observed educational contexts share these qualities. Critically these qualities shed light on the *embodied students'* transitional experiences whilst helping to frame their opportunities and constraints.

This metaphor is most vividly employed in terms of the way in which the learning environments are usually physically arranged. There were visible similarities, most obviously because the majority of scheduled lessons (in both FE and HE) were held in purpose-built performance studios, '*the pit*' and '*the hut*' respectively. Here there were performance areas that were surrounded by either temporary or permanent seated areas or viewing points for an audience. Although some lessons, and lectures, took place in more traditional classroom type facilities both students and educators rearranged the physical environment to create zones for performers and audiences.

Both of these photos were taken in City University. This was not 'the hut' but a normal seminar room that the students had adapted. The 'audience' is in the foreground. The 'performers' have made and designated a makeshift stage.

While this is an interesting observation in itself it is matched by an identification of a tendency for students to have dispositions to favour less rigid forms of learning environments. There were many dimensions of complexity to this, but repeated findings were generally consistent and clear. For example, one HE lecturer told me "the students are much more comfortable when they are not made to sit in seats, at tables. They prefer to be sitting on the floor and moving around the space. They are more engaged, and more productive when they feel that the space allows them to be *creative* and *expressive*. In fact, it is sad to see but on the odd occasion when they do need to come to a lecture theatre some students arrive in smarter clothing - they look a bit unsettled. I suppose they are thinking *this is proper university now*" (Conversation with Pat, 15/10/14). These perceptions were further supported by Danni, who commented to fellow students "come on guys we are supposed to be sat in a semicircle. We are Performing Arts students this is *the one thing that we're supposed be good at*" (20/11/14). In further support of this Gabby revealed that she feels most comfortable at City University when they are "in a relaxed environment" that encourages public performances. Typically this would be a space with "a stage and an audience pit. You'd get up and do your bit and you'd fling ideas around. And where you'd be and on your feet" (19/03/16). There were countless more examples of this that also added layers of complexity within this general disposition. These worked at the intersection of different forms of expression, creative skill, productivity, cultural capital, gender, sexuality and lighting; themes that will be picked up upon throughout this Chapter. For now though, the consistent approach to the physical arrangement of the arena also brings to attention the types of bodies that regularly occupy positions within it.

As the data above implies, Performing Arts students tend to gravitate towards and actively form creative environments where they can *express themselves*. The natural implication of these dispositions for the presentation of the self would be to imprint their individuality onto their personal front, or their surface bodies (Goffman, 1969). Yet somewhat paradoxically, at least at first glance, students also overwhelmingly conformed to a dress code. This is not unlike an arena where performers wear 'kits' or 'costumes' and the audience sometimes copy or create their own expectations of what to wear. In this setting the dress code was simple and formalised

for Technicians[28] - wear nothing but black. Also known as 'Theatre Blacks'. While this was the accepted convention for technicians who conformed almost without exception, aspects of this code transcended into the unspoken 'fashion' for student and staff alike. Throughout my time in both FE and HE contexts my records indicate that black, or dark colours were the default for students and staff. This observation did not conflict with but accompanied the theme of 'chequered shirts' that is elaborated in Chapter 7. While black often provided a neutral backdrop for attire, students did express their individuality through a use of colour or other methods to make a 'statement'. Some examples are purple hair, knee-high leather boots, chokers, dark make up and flamboyant hats (see image on p.153). Rarely were these regularities discussed, apart from one moment where the code was broken.

Why black?: 6th of November 2014: George (the technician) appears from the hut wearing blue jeans and a blue top. A student shouts over "George, you look really different". He does appear different, more than just the change from his 'uniform'. He is carrying himself differently. George replies "yes, today I look like what I normally look like. I'm not wearing my Theatre Blacks" he continues "you guys are lucky, when I did my degree we had to wear them. If we turned up without them or wearing incorrect stuff we were sent home. They still do that in BTECs don't they?" asked the group of students. While others shook their heads implying no, Ashley nodded "yeah yeah we had to" (Ashley is wearing black jeans, a dark grey T-shirt, and bright red trainers). The discussion within the group now turns onto the rationale for Theatre Blacks, and there is no accepted logic. A student suggests that "wearing blacks makes you *feel equal*". George disagrees "no, no, it's not that. It's about *loose clothing*… if you're doing a performance you need to be wearing appropriate kit so that you can move about". Here Theatre Blacks have been defended on the grounds of equality and practical purposes. Neither explanation provides an adequate account of the inherent logic of this formal dress code. More than these explanations they cannot even begin to account for the manifestation of aspects of this formalised code into the informal fashion that shapes students' clothing *tastes*.

In my analysis, black serves as a backdrop colour functioning as a blank canvas to allow for statements of 'individuality'. And thus bypassing the surface contradiction between a desire to present oneself as an individual and the apparent conformity to a collective costume. From this, the logic and transferability of these practices lie within their ability to characterise and

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[28] 'Technicians' were individuals employed by both of the institutions (within HE and FE) to provide technical support for their performance programs. Both of the technicians had other industry roles outside of their job in an educational setting. Importantly, these figures did not recede to the backdrop but played an important active role in the education of the students and the general social dynamics of the spaces.

distinguish the field, and the actors within it, from others (i.e. English students who tend not to wear any black and share some modules with the PA students, see P2, A2, S1). In this way the phenomenon serves to develop distinct collective and individual identities. These codes and tastes therefore outline an aspect of the arena that can be seen as a mechanism to regulate (or order) a particular process of embodiment. The mechanism draws on a standardised method (to wear predominantly black but to include an item of colour or another 'statement') which contains dual processes that are able to simultaneously cultivate and regulate collective and individualised appearances.


The properties of the arena that are being outlined here are not only shaped by these physical and embodied regularities. The arena for Performing Arts transition also has an important sensory dimension that is regularly activated through the manipulation of lighting. Set against the wider educational landscape there is something distinct about the way in which lighting is used to create certain experiences within this arena. From my personal experiences I can only compare it to some of the techniques commonly employed within theatres - the historical arena for the Performing Arts. The regular variations in light felt *strange* to me in comparison to learning environments I have become used to. But for the students, who weren't able to

articulate their sensory experiences eloquently, it seemed far more *familiar*. The following fieldnote elaborates on these themes.

Lighting and the Senses: 9th of October 2014. Split into groups our task was to recreate the *tone* and *mood* of a portrait through recreating a similar light - shadows, intensities and colours were discussed beforehand. With each group agreed on the image they will tackle (ours is an image of Rembrandt) the cohort splits as George shouts "going dark" and the room plunges into a blackout. With each group finding a space under the guidance of mobile phone screens we begin our work. A group of girls are first to start the process of trial and error - we all noticed this because from an unseeable horizon a figure appears brightly lit sitting on a chair. She is paralysed, completely frozen, as her group get to work manipulating the lights with gels, colour sheets, distance and angles. Although she is sitting static, maintaining an elegant posture, little half glances suggest that she is very aware that people's eyes are fixed on her from the abyss. Those immediately around me certainly pay attention to the model as their discussions are momentarily paused before one member suggests "let's get back to it". Lighting clearly is changing the way in which students are interacting in this space. More than this, reflective discussions after this task revealed the power of lighting in shaping student experiences and how they can connect to the subject matter through this.

With everyone back in the informal U shape - again enclosed by a large warming spotlight - the discussion turns to the way in which lighting can affect atmosphere or mood. The theme was introduced and discussed by the students - each sharing their own unique sensory experiences. After which Neil produced a powerful summary the most memorable line of which was "lighting can make drab sex, or even drab acting for that matter, look good". He suggested that lighting can enhance the sense of expression, facilitating performances that in turn can powerfully alter the meaning of a piece. We all agree.
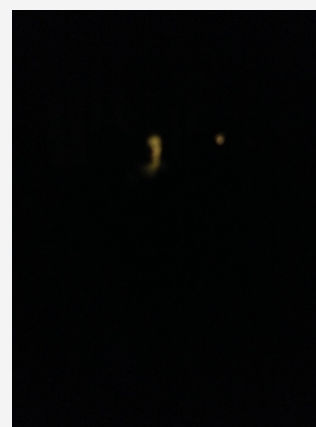
George however insists on illustrating a range of techniques that can be used to create particular atmospheres. He excitedly reels through a number of demonstrations using the lamps to manipulate the mood of an object - in this case a chair. He 'white washes'[29] the chair, hurting our eyes that have by now become accustomed to sitting in relative darkness. Reacting to this a female student shouts out "ouch, that's like school light! You know, really bright and white to try and keep you awake". I know exactly what she means - others agree adding their experiences to her statement.

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[29] This involves directing all the lamps to one spot from different angles to eliminate shadows and then raising them to full intensity.

The three examples in this prelude aimed to reflect some of the emerging overarching themes that help to accurately describe the familiar learning environments. The image of an arena was deemed useful to convey the way in which these environments were physically structured, the types of bodies that occupied these environments, and the sensory experiences that were incorporated into the learning process. The main function of this prelude was therefore to provide an initial, but accurate, sketch of some of the social and educational structures that characterised the field(s). The intention was to produce a canvas on which the bodies-in-transition will come to the fore.

Now that some of the physical, sensory, and embodied walls of this arena have been laid out, the metaphor will be considered in relation to the second meaning of an arena - a site of activity, performativity and contestation. It is with this sense of the arena from which the rest of the fieldwork chapters are located. Before proceeding a caveat is required to depart slightly from the arena metaphor. Being an arena for *transition* means that there is necessarily a mobility and fluidity to the site, its main structures can morph and are not situated in one location or one moment but can only be understood in a procedural form and over a longitudinal frame. Given the mobile nature of this arena, to recount some of its dynamics important themes are given in BTEC, HE and *other* contexts[30].

The upcoming section will stretch into these realms by recounting interesting and memorable moments from these transitional arenas. After long period of immersion, reflection, and analysis the aspects of transition I have selected to represent and accompany with my critical commentary, relate to:

	Title	Main Focus: and themes
Play 1	The Powers of the Arena	Processes that Order: Gendered Transitions, Times to be Productive, Sexualities.
Play 2	Educating Expression: a Hidden Curriculum	Processes of the Experiencing Body: Valued Expressions, Body Symbolism, Experiences that Precede Expression.
Play 3	Performing Arts and The Order of the Creative Skills	Situated Processes: The technical-creative divide, employability skills to talented bodies.

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[30] Through interview data I managed to get an insight into *other* contexts, contexts that lie beyond the narrow spatiotemporal boundaries that ethnographic fieldwork operates. A selection of these contexts will feature in these plays.

This table lays forth the trilogy that will follow. The entire body of work was built upon a multitude of documented events that stretch across an extensive spatiotemporal frame taking from, and combining, the multiple sources of data collected. The findings will be presented as a series of 'plays' that can deepen understandings of the arena for Performing Arts transition. Central to each play is a distinct narrative of transition.

Each of the narratives were built around a series of connected encounters that have been written in tangent with the narrator's analytical understanding of the significance of these events. To borrow a common phrase from the creative industries, the plays are *based on a true story*. Yet they bare the marks of author (researcher) interpretation and representation. They may be read as realist tales from the field (Maanen, 2011) but importantly these tales are accompanied with *my* narration, analysis and critical commentary, in a bid to overcome some of the significant criticisms of naïve realist ethnography (see Chapter 7 for more details).

Presented in the format of a trilogy the plays are interrelated in the sense that they build on each other, unfold in many of the same locations, and feature most of the same social characters. Importantly they are also distinct in that they individually reveal a different face of these bodies-in-transition. The plays are thematically organised into 'acts' and when appropriate the temporal dimensions are reflected through 'scenes'. Some of the events are mundane in their regularity and others are infrequent but just as powerful in shaping the arena for Performing Arts transitions and the bodies within in it.

PLAY 1: The Powers of the Arena

> gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular
> actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be
> actualized and reproduced as reality once again (Butler, 1988, p.526)

For Butler, gender is constituted by "stylised repetition of acts through time" (ibid, p.520). These acts are performative in nature, they are dramatised by embodied actors that give gender a *corporeal style*. The dramatisation of gender, in which students acted out assigned gendered roles, emerged as a contentious and *powerful* aspect of the BTEC learning environment. Therefore while Butler's thesis of 'doing gender' may be criticised from a corporeal realist position for a tendency to provide an overly constructed notion of the gendered body (Shilling, 2012) her insistence on paying attention to both the body[31] and to the theatrical performances that construct forms of social (inter)action provided a useful vantage point from which to frame Scene 1. This lens put into focus the ways in which individual actors (or *embodied students*) came to read a script and learn, or resist learning, through the discussions that emerged from points of contest. The incident that follows may act as a useful focal point but it must also be seen as only one episode, of many, that followed similar dynamics.

Is it Acceptable to Cut Off Women's Tongues?: 12th of January 2015. New year, new term, and a new play. Ground work for the play, as usual, consists of script readings. To introduce the play Sandy suggest that the three main themes are gender, war and violence.

First, characters need to be allocated: Sandy asks the group "Who wants to be first soldier?" Jude quickly snaps up the role, "I do". No resistance is given - like in previous plays he is the *natural choice* for the lead male character. Other roles are then discussed and agreed upon before the script reading begins.

While the play is set in contemporary times the style of the dialogue reflects that of Antigone (their previous play). After one especially convoluted line, Jen pauses to seek clarification from Sandy, "Am I saying that he has a small willy?". Tina adds "Yeah, I think she is telling everyone that he has a small penis". Sandy clarified the line further by saying "What she is doing is publicly questioning his manhood, she's trying to emasculate him". There are no further comments for now. Jude and Liam just give each other a sideways glance before the reading continues.

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[31] In this publication Butler suggested that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" (p.523). This version of 'becoming' relies on the "process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities" (p.521); so in other words the body becomes gendered through an ongoing transition.

Once there is a natural break in the dialogue and Sandy reveals more about the plot by telling the students that "while there are very strong female characters, when they speak out of line they get controlled - in the next scene her tongue is literally cut off". Both Jen and Tina are visibly shocked and angered by this revelation, "having your tongue cut off must be the worst! Because you are stuck with yourself" Jen responds. At this point the script reading is abandoned. The actors debate whether the female character (who had been a victim of sexual violence) should speak out against her male perpetrator with the knowledge that this will result in her being silenced - perhaps in a violent way. Or whether, it would have been more *sensible* to have retracted her comments and stop talking 'when she was given a clear choice to keep her tongue'. Liam acknowledged that it was "a lose-lose situation for her" whereas Jude was more interested in raising the point that "there are two sides to any story" and that the scene does not provide all the details and facts that surround this confrontation. This line of argument proved too provocative for Jen who responded "what the fuck, he is a psycho", and the others agreed. To this Jude attempted to act as the male provocateur, "I wouldn't feel sorry for her, she had it coming" (his body exuded strength and confidence while the statement was delivered in an emphatic but somewhat sarcastic tone). Sandy makes a timely intervention asking Jude "do you want a spade? You're digging yourself a hole!". This made him notice that he was presenting a minority view that wasn't indulged even in terms of its *humorous* quality for being *outrageous*. The response from his audience generates a new awareness as he joins to mock his previous statement before continuing, with a more serious voice, an attempt to try and justify the core principle that underpins his chauvinism. He noticeably becomes less forceful although his views remain mostly intact. To 'dig himself out of the hole' he draws on a point that Jen had previously raised, "the thing is, Pankhurst et cetera actually achieved something".

Tina does not accept Jude's mediated position elaborating on one of Sandy's earlier points that activism or *speaking out* is required for change to happen. In a defeatist tone Jude closes off the conversation by stating "maybe I am just failing to see your point". Unsatisfied with that as a closing statement, Sandy reopens the discussion by suggesting that "these types of questions are not particularly limited to gender but any type of oppression. In this play women are silenced by rape and men are silenced by death". A lengthy discussion continues where Jude strives to carve out a performance that straddles what he now sees as polar extremes. For me, this discussion beyond the script provides an interesting example of 'collaborative learning', where the performance of gender played a key role. My forming interpretations were solidified by Tina who reflected "who would've thought a play would give up so many messages… doesn't it annoy you that people go 'why are you doing theatre, it's useless'".

This script was archetypal of the male gaze that sweeps through much of the Performing Arts where "Men act; Women are acted upon" (Gamman & Marshment, 1988, p.1) as Sandy

identified even strong female characters are controlled; their bodies are maimed, their voices silenced. Furthermore, the script reading induced a powerful social encounter brimming with political discourse and contest. As a result the enactment of this script had an educational function in the sense that it brought attention to the importance of feminist struggles within society and within the arts. Conceivably then the activity demonstrated what Burt (2007) understood as the inherent potential of the Performing Arts to transform society and individuals. Certainly the students found the play a stimulating medium to explore social issues. Importantly the performative nature of this scene showed how students engaged in these theatrics bringing to bear their own *Weltanschauung* (worldviews) that have formed through their embodied histories. Additionally the fieldnote illustrated how students may be pressured to improvise their performances as the social scene unfolds. While the dialogue may seem unstructured it was underpinned by social power that maintained there is a 'correct position' and accepted performances in relation to this topic.

Sandy was pivotal in steering this process, while Jen and Tina bolstered the legitimate discourse. Of course, Jude was not fully reformed from this exchange alone. To the contrary, his resilience to change political (and oppressive) views on gender was made clear at the end of the session when Liam remarked, "Women aye. You can't live with them. You can't live without them". Prompting Jude to correct him, "Well you can". In terms of his core beliefs there were no immediate or seismic shifts. He was however advised to adjust, or 'tone down' his gendered performance - his chauvinism. And if we accept Butler's thesis that gender is 'done' we can also accept the possibilities that it can be undone as well. There was some limited success here, to a large extent Jude 'reigned in' his masculinised performances. Moreover feeling obliged to explain his position Jude was forced, at some level, to reflect on what he perceived to be the 'merits' of his intentionally provocative statements. As the scene illustrates, this resulted firstly in a change in Jude's *corporeal style* of performance that was in turn accompanied by minor shifts in discourse and reasoning. For others in the group (mainly Jen and Tina) this scene may have been catalytic towards a form of embodiment that actively challenges hegemonic forms of masculine domination. Both developments indicate the potential for some form of gendered transition to be ordered through events like these; events that were not uncommon in the BTEC.

Two further processes can be identified that work against the progress highlighted above. Firstly the BTEC is only one small aspect of students' education and transition, there are processes of embodiment occurring in contexts other than the BTEC. It is through these contexts that Jude has most likely lived within the influences of an "overwhelming history of patriarchy" (Butler, 1988, p.53). It was my judgement that his doxa had already been formed by this history and his habits (as seen on multiple occasions throughout the fieldwork) reveal the way in which his body has become gendered in predictable ways. Consequently he has assumed the role of the lead male, the first soldier, the Romeo. The way in which student bodies have already been historically formed is intimately related to the second counteractive process, typecasting. According to Tina typecasts existed, "then we were all obviously kind of typecasted which isn't great… like Liam was the villain and Jen was the moody one - the brat, not in that sense but she was so good at playing bratty parts. And I was a typical Juliet part and Jude was like, yeah, it was always me and Jude - the Romeo and Juliet."(Tina, 22/01/16).

As shown in this sense, the connection between types of bodies and casting decisions were rarely challenged within the BTEC. Tina thought that this was a very limiting aspect of the course where "it wasn't just me that was stuck. Everyone was stuck" (06/02/16). Being stuck implies that *constraints* were in place that reduced students exposure to new experiences, new points of view, new roles, new identities. This process was therefore limiting of multiplicities. In other words there was little scope for students to transgress pre given typecasts that were reinforced again, and again, (re)producing stereotypes that were increasingly imprinted on their exterior bodies and shaped their corporeal style. They were stuck in a highly ordered pattern of expected (gendered) performances. Typecasting therefore took away *opportunities* to change and evolve, or become multiple - instead streamlining and specialising the individuals embodiment. This potentially places limits on the types of gender transitions available to these students.

ACT 1: GENDERED TRANSITIONS
SCENE 2: BETWEEN EQUALITY AND MASCULINE DOMINATION IN HE

There was a notable gender imbalance within the degree course. A significant proportion of HE lectures working on the PA course were male (approximately 63%) whereas the vast majority of students were female (approximately 87.5%)[32]. These figures reflect industry sector surveys that also show a disproportionately high number of males in positions of power (see Chapter 4). It is also indicative of a *masculine order*, central to which Bourdieu (2001) argued is a cultural assumption that there is a "natural right of men to the positions of power" (p.67) - positions such as lecturers. In this text Bourdieu outlined some mechanisms that generate and protect this order giving masculine domination a resilience. Through these mechanisms the same order is often reproduced across societies and generations, through time and space. The masculine order does not need to be visible and operational in its distilled form in order for it to have significant implications for transition and career progression for men and women. In any context where elements of the masculine order can be seen to order practices and interactions, transitions will inevitably become fractured along well trod patriarchal lines.

It may never be the intention of many Performing Arts students to pursue an academic career but the model below makes visible the resistance they would encounter if they did - they would have an 'upstream' battle.
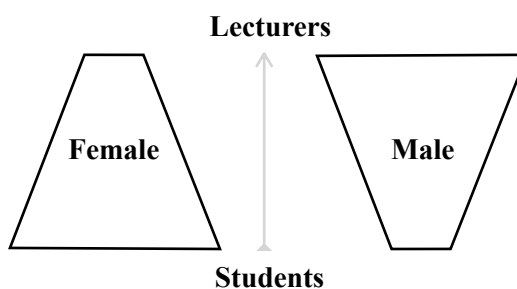
In no way does this figure intend to exclude bodies that do not relate to the traditional binary; a binary that has been powerfully critiqued in feminist thought, not least by Butler (2011). Instead the figure is included only to illustrate the general narrowing of opportunities in terms of

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32 Percentage of Performing Arts students was calculated through the returned consent forms, for the first year cohort in 2014. This excluded Drama and English students that sometimes shared modules. Staff percentages were calculated through the programmes webpage again in 2014.

proportional trends. These trends obviously place constraints on transition based on the material maleness or the femaleness of one's body. This model is not limited to those pursuing Performing Arts in the Academy, Burt (2007) also makes the same argument for those training to become professional performers, albeit in *theatre dance*. Analyses of this nature do not however, provide a complete picture of the current constraints on transition. With transition there is a time lag built into data sets, the transitional 'outcomes' from one generation were produced in a set of conditions that have changed over time. Therefore the disparities such as the one identified above only inform us that in previous generations an *equality of opportunity* was not achieved. If the Bourdieusian mechanisms of reproduction are strongly present the unequal distribution of transition outcomes[33] will likely continue to occur. As Jude demonstrated in Scene 1, formal educational environments can never have complete autonomy in (re)wiring the cultural mechanisms that shape gendered transitions. Therefore while being mindful of the probable limitations contained within this observed dynamic, this Scene examines the social and educational processes that *actively* contribute to combatting or reproducing gender inequalities within City University.

"Women aren't allowed in the control booth": 8th December 2014. Having already identified a numerical gender imbalance I explicitly began to notice and record any forms of casual sexism, or other manifestations of symbolic violence against female bodies, or bodies that transgress socially constructed gender binaries. Despite these efforts I had registered little of significance in my fieldnotes or reflexive diary entries until today.

It is especially busy and chaotic in 'the hut'. Rehearsals are taking place. Each group of students has been allotted a specific time to practise in the *control booth*. George is frantically trying to support students with the range of operations they are testing. Questions upon questions are fired towards him at a pace that eventually leads him to erupt "this is manic".

Each group is comprised of different roles: performers, stage manager, someone controlling the sound and another responsible for the lighting etc. Finding the confined space too cramped, too busy, George eventually tells one of the 'performers' to "get out". The female student asks "Why can't I be here?". George replies with *joke*, "Because your'e woman. Women aren't allowed in the control booth". There are other women in the control booth but they have a reason to stay as they are operating some

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33 In Chapter 1 the notion of transitional *outcomes* was used to describe the measurable (and traceable) destinations for vocational students. In policy terms this usually is understood in terms of the job they secure in later life.

of the equipment. This statement is indeed received as a joke and everyone laughs, including the performer, who is just about to leave. Neil who is outside of the booth but within range to hear the exchange contributes an apology in jest "sorry about that, technicians are known for being sexist". The laughing that still lingers from George's line returns. The female student leaves the booth.

Sexist jokes are the comical face of symbolic violence. A form of violence that is effective because it is not recognise as particularly violent. It is a stealth attack. Symbolic violence can therefore degrade types of bodies (such as female and feminine bodies) and forms of embodiment without being discursively noticed and therefore challenged. But at the same time it has a power to reproduce a 'natural order' in this case the masculine order. This order has no ethical objections to exclude women from metaphorical and literal control booths. Whilst I avoid over stretching the legacy of this lone incident the general process that underpinned the witnessed event may have sought to regulate and reproduce the construction of particular types of bodies and embodiment. This encounter therefore provokes an important question: what might the implications of this be for these bodies-in-transition?

George had authority and control over this space. On practical grounds he had a sincere rationale to temporarily reduce the number of bodies in the booth. Yet at no point was this rationale communicated with the students. Instead when confronted for an explanation he responded with (sexist) 'humour'. When faced with "sexist jokes, that by the very nature of being a joke are delivered under a nonthreatening pretence of 'good humour', women often have no other choice than to exclude themselves or participate at least passively [by laughing for example], in order to *integrate* themselves" (emphasis added, Bourdieu, 2001, p.68). As previously discussed, integration is a vital aspect of educational transitions into HE, especially for first year students (see Chapter 5). So when faced with little choice or agency this first year female student excluded herself, or more accurately was excluded from the control booth. Everyone present joined together in passive participation through laughter. In this case passive participation may have been unconsciously perceived as an easier non-confrontational response while also having the benefit of potentially continuing to facilitate social integration between staff and students. Being an outsider in this scenario I am critical of what the end goal of this type of integration would be.

Firstly, this version of integration might actually be promotion of segregation. The content of the joke brings to the surface an idea there should be a "structure of space" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 9) where there are locations reserved for male bodies only. These locations, like the control booth, are places where decisions are made and valued labour takes place. The gendered organisation of space acts to curtail and horde powers to the confines of male spaces and thus devalue (female) labour outside of these walls. In this case there were no specific rules excluding certain bodies from that space, however, the encounter drew on segregationist rhetoric; even if it was, and was seen as, a form of *parody*. Parody or not, a danger of invoking this rhetoric is that it has the potential to hinder advances towards gender equality. More worryingly, incidents of this nature can function as a gateway to more violent and dangerous forms of masculine domination. Bourdieu suggested that an unfortunate byproduct of passively participating in sexist jokes is that these students would run "the risk of no longer being able to protest if they are victims of sexism or sexual harassment" (*ibid*, p.68). This is through no fault of their own as these students were put in a very undesirable position, a lose-lose position.

Neil's follow up joke could also have been interpreted in a couple of different ways by the students. Positively it could be seen as an effort to not allow sexist jokes to pass unchallenged. Or negatively it could be seen as a brushing aside of an utterance that was steeped in rhetoric of the masculine order. Furthermore, by suggesting that technicians are notoriously sexist, students may have taken away a warning of symbolic violence to come if they plan to stay in the industry. This has the power to influence an anticipation of their future and maybe reevaluate their imagined trajectories or (re)shape their immediate choices. The overall analysis presented here intentionally leaves the symbolic force[34] of this encounter open to various (mis)interpretations; this is because each embodied student may have experienced the encounter in different ways - as a parody, a harmless joke, a warning or whatever it may be. While the affects remain unclear, this moment needs to be taken seriously because gender inequalities do present themselves in the Performing Arts (see Chapter 4) but also because the interaction bares

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[34] A symbolic force is "a form of power that is exerted on bodies, directly as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but this magic only works on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body" (Bourdieu, 2007, p.38).

theoretical hallmarks of masculine domination, such as symbolic violence and the gendered structuring of space.

To situate the narrative of gendered transition above into the broader context of the normative practices and interactions that took place within City University this scene comes to a close with an example of a practical and symbolic intervention by staff to (re)create greater gender equality within the course.

Gender Irrelevant Musicals: 13 November 2014. I have a moment during a lesson to talk to Neil while the students are off on a break. We start to talk about some of the main challenges in the organisation of the Performing Arts programme. Neil acknowledges that Performing Arts courses tend to have a gender imbalance with females vastly out numbering males - this is a constant phenomena year from year. And unfortunately this can lead to some very difficult moments when casting a play. With the role of the performance being a central part of the programme (for example the first year students take part in three assessed performances in the year) this can become a fairly difficult organisational challenge. Neil has reflected on this and suggests that "if the staff are not careful students may get the impression that some students have been favoured and put in an advantageous position to achieve better grades".

In an attempt to address this Neil and a co-author have written a musical specifically designed to overcome some of these difficulties. Over previous years they have found it very difficult to adapt existing plays to meet the challenges they face. Instead of having main characters, their musical therefore, had divided the lines of songs equally amongst the entire cast. Additionally and importantly all of the characters were 'gender irrelevant'. This meant it would make no difference whether they were played by a male or female student. After outlining the principles behind the play Neil tells me how it came about, "There was a gap in the market for a play that does this… the idea was to write the play and then sell it on to other Performing Arts courses, at other institutions that have a similar problem".

The move towards making 'gender irrelevant' is a welcome one. It is a step in the direction of a form of social progress that might produce the types of bodies and transitions required for my vision of 'social justice' within the PA to be achieved (see 7.3). But there are two caveats that need to be raised against this point. Firstly, while an epoch whereby gender is irrelevant in performance and in society provides a desirable endpoint, organising scripts without gender roles makes gender invisible in those performances. This reduces some of the inherent power of

the Performing Arts as a critical medium through which gender constraints can be made visible and therefore contested (as demonstrated in Scene 1). Secondly, the fiscal undertones of Neil's incentives presented an unusual language and rationale for altering the course structure and content. From a cynical view one can make the case that exploiting or moving into another 'market' represents an acceleration of the marketisation of Higher Education, a phenomenon that Brown and Carasso (2013) have warned against because in general it "is not a recipe for increased social mobility" (p.143) or improved social justice. This is not to imply that free markets in education are incompatible with social justice, these arguments have not been conclusively won (see Brown & Lauder, 2002). Indeed 'Gender Irrelevant Musicals' may be used as an example to show how occasionally the incentive of the market can spur innovative social progress, improving, in a small way, opportunities for all students to gain equal access to performance during their degree. This stated, there remains significant problems associated with the neoliberal politics of late modernity for these bodies-in-transition. The following Act will make these claims by exploring themes of time, production, power, liberty and of course the body.

Rigid Rhythms and Illusionary Freedoms: 1st of December 2014. I am sitting alone in Journeys' reception waiting to meet Sandy. I am early. A large clock is in my eye-line. As the minutes pass the busy, but structured, rhythms are hard to avoid.

The reception area connects different wings of Journeys. The space oscillates periodically between eerily quiet and empty (where I hear the clock ticking) to noisy and hectic where fast-paced students flock to their next lessons. The pace of the 'working-day' also binds the movements of staff, who hurry in opposite directions. They fail to stop when they reassure a colleague "see you at 2:35".

My reflections turn to these observations, thinking in terms of what Bourdieu would have described as "the *tempo* of action" (1977, p.7). Sitting in this locale the temporal structuring of practice appears to be a powerful aspect of the institution. At Journeys time has been configured and compartmentalised in a way that closely assimilates wider 'Fordist' social and occupational structures.

With nothing to do and with this trail of thought I reach for the latest prospectus; just to pass the time. On the first page the College sets out their 'promise' to students: "Are you ready for Journeys? It will be different to what you are used to. For you, that's probably the whole point - it's probably time to leave school behind, to make a fresh start and take the next step… possibly for the first time you will have free time during the day: *Time* we trust you to spend *productively*".

This opening account brings to the fore a powerful insight into institutional expectations and daily rhythms. There are *times* to be *productive* at Journeys. The temporal structures that frame daily/seasonal practices and movements offer a tailor made site where transitions can be looked at through the rubric of 'social time' (Colley, 2007)[35]. Reflecting on a range of encounters that took place at Journeys, as well as City University, prompted me to consider a matrix of initial questions:

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35 Drawing on the work of Lingard and Thompson (2017), Colley's (2007) and McLeod (2017) in 5.2d. an argument is put forward that it is vital to consider aspects of 'social time' in order to develop an awareness of the temporal dimensions of transition. In Chapter 6 I extended this through Figure A, recognising the importance to unpack the various temporal dimensions in which processes of embodiment stretch. While these methods are not limited to this Act special attention has been given here to the role of 'social time' for bodies-in-transition.

1. who controls & structures how *time* is organised?	1.1. For what functions?	2. What is meant by *productivity* in this educational context?	2.1. What systems, collectives, or individuals benefit from these modes of production?
1.2. By what methods are rigid rhythms maintained?	1.3. (In what way) do students have the ability to resist these routines, or create regimes anew?	2.2. Are these visions of time and production compatible with the Performing Arts?	2.3. Could different 'work ethics' be desirable?
3. (How) do the established relationships between time and production affect *embodied students*?	3.1. Do the relationships between time and production that become embodied bare resemblance to other sections (or intersections) of society?	4. What are the implications for these *bodies-in-transition*?	4.1. Is time organised consistently throughout 'stages' of transition?
3.2. Are some processes of embodiment marginalised or prioritised?	3.3. Are embodied students passive receptors in the way they form a sense of time?	4.2. Are there challenges in making the transition to new tempos of action?	4.3. What 'opportunities' and 'constraints' emerge from these questions?

Table E: A matrix of initial questions regarding time and production for BTEC in PA students. Adapted from reflexive diary entry 19/12/2014.

This Act does not approach each question and subquestion individually; a matrix must be treated as a single entity. As such selected data and my critical commentary do not address any of the questions in complete isolation. While keeping this in mind, the narrative format across both scenes provides illustrations sequentially that illuminate each quartet of the matrix approximately in turn, building a network of explanations that address the entirety.

In order to fulfil this quest it is helpful to begin by reminding ourselves that social time is ultimately fused to power, "the power to control movements, to decide about beginnings and endings, to set the pace, to give the rhythm. In other words, how to organise time… is intrinsically linked to questions of power and government" (Jordheim, 2014, p.510). At Journeys there were levels and networks of power when it came to who controls what is supposed to be done and when it will be done. Prima facia, the formalised institutional powers obviously rest with administration and teaching staff through collaborative efforts to create timetables that coordinate the structure of the working-day. Of course there were hierarchies that divided these powers unevenly between staff. Meanwhile students were not active participants

in these decisions[36]. The issue however of who controls how time is organised, or *ordered*, is not merely a question over who gets to rule the timetable. Even its creators may be viewed as slaves of servants to the document they produce; falling victim to some arrangements and beneficiaries to others. No, the question of control partially lies in the methods employed informally and interpersonally that assert control over other bodies (in terms of what *they* should be doing and when *they* should be doing it). While this may be enforced by disciplinary rules and procedures, such as registers and failing students through non-attendance, more subtle technologies of power could be detected:

Death Stare Surveillance: 15th December 2014. On the surface it is a very *relaxed* atmosphere in 'the pit' today. Music is quietly playing in the background and the students are using their time to prepare stage materials for the upcoming performance. The students have been left to their own devices.

With little 'regulation' during this informal arrangement Jen seeks clarification, "Are we being examined today Sandy?". Sandy's response was quick "*All the time*. In fact you can take pictures of what you have been making today. Put them in your log books so that you can write next to the photos saying what you have done today". Immediately and without question all of the students go to get their phones (they have to leave them in their coats) before returning to take pictures.

Later in the day Sandy leaves the room for a while. The discussion turns to the way in which Sandy always makes them *feel* that they have been 'naughty' if they are not doing what she expects them to be doing in any given time. They talk openly about the 'Sandy death stare' that is described as an intense stare, right in the eyes, when they are off task. They all know it well, but they agree that Jude knows it best. Their discussion and slower pace of work come to a close as Liam reminds them "we should probably get back to it, Sandy will be back soon". Perhaps, the informal arrangement earlier wasn't as unregulated as it first appeared.

Holding up a Foucauldian lens, a work ethic and a productive output were maintained through a surveillance technique that depended on detection and discipline through the human eye. The death stare, as it was known to students, was internalised into a gaze upon the self; this refers to the *feeling* that became associated with being caught 'off task', and this was indeed powerful because in anticipation of Sandy's eyes returning into range of surveillance the group changed

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[36] It was not uncommon for me to overhear conversations between students where they would complain about how late they have to stay and how early they have to arrive. They also complained about what they were made to do during this time. To quote Jen, "I am pissed off that I have to go to French now" after pleading with Sandy to give her an excuse so that she could miss that lesson (12/01/15).

both their activity and discussion accordingly. With this power 'the death stare' could penetrate the walls of 'the pit'. Sandy in other words possessed a set of panoptic eyes. Yet in this BTEC setting the sense of constant surveillance can be noticed on two levels, revealing a complexity of the power network that structures time and production. The brief interactions above set reminders to students that their behaviours, skills and work outputs are continually monitored and 'assessed'. Meanwhile Sandy was acutely aware that the exam boards require 'evidence' that students have undertaken certain projects, and that 'learning has occurred'. Her teaching practices were therefore also under surveillance. It follows then, to understand who controls time in this context is not merely to gaze into the institutional practices and the actions of individual characters. It is also important to consider these dynamics within a broader scope of how educational, occupational and social systems tend to recreate particular temporal regimes: and importantly for what function. It is at this point where the way in which *productivity* is framed becomes important.

Productivity at Journeys is connected to a functionalist theory of learning, learning that fulfils certain functions within late-capitalist systems - i.e. to bridge the identified skills gap or to meet the demand of rapidly changing labour markets (see Chapter 1 & 3). The institution expects students to spend their time productively (whether they are supervised by teachers or not), which actually means to spend time developing the necessary skills and knowledges required to pass examinations and eventually contribute to the socioeconomic future of society. This functional approach to teaching and learning on a very basic level also requires some form of occupational socialisation (Willis, 1977; Colley *et al.,* 2003). The argument here is that in the pursuit of national and personal economic prosperity the majority of students need to become accustomed to the rhythms and durations of the typical working-day[37] in industrial settings. Journeys is an efficient institution at assimilating some of these wider work conditions. The institutional framing of productivity and organisation of time bleeds into the students' general educational experiences of the BTEC. For example, Gabby described the BTEC (at her former college) as "pretty intense. Not in terms of the content but in terms of *time and effort…* It was nine-to-five, five days a week" (05/02/16).

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37 In this Scene I am using Marx's (2013) term 'working-day' to remind the reader that the sale of labour "takes place for a definite period of time" (p.380) and that it is the aim of the capitalist to control the duration and intensity of the 'working-day' to maximise returns on capital investments.

To critique this temporal structuring at Journeys a neo-Marxist concern with the body can be adopted. My specific concern for these bodies-in-transition is tied to industrialist and late-capitalist treatment of the *body as a machine* (Shilling, 2012). The sole purpose of the machine is to produce more and more, quicker and quicker, and for longer and longer. And it is through this treatment of workers and students that the body is reduced to a unit of production, becoming nothing more than an investment bank for human capital. In this system the aim is to see profitable returns from the body. A prerequisite to effectively "capitalize time" in this way requires the successful education of *docile bodies* (Foucault, 1977, p.157). Disciplinary technologies make the body "more obedient as it becomes more useful" (*ibid*, p.138) to capitalist economies. The three great methods of the timetable, that is to "establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, [and] regulate the cycles of repetition" (*ibid*, p.149) accompanied with surveillance (of both students and tutors) impose a pedagogy for docility. Here time penetrates the docile body and meticulously controls it. In this educational arena, but also in Fordist labour arrangements, 'profitable time' is one where "the body is constantly applied to its exercise" with precision, application and regularity (*ibid*, p.151). With the BTEC's rigid but also regular regimes (e.g. nine-to-five, five days a week) the PA students' embodiment can become ordered beyond the immediate grips of disciplinary power.

Regular routines give order to the students' days, weeks and terms while also providing continuity through different 'stages' of transition. In other cases breaks in routine may provide discontinuity. Both are important to bodies-in-transition because the temporal regimes set at Journeys might be converted into a habitus that is then carried with the students' body into any new settings, because "habitual tastes, dispositions and perceptions are omnipresent, and carried with us wherever we go" (Barker & Bailey, 2015, p.44). Bourdieu (1990) emphasised this when arguing that "to control movement, and especially the *tempo*, of practice, is to inscribe durably in the body, in the form of the rhythm of action or words, a whole relationship to time, which is experienced as part of the person" (p.76). Students at Journeys therefore are vulnerable to embody a particular relationship to time, a relationship in which they are subordinate to institutional tempos and instructions. At Journeys disciplinary time has become socially formatted and compartmentalised to reinforce work-leisure dichotomies and to ensure that

students and staff remain *productive* during the working-day. This feeds into a reproduction of class distinctions where the forming relationships to time and production, like those illustrated in the scene, are central to the formation of a working-class habitus (Wolkowitz, 2009; Shilling, 2005).

In relation to this, Bourdieu (1990) explained that time can work in some people's favour, he also noted that the opposite can be true. The processes that order embodiment, to make the body docile and to ingrain a working-class habitus, may become problematic for these Performing Arts students. It is conceivable that the ways in which time and productivity have been organised in Journeys may be at odds with modes of production that are typical (and potentially necessary) within the Performing Arts (Chapter 4). While Journeys promises students "free time during the day" through the prism of 'productivity' the guiding principle of the College is of non-idleness. Therefore, Kunst's (2017) manifesto for laziness certainly cannot be accommodated or even tolerated within these institutional conditions. But even on a less radical platform the treatment of the body as a machine can dehumanise bodies (Shilling, 2005) stripping flesh of feeling, creativity and expression. And it is through this mechanisation, automation and cultivation of the docile body that the rigid rhythms of Journeys can be seen to be counterproductive to the demands of the Cultural and Creative Industries and the post-Fordist work place.

ACT 2: TIMES TO BE PRODUCTIVE
SCENE 2: MAKING THE TRANSITION TO NEW TEMPOS OF ACTION AND INDEPENDENT
LEARNING

Time and productivity take a different format at City University. The first time I encountered the stark difference was when I accompanied the first year PA students on a tour of the campus. This was on the very first day of 'contact-time' for most students, and my first day at the site:

Tour time: 29th of September 2014: Formalities of the first lecture have come to a close and the entire group is invited on a tour of the campus. Although this is not compulsory everyone joins. The tour is led by George who has planned out a route so that the students can see the locations where they can "hang out and pass the time" (this included coffee shops, bars and open spaces etc.) as well as the places they will need to become familiar with for their academic studies (libraries, equipment repositories and student services etc.).

The tour comes to a pause for over 10 minutes in the University's Art Galleries. Here George finds some of the student-artists to come and explain their works on display. After which George recalls some of his favourite pieces that the galleries have housed. Before proceeding he pleads with the students "come walk through here any time, it's always changing. Pop-in even if you are just bored and nearby with nothing else to do".

A few stops later we arrive at the University's 'Public Theatre'. The theatre manager is asked to come and give us a talk while we are ushered by a couple of student-employees to the seats of the auditorium. We are told about everything that goes on there and that anyone is welcome to apply for any vacancies. We are even told that coming to watch what is on offer can help us 'get inspiration' for our own artistic projects. This broader educational point leads nicely into the fact that "there are a few tickets left for tonight. [Name of a theatre company] are doing [name of the production]. You can come along for a small sum of £4". That is the student discount prices.

Minutes later we find ourselves in the bookable music rooms. Here we are encouraged to "come in with your mates. Form a band. Or just come and have a jamming session". Students are allowed to come in late at night and leave early in the morning. Apparently many do, according to George, because it fits in with their social schedules and work commitments.

In this tour alone we can see how the working-day is no longer tightly controlled or defined by the institution. In contrast, the working-day was shown to merge education, work, life, and leisure throughout the day and into the night. These temporal flexibilities were accompanied with a reduced emphasis on students to be *productive* with their time. A discourse of

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productivity was replaced with an encouragement to be generally engaged and interested in the Arts. Indeed Neil connected these qualities to students who thrive on the course and beyond, "crucially, and you would think that this would be inevitable, but it really isn't, is [that students have a] passion for the subject… we cannot assume that people have that fundamental love of the subject, some people are doing it honestly because they feel it is an easy option" (Neil, 05/02/16).

While the imposition of rigid rhythms and the promotion of productivity are less prevalent within this educational context, the University, and its academic staff, were still sceptical of student engagement levels - or their *passion* for the Performing Arts. This did transfer into a concern about how students spend their time, "like any university course you see them for 10 hours a week, what they do for the other 30 is up to them. And they could be lying in bed, or playing Xbox for the other 30, and some are" (Neil, 05/02/16).

At an institutional level the potential for students to abuse the freedoms of 'independent learning' worried the University. As programme leader, Neil's comments reflect these anxieties. To combat these fears a range of disciplinary technologies were in place so that the limited contact hours could be monitored, at the very least. For example, students were required to swipe their campus cards when they entered or exited 'the hut'. A digital record of their attendance was instantly stored through this. Automatically, advisors would then be informed if attendance becomes an 'issue' for one of their students. In this scenario a meeting is often arranged so that both parties can discuss some of the reasons for low levels of attendance and implement a plan to increase these levels. On paper, these mechanisms appear to provide a more sophisticated architecture that has the ability to survey and track student movement (digitally and remotely) with more accuracy and in real-time. In practice, whilst the students were tracked and monitored in these ways there were far less attempts by individual staff to regulate students' 'productive use of time'; I did not detect any Death Stares or subtle forms of disciplinary surveillance. In its place tutors emphasised 'independent learning' or 'a different type of learning' as cornerstones of Higher Education.

Pat noticed that a shift in learning style can create a hurdle for some students, "the big transition is to get them engaged in the process, not fixated on the *product*" (Conversation with Pat, 16/10/14). In this pedagogical formulation students were required to become less concerned with *productivity*[38] per se. Unlike Journeys, learning was no longer seen on the basis of its functional worth alone. Instead learning had been partially framed around more liberal conceptions, such as learning for the sake of learning itself and following interests in the pursuit of knowledge. Through this slight shift in framing, the productive use of time was not as present as it was in the BTEC[39]. In other words for students to 'get engaged in the process of learning' displaces ideas of a mechanical, machine-like view of knowledge and skill acquisition (see Chapter 3). Instead at City University, the *embodiment* of skills and knowledge did not follow a simple input-output model. In these configurations (i.e. learning as an independent or engaged process), student labour and learning was not necessarily fixed to what they produced and how/when they produced it. Consequently it was less of a concern to maximise the time students spent 'on-task' and less desirable to impose a narrow criteria that defined exactly what their final product should consist of. Instead, as Pat alluded to, the students had to begin to evaluate their own progress through a participatory lens as well. To do this it was recommended that students reflect upon how *engaged* in the ongoing process of learning. Although connected, this does not necessarily require them to directly reflect on whether, or not, they have worked within the structured rhythms and tempos set by the institution[40]. Nor would students benefit from fixating entirely on the 'exchange value' for their 'products' (essays and performances) in terms of grades. While still obviously an important element within the Higher Education context, elevating *productivity* to a position where it overshadows an independent pursuit of interests (through an engagement with the artistic world) was not advised as the ideal strategy for a 'successful' transition.

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[38] These expectations were uniform and were applied to all students regardless of what their established relationships to productivity and time were when they began the course. A transition was expected to these new styles of learning.

[39] The productive use of time in ACT 2: Scene 1 rested on a capitalist project to produce more and more, quicker and quicker and within a structured chain of production. It also rested on a notion that the sole function of education is to ensure that students become a more 'productive citizen'. This gave rise to a treatment of the embodied student as a machine in certain respects.

[40] University staff often made a point that they were not in the business of structuring the students' time for them. When students were 'making excuses' for why they were not prepared for a seminar group activity George responded "welcome to University. You have to manage your own time" (13/11/14).

To reformulate these embodied schemas proved challenging for some students. Gabby's statement succinctly illustrates the emotional toil she felt in trying to come to grips with these new arrangements,

> In College I got constant feedback and I knew where I was… I knew exactly where I was on my journey through the course [BTEC in PA]. I knew what I needed to do and when I needed to do it. I knew what my grades were… I knew exactly what I needed.
>
> And I came in here [City University] and I just remember going up to the teacher, going like I *need* you to tell me how I'm doing. Like I *need* it, and they don't do that. That's not how it is. So even just the way we're taught, I didn't cope (Gabby, 05/02/16).

Independent learning did not come easily to Gabby, like many on the course. These reflections showed that she was schooled in the ways of dependent learning, but also schooled in the rhythms of producing work typical of the BTEC setting. Specifically Gabby's dependencies stemmed from her embodied relationship to time and production - the need for her to be told *what* to do, *when* to do it and whether it had *value*. These relationships map neatly onto the dispositions of the working-class habitus as outlined in the previous scene. However more importantly for Gabby, her modus operandi ran contrary to the pedagogical models that City University staff subscribed. Moreover her strong desire to gather measurable feedback on her early work was a strategy so that she could put the 'required time' to attain her desired grades. During her BTEC there was a clear roadmap set out across time, where there were set opportunities for incremental 'formative feedback'. Importantly this feedback cycle gave her a valuation and an order sheet. The exact exchange value of her current work (pass, merit, distinction) would be given alongside a list of requirements that were needed for the higher grades. She could therefore submit 'improved work' across a designated timeframe until she achieved the exchange value she was aiming for. She carried these dispositions into City University, causing some challenges along the way, "a lot of my worry and stress comes from needing to achieve. So I entered Uni with this whole like, 'I'm going to get a first, and this is how it's going to happen'" (05/02/16) but admittedly there were less opportunities to work to these rhythms at City University. This was not an aspect of the course that Gabby could adjust to smoothly or quickly. Indeed as Pat forewarned, for Gabby this was a 'big transition'. Even into her second year she had not overcome these anxieties, "I still find it today. Like it's really

difficult. I feel like I've missed a skill along the way. [the skill of?] Independent Learning!" (05/02/16).

Making the transition to independent learning and the flexible temporal structures associated with this pedagogy also generated the opposite challenges for other students. Danni, for example, realised that at City University she had acquired new freedoms and independence, "I feel like I've got my *own sort of time*. So I'm free-er or more independent with what I do, and when I do it, and where I go" (Danni, 29/02/16). While overall she perceived this as a positive transition, she also talked about struggling to manage these new freedoms and balance her 'own time'. A good example of this was that in "the first semester, I was up until 3 o'clock in the morning finishing all my essays… and then handed in before 2 PM the next day so that was my moment of 'no, this has got to stop' [throwing her hands in the air]… and then it's like, since then, I am an organised" (Danni, 29/02/16). Although occupying opposite sides of the spectrum, the experiences of Gabby and Danni illustrate how students can find it difficult to make the transition into new tempos and pedagogies. These examples therefore do not portray a smooth path guiding students through the first few months gently into the new regimes and orientations of University life, instead they expose a potentially long rocky road ahead.

One reason for these extended periods of trial and error can be attributed to the *hysteresis effect* (Bourdieu, 1977). This effect takes place when the embodied students' system of dispositions (in this case their relationship to time, productivity and independence) are too distant from their new objective conditions (those of City University). As Bourdieu (1977) explained this may lead to either negative sanctions being imposed on individual and collective trajectories, or, those for those populations to view novel conditions in negative ways, as Gabby's experiences partially illustrated. More significantly this effect may also limit the chances of students being 'successful' within these new conditions, because the "hysteresis of habitus… is doubtless one of the foundations of the structural lag between *opportunities* and the dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of *missed opportunities*" (emphasis added, Bourdieu, 1977, p.83). So while the new rhythms, tempos, and freedoms of City University may eventually lead to updated forms of embodiment that are more responsive to the flexible working conditions of the CCI industries and the Performing Arts (see Chapter 4), there may be lots of 'missed opportunities'

along the way, moments when students' embodiment is ordered incorrectly for the temporal and productive orders of what is on offer. Additionally there are no guarantees that students' embodiment will ever become (re)ordered in 'productive' ways through exposure to these new tempos of action due to the fuzzy logic of the transmission between external structures and embodied structures (*ibid*). Reordering the body is therefore a difficult and unpredictable task, one fraught with potentially constricting consequences for these students. These difficulties are not limited to their 'academic transitions', such as coming to terms with independent learning, but also relate to more primal forms of being and becoming. To reinforce this last point this scene concludes by briefly returning focus to the extent to which previous educational experiences have made these bodies docile.

To imagine the ultimate disciplined body is to envisage a person who does not urinate until the authority says it can urinate, and it will not defecate until permission is given either. This obedience is the perfect vision of docility - to control one's natural bodily functions at the behest of disciplinary power. Not dissimilar to Foucault's (1977) description of the eighteenth century soldier, these BTEC students now in HE, would always seek permission to remove themselves temporarily from the learning environment to go to the toilet. While I was present this happened without exception from September to the 12th of December 2014. The selective series of examples below contribute a highly symbolic account that epitomises the extent to which these bodies had been made docile through previous educational experiences.

Toilet Please? 9th of October; 15th of October; 13th of November; 12th of December 2014.

9th of October: Danni asks Neil "Can I go to the toilet please?". Instead of just responding to Danni, Neil addresses the whole group. Politely he reminds them that "you do not need permission to go to the toilet".

15th of October: A female student directly in front of me is shaking her crossed legs and tapping her feet on the floor. She turns her head to whisper to the girl next to her. Straight after this girl shouts out, "Can Ellie go to the toilet please?" interrupting Pat's explanation of Stanislavski's theatrical symbolism. Ellie was obviously 'too shy' to ask at this moment and her friend took matters into her own hands, to Ellie's embarrassment. Pat replied with a type of response that was now commonplace, "you don't need to ask! You can go at any time, just get up and signal as you go".

13th of November: A female student walks up to George and quietly asks "Can I please go to the toilet?". His response was both public and loud, "Yes! You don't have to ask, *it's not school*! Just go, if you need a dump. Just go". George finished his response in a more playful tone after opening sounding genuinely annoyed and forceful. The girl's body betrays her as her face goes pink in a display of discomfort and embarrassment. She laughs and shouts her reply "I need a wee actually" while quickly leaving the room.

12th of December: Earlier in the day Gabby had asked quietly if she could go to the toilet and got the usual response. But this time Gabby just stood up and quietly made her exit. She walked nervously and quietly across the room to the door, looking back every few steps. It appeared like she was anticipating the lecturer to ask her what she was doing. She left without any challenge.

For almost three months the body, when faced with moments of minor discomfort (most likely not intense pain), remained loyal to a protocol that installs obedience. What may be thought of as a courteous permission seeking convention actually invokes disciplinary power because what if the lecturer said no? A decision would be forced between complying and controlling their bladder/bowels as their discomfort turns to pain, or alternatively they could defy the order and potentially face disciplinary consequences. The students had to be told multiple times before habits started to change, implying that these habits were deeply ingrained into their bodily hexis. Most likely the reluctance to go to the toilet without permission was a lasting affect from a history of surveillance within educational settings that had made them overly cautious: what if they went to leave without permission and then were challenged by an authoritative person? This caution spilt into Gabby's nervous walk when volunteering to be the 'guinea pig' and test the new arrangement (12/12/14). Luckily in this case City University was not an authoritarian institution when it came to micromanaging when students could use the toilets, as the lecturers had frequently advertised.

The argument here is not that the social constraints of the civilising process[41] (Elias, 1994) should be undone, and for society to return to 'primitive' or 'savage' pre-medieval manners, for

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[41] A process where "the more animalic human activities were progressively thrust behind the scenes of people's communal and social life and invested with feelings of shame" (Elias, 1994, p.365).

transitional opportunities to be unleashed. Students, or staff for the matter, would not benefit in any serious way from going to the toilet wherever and whenever they had the urge. The argument is instead of theoretical and social significance. Theoretically, these examples reinforced that these bodies-in-transition needed continual encouragement (and sometimes embarrassment) to be coerced from their docility. And like the transition to 'independent learning' an extended period of time was required before habits began to be replaced - and even then some fail to adjust. Socially, these examples revealed that students self identify with a low position in institutional power relations. So low that they felt the need to ask permission for minor and temporary movements (both bodily and locational) that require them to leave the 'classroom', placing them momentarily outside of human surveillance. Implicit in this self identification was a misguided judgment that the institution's tentacles stretch into the corridors and toilets in a bid to regulate what is done and when it is done. However, the advice from staff was not for students to wait and to go to the toilet in their 'free time'. They are free to go whenever, and therefore to some extent it was now *their* choice to do with *their* time what they want. With this most basic of freedoms, lectures and seminars are not set in the *same* forms of productive/regulated/disciplined/capitalised time as in Journeys. Yet, this is only a powerful transition if the students seize, or are equipped to operate in, the (re)ordering of engaged/ independent/participatory/free time. Otherwise it merely creates challenges to overcome and emotional toil to cope with. With this comes an increased potential to 'fail' to be inducted into University life and work.

Gay Drama: 30th of September 2014. This is the third induction activity, or 'icebreaker', I have taken part in this week. Each time with a different cohort of Performing Arts and Drama students. These exercises have not been rushed, usually taking up half of the two hour introductory lecture. The time is spent sitting in a circle sharing information and stories about ourselves. Ethnographically it has been really useful to get a sense of who the students are and vice versa.

Neil poses his first question to the group, "can you introduce yourselves and say which course you are taking - so we can begin to get to know each other?"[42]. On cue the student to Neil's left introduces herself. They are taking 'Straight Drama' as opposed to mixing the subject with any other pathway. This statement passes without attention being paid to it. The second student informs the group that she is also taking 'Straight Drama'; to which Neil humorously interjects "why has Drama become *Straight Drama* all off a sudden? … It seems just a bit homophobic to make explicit the sexuality of the drama you do. We don't care here!" His comments were met with lots of laughter from the group.

A few Performing Arts students have introduced themselves before it is the next Drama student's turn. Learning from the previous poor choice of words this student clarifies that she is taking 'Just Drama'. Neil, with his quick-witted response challenges this as well, "well don't call it *Just Drama* either, because that infers that drama is not important, and if that is the case why are we all here?". Again this is met with laughter.

Now halfway through the group, it is the turn of a youthful faced male student who is perched ready on the edge of his chair: his legs are crossed and arms folded (with his right wrist propping up his head, connecting his chin to his raised knee through his arm). His head is also slightly titled to the side. It is a distinctive pose. Confidently he addresses the audience, "Hiiiiiii, I'm Timothyyyy, and I am doing *Gay Drama*". His right hand, used to prop up his head, is disconnected from his chin towards the end of the sentence freeing him to make an open palmed sweeping gesture. Timothy then pauses for a moment anticipating the audience's response. Laughter and smiles greet him. The response from the audience was not dissimilar to the feedback Neil had been getting from his contributions.

This icebreaker was more noteworthy than merely having a function to help facilitate students in getting to know one and another. In the earliest of opportunities, the first formal group interaction, a level of sexual openness was established. Neil set out an anti-homophobic policy within minutes of the students' first lecture, making it abundantly clear that "we don't care here" in relation to how people identify with their sexualities and what forms of sexualities may

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42 This cohort is comprised of almost equal numbers of students on the Drama and the Performing Arts programmes.

appear in their theatrical performances. This established, Timothy felt comfortable and confident to 'come out' in his very first public address. His declaration was warmly received and, on the surface at least, openly accepted. Set against the review of sexuality within the CCI's and theatre (see Chapters 4) this account was unsurprising. The induction activity adds further support to qualitative and quantitative evidence that suggests that these types of 'creative environments' tend to show a greater openness to the LGBTQ communities and liberal/diverse sexual politics. It mirrors Dolan's (2010) recognition that "sexual minorities have found among theatre people a generous acceptance sometimes not available in dominant culture's more constrained, conforming ways of life" (p.3). The rhetoric conveyed in 'Gay Drama' demonstrated an acceptance that stretched from the 'backstage', where the community of Performing Arts students socialise, into the 'footlights', where their public performances were staged[43].

Neil's comments apply to the backstage, through an anti-homophobic policy, but also in the footlights because it does not matter what "the sexuality of the drama you *do*" is. This statement therefore opened up an environment where it is acceptable to identify as straight or gay but also to *do* straight or gay drama, in any combination the students wish. Better still, Neil suggested, are types of Drama that do not explicitly *label* sexuality. This is, by definition, an 'open' Drama. A Drama that is not exclusive to, or exclusionary of, multiple sexualities. Yet an exception was made for Timothy's affinity with Gay Drama. In this instance though, Gay Drama was not a label, it was more accurately a *flag*. And as such it was not subject to the same playful scrutiny that Straight Drama was. Of course, it would have been ludicrous, and potentially construed as homophobic, for anyone to suggest that 'it seems a bit (hetero)phobic to make explicit the (homo)sexuality of the drama you do' when Timothy's flag was laid out. Homophobia actually exists whereas heterophobia doesn't[44], at least not with a cultural force of oppression and marginalisation behind it. Nor are there any sensible suggestions that the transitions of people

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[43] Dolan's historical examination of live theoretical performances shows that this is not uniformly the case. While generally speaking contemporary forms of Performance Art reflect a post-modern refusal "to observe the conventions of fourth-wall [gender and sexual] domesticity" (ibid, p.15) other forms of live performances continue to press conservative heteronormative visions of sexuality into the public arena.

[44] The fictitious world of 'heterophobia' has been recently explored in education. Using the Performing Arts as a critical medium, Phillips's (2016) *Heterophobia* presented to teenagers "the struggle of one young heterosexual male, Ryan, trying to 'come out' in a homosexual world, a binaristic sexuality switch of the privileged and oppressed" (p. 319).

who identify as heterosexual are constrained through bigoted views around their sexual practices. The same cannot be said for homosexual populations, even in various sectors of the Performing Arts around the world (Dolan, 2005). Therefore in an important token of tolerance and acceptance, both 'Gay Drama' and Timothy were welcomed into the space in these initial exchanges unchallenged, greeted with laughter and smiles.

It was not possible to confidently comment upon how open, or closed, the BTEC environment was to non-heterosexual identities at Journeys. Sexuality did not emerge as a theme within this site, there are a number of potential reasons for this. It is possible that because the participants were marginally younger (17 to 18 years old) combined with the fact that I only met with them inside a more tightly regulated FE environment, discussions and displays of sexualities could have been muted. While this may have been a pronounced finding in itself, it is not one that can be firmly made. It might simply have been a result of chance. It is not inconceivable that I was absent when discussions of this nature took place[45].

Nevertheless, the sexual politics of one BTEC student, Tina, provides a traceable lineage that makes the observed dynamics within City University more than possible, even predictable. It was Tina's firm belief that sexualities are both misrepresented and 'made a mockery of' in pantomime. Her convictions were intimately tied to her distaste for 'Panto' as an art form, it's "just not theatre… I feel that they're taking the mickey out of theatre and how beautiful theatre can be… theatre is there to make people think and change lives, be beautiful, and to inspire kids and all this kind of stuff". Apart from the main function of a pantomime to 'make money' the real nub of her distaste is that "I don't like the fact that we're *still* dressing up… I've got nothing against people that want to dress up, but because it's the 'Panto culture'… it doesn't feel - it doesn't feel *real*. So fair enough if they were experimenting with like sexuality. So I get that, and I think that's great! But they're not" (Tina, 06/02/16). These statements were revealing for a number of interconnected reasons.

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45 A claim that can be made confidently is that (homo)sexuality frequently bubbled to the surface of social interactions at City University, whereas the same was not be true in Journeys. This does not mean that sex and sexuality was not an important or powerful feature of the BTEC, merely that it was not captured through the ethnographic practice, for whatever methodological reason.

Importantly Tina showed support to people who experiment with gender and sexuality on authentic or real grounds. However, this authenticity must relate to the natural, materialist and biophysical desires of the flesh. 'Real' sexuality here bears little, or no, relation to the influence of nurture and cultural socialisation (as it excluded pantomime culture). Specifically Tina's distaste was for "traditional pantomimic stereotypes such as dame (weighty, oversexed woman played by a man)" (Sladen, 2017, p.209). These types of performances in Tina's view were not fitting for the twenty first century because they make a spectacle of those that chose to 'experiment with sexuality' through comedy and carnival. Trivialising transvestism and experimental sexual projects, turning them to drag for money, was not a *beautiful* transformation that can inspire kids and change lives (in Tina's eyes), it was *grotesque*. These grotesque bodies offended her embodied cultural tastes. Experimental and real (i.e. natural and grounded in biological/materialist differences in the body) sexualities were 'great' and to be encouraged, whereas unnatural and freakish displays of sex did not belong on the stage. While this may seem contradictory to an 'open' sexual environment Tina reconciles these tensions through the belief that the remit of Panto culture is fundamentally insensitive. It is her view that in pursuit of quick thrills Panto is doomed to fail to 'make people think'. As illustrated in (P1, A1, S1) Tina is convinced that 'serious' drama, like Antigone, has the innate power to make people think about social issues and this includes tensions around sex and gender. On the other hand, from her point of view, Panto cannot do this and is therefore a less culturally valuable form within the Performing Arts. But in these dismissals, on some level, the grotesque performances of weighty and oversexed dames are delegitimised through an association with low cultural capital and inauthenticity.

While Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital will be explored further in relation to valued forms of expression in Play 2, this example shows that sexual tolerance is bound to more variables than just sex and gender. Against my critical lens of social justice within the Performing Arts, all performances, hold value as long as they do not infringe upon the democratic polity. All performances, regardless of genre, should provide avenues for any*body* in transition to discover a future where they are accepted but also can 'flourish' (see Chapter 6 for more details). An open Drama must therefore include Gay Drama, Straight Drama, Antigone and Panto. For Panto can provide a space to be sexual and explore sexualities (even for overweight men), while at the

same time provoking thought about what some may find insensitive, and *why*. These do not have to be contradictory statements they can be complimentary processes. Exploring this 'why', in a public arena, can pave the way for a 'progressive' politics and greater social justice through a stimulation of collective reflexivity. Put simply, Drama (including other modalities of performance) does not have to be 'Just Drama'; it can be an important discipline for a spectrum of sexual transitions, and shifts in public conscience to occur. But for this to happen firstly it needs to be uncompromisingly 'open' throughout; in the backstage, in the footlights and in the auditorium[46]. A truly open Drama is a powerful Drama, powerful enough to reorder what sexual practices/performances embodied students can engage in and indeed what sexual identities are possible. It is a Drama endowed with more sexual *opportunities* and less sexual *constraints*. But to what extent did City University meet these abstract hyperboles of openness in practice?

Openness is not measured by popularity. Arguably though popularity is a good indicator of how accepted somebody is, and this, by extension conceivably includes their sexual identity. By proxy therefore it may be a suitable category to assess roughly how open student and staff are to (other) sexualities beyond discourse and rhetoric. In the months following this icebreaker Timothy became a popular figure across the group. Two lines of anecdotal evidence support these claims. First of all, on numerous occasions Timothy and male or female students embraced for between five and ten seconds. This implies an openness to prolonged and close *physical* contact. Secondly, Neil assumed his popularity when suggesting to one student, "with the close bond you share with Timothy, perhaps he can do it for you" (20/11/14). Encounters of this nature suggest that on the surface Timothy, as an openly homosexual student, was not overtly constricted in forming social bonds during his course. This implies a *social* openness.

Evidence to the country however implies that some *cultural* slips might be partially closing off, rather than opening up, an acceptance to some homosexual bodies. In other words, the walls of the Arena for Performing Arts transitions can be breached by language that holds an uncomfortable relationship with progressive sexual politics. Through this permeability, more complex 'degrees of openness' are established. The degree to which this site may be considered

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46 Perhaps more ideally it can be 'post-human' in its orientations towards sexual practices and identities. This futuristic body will be empirically explored in the next scene.

truly open is relational to the embodied actor's interpretations of the hostile or inclusive qualities of particular cultural phrases. In Timothy's absence, for example, members of his working group for the upcoming assessments were editing video footage. While watching back their production on screen one of the female members pointed out "look how gay he looks" [laughing]. This comment was in response to Timothy gasping in fear (13/11/14). Gay in this instance was not necessarily used in a derogatory way, although some may interpret it in this way as the term often used with negative connotations. It was most likely a nod to the *campness* of his movements and expression. According to Harrison (1998) historically to 'camp it up', in a theatrical context means to perform in a very visually extravagant and flamboyant manner. Its French derivative, *se camper*, is a reflexive verb which means "to stand in a proud or provocative attitude" (*ibid*, p.46). However, in post Second World War usage, to camp it up became associated with displays of 'homosexual mannerisms' (whatever culture decides these consist of) alongside performing in an over-the-top fashion. Conceivably these qualities accurately described Timothy's performances; but nonetheless reaching for the word gay spells out a complicated relationship to acceptance, especially in his absence. This utterance would have remained problematic even if gay was meant to point towards a 'camp' movement because this would bring into alignment homosexual mannerisms with visually extravagant/flamboyant motions. These types of over-the-top performances have been consigned to Panto, Jazz Hands, and lower forms of Performance Art. Consequently camp bodies might ultimately be constrained a future consisting only of Camp Drama, particularly when the ordering processes of typecasting persist (see P1, A1, S1).

On the same day Timothy was also labeled a 'pussywhip'. This is surely a reversal of the slang term 'pussywhipped'[47]. In urban mythology *only*, the status endows him with an immunity to the assumed powers of the vagina (also known in 'vulgar slang' as the pussy) and inoculated against its anatomical seduction, gravity, and lure. The pussywhipped male, as mythology has it, exhibits submissive behaviour for the prospect of hetero*normative* sex. Women, on the other hand, are believed to possess more control over their own libidos and genitalia, thus creating an

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[47] For some cultural references for this term see: Pussywhipped by Steal Panther, 2014. The music video can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUUc4Cq5NJc. A definition can be found on the 'Urban Dictionary', the specific entry can be accessed at https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=pussy%20whipped.

opportunity for them to control the phallic male through their weaknesses to their sexual desires. The legend of being pussywhipped, is therefore based on the extension of the cultural belief that males inevitably succumb to the impulses of the phallus, "subordinating the rest of the body to the valorized functioning of the penis" (Grosz, 1994, p.200-1). Through an alleged incapacity to ignore these impulses, *man* is thought to be enslaved to their (hetero)sexual and reproductive desires through an insatiable lust. Whereas *woman* are viewed as the exploiters of masculine desire through this assumed power they hold. Therefore the term refers to a sexualised site whereby gender power dynamics are somewhat reversed. Of course, this is all in cultural mythology and is not to be taken literally as an accurate account of processes that order students' sexualities. This point cannot be laboured enough.

Despite this I argue that by examining relevant cultural mythologies, like stories of Oedipus[48] for example, an analysis of how *others* come to view these bodies-in-transition as sexually powerful, impotent or dysfunctional becomes possible. Through such methods of cultural deconstruction we can take seriously the role that the pussywhipped, and the myths that are background to it, have in ordering perceptions of sex and gender in this context. This is exemplified here through the positioning of Timothy within sexual-power networks. Timothy, the so called pussywhip, presented an anomaly or an unusual case for these female students because he remains a powerful male without his Achilles heel. While he has a penis, it was perceived that he could not be manipulated by the mythical powers of the vagina (due to his sexual identity). Again, the pussywhip status imposed on Timothy presents a myriad of complicated relations between sexuality, gender and openness to difference. Too myriad and too complex to explore in full here.

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[48] Freudian accounts, with other forms of psychoanalysis, of sexuality seem farfetched to me. In my view the Oedipus complex, for example, does not provide an accurate or useful account of bodies' sexual desires - but I acknowledge that as mythology it retains some cultural powers for shaping perceptions of sexualities. Alternatively, I am more drawn to the Anti-Oedipus of Delueze and Guattari (2000) as a way of thinking of bodies and (sexual) desire - even if I do not fully subscribe to their political orientations (see Chapter 6). Pussywhipping as a verb, might have been explained by Delueze and Guattari as an epiphenomenon of the privatisation of organs that occurs through the desiring-production mechanisms that bind the ego and capitalism. This mythology they might say sings of the creation of partial organs that repel or attract the whole body; one such partial organ of attraction is "vaginas riveted on the women's body" (*ibid*, p.112). Through this corporeal dissection, locations for (masculine) desires are formed, where embodiment can flow into and through. Yet, in the cultural assertions contained within this urban mythology a Body without Organs was not required to subvert sexual desire and remove oneself from an order of power relations. In City University, apparently all you have to be is homosexual.

In summary, the Arena for Performing Arts Transitions appears to provide a relatively open environment for sexualities to be explored and exist without homophobia and stigmatisation dominating the space. But some examples to the contrary show that, on the ground, sexual politics are more contested than first appearances. To reinforce some of these tensions, the full range of themes that have emerged through the analysis of 'Gay Drama' return as this Scene comes to its climax through the following on-screen eroticism, 'All that Jizz'. The screening shows off an eroticism blended with horror, carnival, comedy and campness. For added effect this busy fusion is sprayed with visual and semantic reference to blood and seminal fluids. The artistic combination typifies the "queer site of live performance which is drenched with *oozing* libido that can not be held back" (emphasis added, Dolan, 2010, p.x). The result is apparently 'terrifying':

'All that Jizz'. 20th November 2014. Willow shouts "Outtakes!". Their group has made an outtake video which is twice as long as the short horror clip they submitted for the assessment. Evidently the two minutes of footage wasn't enough performance time for this group. They revel in the spotlight. Neil has little option but to allow them to play this montage of clips, Willow has already pressed play.

Dressed in their halloween style costumes, complete with gory/ghostly make up, the outtakes provide a 'behind-the-scenes' glimpse into the production. The edited assortment of clips was structured to mimic the building of suspense typical of the horror genre.

It opened with Timothy singing "all that jazz" whilst mounted on Gabby and doing Jazz hands. After a few repetitions of signing the line, and progressive zooms, the crescendo has been hit. Now he is now forcefully shouting "all that Jizz" while pinning Gabby down.

After a short cut a playful scuffle is unfolding as Gabby tries to get free from under him. Timothy laughs, "you just touched my balls then". They both fall. Landing together laughing and embracing. It is seconds before the embrace starts to become eroticised once again. While laughing Gabby tells Timothy "Not so sexual…" when he is leaning in to bite her neck, with fake vampire teeth still in. The outtakes come to a close with Timothy recognising that "this is pornographic." The credits roll.

Neil concludes, while laughing, that their outtake video was more terrifying than their horror video!

Timothy unleashed Jizz, or male seminal fluids (semantically not physically), into the climactic moment of the montage. Producing according to Neil a more terrifying video. The effectiveness of this ploy is innate in the properties of sexual fluids association with danger and contamination. Indeed, drawing from Douglas's work *Being and Nothingness* Grosz (1994) eloquently summarised that "the viscous, the fluid, the flows which infiltrate and seep, are horrifying in themselves: there is something inherently disgusting about the incorporative, immersing properties of fluid" (Grosz, p.194). What is more terrifying, for me at least, when considering the sexual opportunities and constraints for these bodies-in-transition, is the absence of 'female sexualities' within these Performing Arts courses. This silence, may in part have a methodological bearing, notwithstanding the contrast was stark. What sort of justice is possible in an environment where the sexualities of 87.5% of the populous are (mostly) hidden from the ethnographic gaze?

Sex is, on many levels, synonymous with power. From bodily desire, to the *acts* themselves (however these may be defined), to what civil society deems to be unacceptable sexual practice. This power infiltrates the very core of the embodied subject – gripping tightly and caressing gently the inner strings that bring it to desire and enable it to think, feel and act. Power, operating through these sexualised impulses, could be evenly distributed and received with justice for all. Bodies as social-natural receptacles and generators will never have their fill, and share their lot, fairly, if the power dynamics remain hierarchical: positioning normative (i.e. acceptable/healthy/moral/reproductive) and transgressive (i.e. pathological/animal-like/immoral/ recreational) sexual forms in the image of man and his phallus. Nor can this future be reached if some sexualities are left off the mainframe and pushed to the peripheries of this circuitry of power; or worse still, being positioned as targets for the surges and storms this energy generates. Sexualities that are *underrepresented* in public are susceptible to become such fodder. In the wrath of being stricken by this storm, but also in the quietness of its eye, power is drained from targeted sexual actors and in some cases they become utterly powerless. In these situations these bodies become defined by their lack of autonomy to be fully sexual. There are varying degrees to which these bodies are left void of sexual sovereignty, of course. But generally speaking in City University this periphery constituency consists of the silent majority, that is female sexualities - the 87.5%.

Appropriate questions to probe with are therefore: (1) Is there a better future possible for this constituency of bodies-in-transition? And (2) are components of that future upon them already? To politically orientate my approach to the former, I will *selectively* recall a manifesto (Haraway, 1985) that holds promises of justice and pleasure to these sexual bodies if only they come to be integrated into the mainframe of a post-human world. Their transition towards sexual liberation depends on this revolution occurring and taking them with. This new word, in my view, functions more productively in the domain of science fiction. For the purpose of this analysis, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (*ibid*), therefore will be employed as a fantasy of a revolution, one that is equally concerned with a metamorphosis of minds as much as it is of bodies (although it

rejects such dualisms). Through engaging in these transformative imaginations we can begin to "rethink sexuality without genders", not erasing but reassessing "the generative powers of female embodiment" (Braidotti, 2013, p.98). Here holds a utopia with unlimited opportunities for these emerging cybernetic organisms. At the same time a dystopia awaits because these opportunities are matched by the dangers of losing sight of what it is to be a *human* body: a sacrifice that might be worth making.

Today "the cyborg seems a little dated, a dinosaur of the *zeitgeist"* (Black, 2014, p.108). However to resurrect the cyborg, or more accurately reboot the image of the post-human promised land in which it can exist is a valuable exercise for the silent majority identified above. This is because even after more than 30 years on from Haraway's (1985) seminal text, female sexualities at City University might still appreciate a break from the "hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks… called the informatics of domination" (p.300). The cyborg's way of thinking, feeling and acting has the potential to expand the open foundations that have been (partly) established within the Performing Arts arena while creating conditions where the sexualities of the 87.5% can enjoy greater sexual representation and autonomy. The ideologies of a post-human initiates a reordering process of embodiment that continues to bring to question the conceptual dichotomies and inequalities between "mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized" (*ibid*, p.302). This will have a profound effect on the transitional opportunities and experiences for periphery sexualities within the Performing Arts and beyond - such as female sexualities.

In order to make these reforms, the first reorientation of consciousness would require an erosion of homogenous male and female categories replacing bodily statuses with cyborg citizenship. Through this cyborg sex need not be *constrained* by simple male-female distinctions; cyborgs have no time, or purpose, to view sexuality through the lenses of heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality or otherwise. Indeed, the mission of the cyborg is to transgress boundaries and make potent fusions that lead to dangerous possibilities (Dystopias) in the pursuit of progressive futures (Utopias). With this purpose cyborg successes depend on seeking and forming alliances, coalitions, and connections with other bodies that have different

configurations. Hence, the *cyborg-body⁴⁹* carries with it a vision of, and longing for, ever expanding networks and infinite attachments. This integrated body can only survive in a landscape of flattening (sexual) difference. Imagine a grid with gender positions running in the vertical plane and sexualities in the horizontal, the post-human conditions outlined above pull these networks under lateral tension. This ruptures the historical hierarchy of domination to such an extent that cyborgs can no longer make any distinctions between categories, as positions collapse into one another. Through the collapsing of hierarchical relations between sex and gender, sexual power is more evenly distributed across a cyborg circuitry. No longer are sexual power relations made in man's image, firm or erect. Sexuality has no masculine or feminine bindings. Sex cannot remain phallic in this world, but this does not mean it has to be innocent. It only means that the phallus can no longer symbolise the sexual hub where power and potency is centrally stored (swelling in size) and ready to flow (or spurt) its energy in which ever directions it desires. This general flattening is congruent with a fairer distribution and generation that mimics the social justice principles my critical lens put forward in Chapter 6. In other words, a science fiction future holds more sexual justice and *opportunity* for these bodies-in-transition. Taken together therefore, this fantasy future sets out a different set of possibilities when it comes to the processes that order (female) embodiment. Rather it relies on a lack of ordering, where all students can be free from sexual/gender identities - while having the blessing to engage in a myriad of practices.

The later and more empirically grounded question can be addressed through two oppositional lines. Firstly, in 'Phono Jacks' the formation of a discourse that invokes a cyborgification of sexual practice is explored and speculated upon. This, in part, gives rise to productive possibilities of techno-human couplings. An optimistic reading of these events makes visible fusions that have the gift to bring into alignment the desires of flesh, electronic equipment, and vibrations through an *imagined* intimacy. Presenting a potential opportunity for a shift in sexual consciousness that has scope to open up post-human futures. In opposition to this, 'Sam's Snake' subsequently explores some trappings and deceptions that have their origins in *time*

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⁴⁹ I use the term *cyborg-body* here because I do not mean to imply that the only way that females (and others that are on the periphery of sex-power hierarchies of domination) can enjoy equal sexual privilege is to undergo futuristic surgery to become actual cyborgs. The female body can remain without electronic attachments but society still needs to make the ideological leap to cyborg citizenship so that the informatics of domination can replace the status quo.

immemorial. These shackles come back to haunt the post-human while draining the sexual powers of these female students. This recollection also comes to the support of a pessimistic reading of 'Phono-Jacks'.

Phono Jacks: 16th of October 2014. The sound mixers need rewiring to accommodate new audio inputs and outputs. George takes the lead, providing the students with a beginner's guide to the equipment. In this technical guide he demonstrates how 'male' and 'female' phono jacks connect. Immediately this coupling allows sound to pass between the female and the male resulting in a sound that fills 'the hut' with low humming vibrations. It is a barely perceptible sonorous sound that resounds within our ear drums and flesh. This cannot be shut out from our shared experiences as ears have no eyelids. All of us must be sensing these connections on some level. George's demonstration, while not particularly momentous in any way, activated our embodied sensory experiences through visual, audial and kinaesthetic methods. An intimate series of flows from one body (electronic) to another (corporeal) happened in this moment. The medium was vibration, the form was intensity.

This is not an unusual chain of events, and one that is not typically considered as *sexual.* Moreover, it is a basic enough technical operation that hardly warrants an extended discussion between George and Sam. Nevertheless, the demonstration creates an opportunity for imagined sexual worlds and acts to enter the public discourse. This is seized.

George advises the students that it would help them remember how to connect the phono jacks together if they use their "*imagination* and think of the anatomy of sex". After this advice is dispensed George again visually demonstrates the movements that bring the male and female into tessellation. His fingers first take the equipment in hand. As he holds the separate components in plain view, he comments "look, the male *goes into* the female. Like this". More sexual analogies and innuendos follow that make distinctions between different sizes of audio jacks.

It is at this point where Sam, the lead lecturer, intervenes "stop George. You're making me horny", not breaking from a pensive expression. It is no longer entirely clear if Sam is thinking of the anatomy of 'human' sex or whether he is starting to *imagine* sexual worlds where sound, audio equipment, and human bodies share some form of erotic experiences. It is less clear where the audience's (predominately female students) imagination lapse in this second as a peculiar laugh fills the room.

When the noise dies down and everyone has had a breath, George continues his illustration, "look, you can't jab the male into another male [he says as holding up the two cables demonstrating - instead of a continual dull humming this made a sharper, more temporary noise]. Well actually you could, it is the 21st century after all!".

An optimistic reading of events revolve around the capacity of imagination to create novel (sexual) worlds without limits. These unbounded worlds do not have to draw exclusively on the human sexual analogies and autonomies that are in play. The imagination of these bodies may also connect themselves to the sensory experiences that underpinned these demonstrations (of the connections that were felt as intensities in our vibrating bodies, for example). While the capacity for an imagination without limits may be thought of as a universal quality of embodied experience and not confined to artistic assignments (Dewey, 1980), arguably, the budding performing artist has pride in their *creative bodies* - or at the very least is encouraged to be expressive and creative (Play 2 & 3 handle these themes in turn). The content of the imagination that a creative body may conjure does not have to be pulled out from human experiences alone. These bodies can create new visions that do "not arise out of nothing, but emerge through seeing, in terms of possibilities… old things in new relations" (Dewey, 2013, p.49)[50]. Through this creative leap students' imagination can generate new images that are accompanied with, and map onto a vast array of embodied sensations. These are imaginations that *feel* and therefore can generate vivid fantasies, some perhaps akin to science fiction and others feasibly *sexual* or intimate in content. The encounter above therefore might just awaken and stimulate dormant cyborg-bodies. It is important to remember that in this chain of events *real* fusions are being made, while at the same time (sexual) imaginations are being prodded within these creative bodies. These creative bodies may be universally given, but with this audience in particular it is quite possible that their creative imaginations are hyper attuned. As such there can be no telling where these imaginations lapsed when a peculiar laugh broke out, or when these bodies took a breath to recompose themselves. From this, I began to consider: is there sufficient evidence to be optimistic that post-human sexual orientations might begin to appear on the horizon?

A pessimistic reading suggests no. This analysis derives from an examination of the linguistics that shaped the discourse. At the most fundamental level the categories of 'male' and 'female'

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[50] Shilling (2012) suggested that it is through pragmatist traditions, such as Dewey's accounts of imagination, where the creative body can be captured and understood. He continued to argue that "pragmatically orientated studies of bodies in a social context… acknowledge that embodied subjects retain capacities which enabled them to adopt an active and at times a transformative orientation to social and technological phenomenon" (*ibid*, p.255). Indeed these accounts of the body provide an avenue where deterministic applications of habitus and docility can be rejected. Even the most docile of bodies can be affected and effected through their creative bodies. So with the body as a multi-dimensional phenomena the docile body and the creative body can live together in the same flesh.

still dictated the identities of the 'phono jacks' but also how they should couple. The ratio for sound to appear is one female jack to one male and together they must remain in order to keep producing vibrations. Secondly we are told and then shown that **'the male *goes into* the female'**: why is it not 'the female takes the male'? This phallocentric discourse asserts the active role of the male jack and the passivity of the female (i.e. sound is only possible when the male acts). The passivity of the female phono jack may also be extended to the corporeal bodies present because the audience of (predominantly) females are being performed to, and do not participate in, the forming public discourse of sexualities. Finally, the audience is reminded that the analogies are taking place within 'the 21st century'. In this epoch homosexual (male-to-male) phono jacks are openly tolerated; even if their physical meetings do not produce sound in the correct way. What is left undisclosed however is whether you can 'jab the female into another female'. Once again female sexualities (even technological ones) pass under the radar in this instance. The reminder to students that it is the 21st century also serves to interrupt any imaginations that may have strayed momentarily into any futuristic possibilities of post-human sexualities.

It is from the two opposing analyses put forward above that my critical judgments lacked confidence. Although 'Phono Jacks' shared some post-human trends (namely the intimate coupling of human and technological bodies) the episode did not necessarily show a futuristic flattening of sexualities. The analogies that drew exclusively on human sexual practices contributed to the framing of what sex is and what sex can be. In doing so it may have imposed unnecessary boundaries on the 'imagination without limits' that was central to putting forward the optimistic reading of 'Phono Jacks'. Consequently in October 2014 I was not yet entirely sure which reading would emerge with more merit. Subsequent fieldnotes, a month later, provided further insights that helped me to understand more clearly the power dynamics at play in the scenario above.

Sam's Snake. 25th November 2014. This time last week (18/11/14) I was just about to enter 'the hut' as a small group of female students were exiting. I was behind the other side of the door as it was opening and I heard one of them say "Where is Sexy Sam today?". Startled the girl who must have just spoken jumped as she reacted to the sight of me "Shit! I though you were him for a second". Relieved that I was not Sam the girls made their way down the street singing "Sam, you can ring my bell-el-el, ring my bell" to the imitation of Anita Ward's 1979 hit single *Ring My Bell[51]*.

Today Sam is delivering lectures back-to-back. We enter as the second year Performing Arts students are leaving (including the same female students I bumped into last week). And we are greeted by what Sam describes to us as an "insight into my mind and world". This insight is visually messy, it has been turned into map on the white board - that sit under a spotlight.
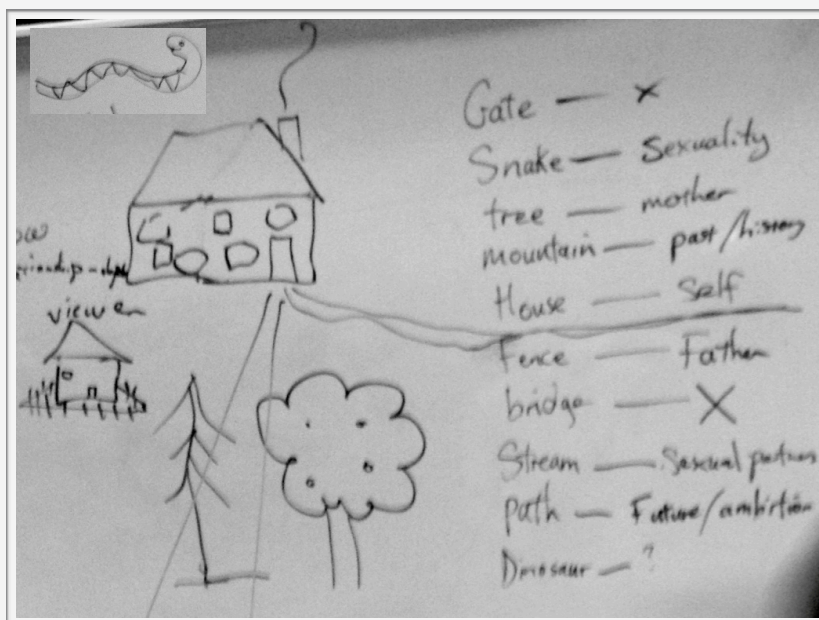
Some students stop to look at it for a brief moment, others take no interest. Sam let me take a picture of it before he turned the board around so that he could use the other side for this session with the first year students.

These notes contain the one recorded incident where female bodies actively participated in discussions in which sexual desires were overtly present. Being a 24 year old male ethnographer, it may come as little surprise that the encounter began when I was out of sight from the female students (see Chapter 7 for some further methodological reflections concerning the impact of my corporeal presence within the field). Encouragingly, after the shock of seeing somebody (me) that for split second could be mistaken for Sam, the group of three continued to

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51 A definition of 'Ring my Bell' can be found on the 'Urban Dictionary', the specific entry can be accessed at https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=ring%20my%20bell.
The music video can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URAqnM1PP5E.

air their (private) discussions more publicly – singing down the street. Female sexualities within City University therefore exist in a form that is not completely silenced or totally underrepresented in public discourse. A second sign of progress is related to students' choice to express their sexualities by drawing on this 1970s disco song. This choice held significance because *Ring My Bell* is suggestive of sexual analogies, ones that centre on female sexual satisfaction (see footnote 57 for further details), and those that once again could signify the flow of noise, vibrations and intensities between human and non-human bodies, albeit in a different composition to 'Phono Jacks'. The accompanying imagery, the bell that rings to the timing of sexual satisfaction, reflects a creative leap and a (re)imagination of human anatomies as open to technological modification. This poses another potential example of a post-human "experience of embodied abstraction whereby the materiality of the embodied subject is, … romantically fused with technological apparatus" (Cregan, 2006, p.15). This productive fusion was not invented or physically enacted by the embodied students, and yet they replicated it through improvised song to express (sexual) desire and/or attraction.

The following insight into Sam's 'mind and world' however undermined the overall significance of the post-human fantasies that were embedded within these field observations. Historically, snakes or serpents have been symbolically potent in sexual mythologies including those born out of religion (Scott, 1941) and psychoanalysis[52]. Since *time immemorial* across many religious and cultures, the serpent has been used as an erotic symbol for passion, fertility, deception and temptation (*ibid*). They have also been seen as predatory in nature. Through these symbolic connections snakes are not only phallic in shape but also in their intentions - to tempt, to mislead, to dominate. With all of this symbolic history by aligning his sexuality to a snake, Sam's imagined world can only be seen to recreate the 'hierarchies of domination' (Haraway, 1985) that are made in man's image. For me, this revelation demands a shift towards a pessimistic conclusion.

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[52] As a scientific discipline, psychoanalysis has generated a mass of theory regarding unconscious sexualities and sexual desire. Indeed Freud contended that snakes represented the penis and that females that dreamed of snakes were lusting for the male anatomy. In spite of the realisation that bodies-in-transition is incompatible with these forms of theorisation, in the previous Scene I suggested that these continue to function and circulate within cultural mythology and powerfully order how others come to view sexuality.

Sam's self examination provided an Oedipal account of (masculine) sexuality and in doing so refined the social meanings of his earlier contributions, e.g. "Stop George. You're making me horny". Sam's diagrammatic insight contributed by solidifying the view that a phallocentrism continues to dominate sexual discourse in this environment. Therefore the power relations implicit within the public discourses of sexuality observed at City University have to be shown in a more problematic and pessimistic light. And from this I concluded that nothing fundamentally happened afresh, there is no post-human fantasy on the horizon. Inertia for change was marginal in comparison to the grips of phallocentrism. There are the same old power dynamics just with futuristic packaging. Even the most profound of imaginations cannot kill the existence of predatory snakes and turn their corpses into just another cyborg attachment. The snake has come back from the Garden of Eden to constrain these female students, trapping them in their transitions to liberated and equal sexual bodies. For an opportunity to move to a post-human (utopic) future an imagination of the cyborg needs to be awoken in everyone, not just the female students.

PLAY 2: Educating Expression: a Hidden Curriculum

The performance of communication is multimodal. A vast repertoire of body language is important for everyday interactions and presenting the self in theatrical context (Goffman, 1959)[53]. Hand gestures play a pivotal role in this multimodality for all primates, including humans (see, Bertolaso & Di Stefano, 2017; Sacks, 1990; Sheets-Johnstone, 2009). Bertolaso and Di Stefano (2017) demonstrated that from the fist to the phalanges, hands, have an ability to express many meanings. In addition to this Castro (2017) noticed that the human hand, through touch, is essential to the experience of art. More specifically the movement of these expressive hands can also be thought of as key to the production of (most) Performance Art due to their noted contributions to communication - most obviously in the production of music (Leman, Nijs & Di Stefano, 2017). Hands can therefore form a centre point where certain types of gestural movements can be ridiculed or marginalised within the arena for Performing Arts transition. In relation to these announcements *jazz hands* emerged as a key theme.

Jazz hands consists of a distinctive set of bodily movement. Through observing these movements I identified three key elements that define its movements and potentially influence its meanings. Starting from the hands themselves, the palm is always turned out towards the audience (not always at the same angle) and fingers are spread apart. The shape of jazz hands are as shown in Figure C. Spacraci and Volterra (2017) suggested that hand gestures of this nature create a visual metaphor for transparency. If this metaphor has any bearing on jazz hands, it would imply that the expressions that the actor is attempting to transmit during that moment are not hidden, shielded, or subtle. This visual metaphor is therefore contradictory to nuanced performances. Any emotional complexities therefore are simplified to a few dominant 'easy to read' expressions that are presented in plain view so that all can witness and understand. As I interpreted them, these were unfiltered happiness and excitement. This interpretation was arrived at in conjunction with the second distinctive element. This consisted of a number of ingredients that had nothing to do with the hands *per se* but were still paramount to the

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[53] For Goffman (1959)everyday interactions unfold within theatrical contexts. In developing a dramaturgical theory of social interaction Goffman conceptualised all of symbolic exchanges to take place 'on stage' or in the 'backstage' and therefore does not distinguish between theatre in everyday life and such. How the social actors present their bodies in these rounds is central to both team and individual performances. In Play 3 Goffman's interaction order returns at greater length.

performance of jazz hands. Specifically, this included making animated facial expressions[54] (e.g. showing wide smiles and big eyes), presenting a slight side profile and pushing forward one's chest. In other words, through these movements, the performer is aiming to emphasise 'tits and teeth' (for both male and female performers) while putting forward their 'good side'. The over-the-top nature of these combined actions may add to the 'campness' of a performance, and therefore 'jazz hands' can sometimes become connected to the politics of sexuality (as briefly alluded to in 'All that Jizz', P1, A3, S1). The third notable feature is that jazz hands are held in a position away from the body and shimmer from side to side. Often this movement is accompanied with noise (either vocal, a foot stomp, or a hand clap that precedes it). This combination of techniques command attention; like the gorilla who uses hand clapping as an auditory attention-getting gesture or the chimpanzee that raises its arms to command a physical presence (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009). In this sense, the projection of noise occupies the same territory as the movement of the rapidly shaking hands 'out there' (in a distal position from the centre of the body). This is the territory of drawing attention to their performance, their *presence*, and their body.

Figure C: Image taken from Spacraci & Volterra (2017, p. 46)

These three identified corporeal techniques therefore may be considered as constituting basic forms of 'signing', e.g. look over here, I am happy/excited, I feel at home on stage. In this light the movements that bring about jazz hands were quantifiably different from the more subtle types of signing that were on display when students sought to *authentically* express the

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[54] Outside of musicals and pantomimes, the spectacle of jazz hands may have been modified with pom-poms and found a home within some fractions of cheerleading. In relation to this third element in particular, similarities can be made with what Priyadharshini & Pressland (2015) exposed as the 'cheer face'. This includes 'massive smiles', teeth and gums, but also according to one of their participants the face is also about courage. A 'brave face' is needed to show confidence, they may never let slip to the audience that they may be scared. This cheer face mimics the facial expressions that accompany jazz hands and if there is any transference here it must be that while the hands visually signal transparency the performers face must show confidence regardless of what they are feeling. This is either contradictory or actually requires the individual to be confident, to be 'at home on the stage'.

movements of a blind man, for example, (see P2, A3, S1). But also they were qualitatively distinct in the ways the actors and audiences came to experience and make sense of these gestures. These actions appear forcibly on the phenomenological horizon. One rationale for these perceptions of jazz hands is that the gestural techniques outlined above may have ancient relatives in the chain of evolutionary semantics (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009; Arbib *et al.,* 2008). This transfers into society's perception of elaborate gestures, where they are often seen "as something rudimentary, primitive, pantomimic, a poor thing" (Sacks, 1990, p.20). Unrefined gestures, such as those that are overly transparent and employ large movements or generate noise, are a reminder to 'civilised' humans that their multimodal communication systems have their origins in a remote, *prehuman* past (*ibid*).

In this evolutionary chain of communicational development Arbib *et al.,* (2008) located 'pantomime' gestures as the second stage reached after mere imitation; many primates are capable of pantomimic gesture[55]. As a pantomime performance (in both the theatrical and evolutionary semantical sense), jazz hands consists of a set of bodily actions that are composed in an out of the ordinary manner. The bodily form intends to mimic an exaggerated abstraction of excitement, and not an imitation of any natural behaviour that is associated with an excited body. According to Sparaci & Volterra (2017) pantomime gestures lag behind more advanced methods of bodily communication and symbolism, such as 'emblems' and 'sign languages'. It is possible to make the case then that in evolutionary terms, jazz hands do represent a less complex or primitive form of corporeal semantics than the types of body languages that the human species are capable of. These assertions may help to produce some understanding of the phenomenological basis regarding how audiences within the Arena for Performing Arts Transition come to perceive and experience jazz hands. In a few words, a theory of evolutionary semantics speaks to the underlying processes of the experiencing body. These processes may impinge on the validation or ridicule of certain types of hand performances, by setting some experiential criteria for their aesthetic judgements (that are based in the natural, pre-cultured, human body). This account cannot be easily dismissed. Nevertheless even if these gestures do constitute more basic forms of signing, it would not mean from my critical perspective, that

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[55] In this anthropological field of research, the ability to 'imitate' is to copy defined models of movements whereas a 'pantomime' gesture entails mimicking movements outside of normal behavioural repertoires. This is to elaborate on a movement that is not a natural function to that body; for example, a monkey flapping their arms to mimic flying.

these types of performances and bodies should have no future in the Performing Arts. An alternative and important explanation is therefore also needed to map on top of this experiential base - to explore and challenge the persecution of jazz hands. This explanation can come from a theoretical position that recognises that gestures (and students' experiences of them) are ultimately shaped by fields of cultural production. This provides an account that the following data is closely aligned to.

Jazz hands and Symbolic Violence: 15th of December 2014. There is a moment of downtime between scenes, while Mason and Sandy recalibrate some lighting controls. The students soon slip into a game-like interaction that reveals some underlining symbolic powers. It began with Jen finishing a sentence with a faint "bud-dum shh" (the stereotypical sound of the drum and symbol that are hit after a joke). At the same time as making these noises with her voice she weakly stomped and clapped in time with the "bud-dum" and shook her hands and fingers to and fro gently on the "shhh". Jude comments, "love the jazz hands" while laughing.

Jen's jazz hands were half-hearted and unenthusiastic. Moments after mocking Jen's performance Jude followed in suit. His actions and noises were slightly louder and more vigorous. The group begins to laugh all together now. All four of them are now engaged in a competition to outdo each other. In order to do this the 'shhhhhh' becomes longer and louder, hands shake more violently and smiles become wider. In fact each of the possible elements (movements and noises) become as exaggerated as they can muster. Within a minute the students are performing this outrageously with *maximal* effort, tiring themselves out and going pink in the face. And this only increases its humour quality for the students. It was comical to me as well watching the events unfold. Very quickly the entire interaction was reduced into a surreal episode through strange movements and noises - these made me briefly imagine a *prehuman* or *nonhuman* scenario. When there is no more extreme behaviour to reach, the humour immediately evaporates and the discussion moves onto a new topic.

It appeared that the loud noises, wide smiling faces, and the ever-increasing shaking hands was something of lighthearted ridicule. Finding humour in the stereotypical performances of not *serious*[56] actors. The backdrop to these interactions is a day-long of rehearsal for Antigone, a very *serious* play. It is a play that deals with subtle emotion and complex themes (as they had discussed earlier that day). The contrast in performances highlights a distinct difference between what the students may have

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[56] Referring to these types of performances as 'serious' was actually a term borrowed from Danni. She used this term to distinguish between types of performances but also how some people negatively view other more forms of performance that require actors to prance about, "I know there's people on the course that singing and dancing drives them absolutely crazy and they'd much rather do a more *serious* play than prance about on stage". This notion of there being 'serious' plays and modes of performance held weight in Journeys also.

> considered as high cultured and popular cultured activities. In Bourdieu's words "each camp exists through opposition" (1993, p.182), and each type of performance (serious versus jazz hands) are engaged in a cultural struggle. The humour they found in this interaction shows a form of symbolic violence against those performances in which expression is performed with a lack of subtlety. Directing this symbolic violence towards jazz hands also reveals their aspiration to produce performance art that may be considered as serious.

This was not a lone incident. Jazz hands were frequently a target for symbolic violence in both the BTEC and HE environments. This suggests that the low cultural valuations associated with these bodily movements were a stable factor across the Arena for Performing Arts Transitions. Serious performers have no *taste* for pantomime gestures, these are widely considered inferior and a site for mockery. Jazz hands therefore are indicative of a form of expression that do not reflect the canon of 'cultured' Performing Arts. Ethnographic evidence (recorded through a number of methods and across a number of sites) points towards the significance legitimate tastes have in defining the experiences and perceptions of students at key stages[57] of their transition. Tina, for example, described how a distaste for jazz hands contributed to her choice regarding which FE institution she applied for. In attending an open day, the first impression was that the college course was "like a *jazz-handsey* musical theatre school. And I was kind of like no, definitely not what I want!". This made her decision to go to Journeys much clearer.

For the BTEC students at Journeys the experience of doing jazz hands for comedic effect only (as a moment of lighthearted ridicule) is different than their experience of being in the company of those who use jazz hands in their real performances. For Tina, performers who are really 'out there' and are really demanding of attention "annoy me so much". In these conversations with Tina, no longer was the term jazz hands referring to the specific set of movements as previously outlined. It became shorthand for a *type* of performance. A performance that shares intentions to command attention and be transparent. While these types of performances may have been laughed at in this context, there are students, individuals and companies in which these forms of

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[57] Although bodies-in-transition firmly critiques the notion of transitional stages as a way of conceptualising the process of transition it is not adverse to raise these periods of time in an analysis. But importantly, to understand these stages the cultural analysis must look beyond the immediate spatiotemporal boundaries - i.e. to examine the wider conditions in which these experiences emerge.

performances exist (and thrive) within the Performing Arts. So in this case what is being described is a struggle between two fields of cultural production for legitimacy. Some bodies-in-transition fall victim to these cultural battles, as they also struggle to achieve the same legitimacy as their peers. The examples above, and those still to come, suggest that jazz hands (as a specific gesture but also as a general type of performance) are losing this cultural tussle. This indicates that there is no such thing as a 'parity of esteem' within this vocation. If this parity is not achieved within a discipline, it is even more unlikely that it can be established between different subjects across the academic-vocational spectrum; especially not through qualification credit frameworks alone, as some may claim (see Chapter 1).

Illustrations of these cultural disparities continue into later stages of BTEC transitions. Most notably for those students who continue in HE. In City University Neil was very aware of these prejudices and explicitly attempted to challenge them. An important reason why Neil was trying to tackle symbolic violence against jazz hand types of performances was because these themes had appeared to negatively impact on 'National Student Survey' results. Some Performing Arts students "were writing 'we are treated like a second-class course', and duh-duh-duh. And they were sort of right" (Neil, 05/02/16). In Neil's recollection of former student experiences he noticed that a discourse of jazz hands has been functioning as a symbolically violent brush. A brush that can tarnish collectives as well as individuals. To some degree the stigma of jazz hands was associated with all students on the Performing Arts degree pathway within this institution[58]. According to Neil this cultural positioning happened throughout the culture of the institution, "so we think, I don't any more, that Performing Arts students are more lightweight. Into more frivolous things like *jazz hands* musicals… I always get that, it is the characterisation I encountered a lot. With the staff. With other students. All of the time. I am constantly battling it." (Neil, 05/02/16).

In this setting a symbolic violence against the legitimacy of jazz hands (as a type of performance) clearly has negatively impacted on student experiences for some on the course. It

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[58] Neil suggested that for us "prejudice lies more in the choice of subject. So performing arts students would be characterising one way, against drama student, as against music students and, as against those doing English and drama or film…". This shows that the collective identity of these students are connected to inferior forms of performing arts – as opposed to drama students etc.

was not only that these types of performances that were seen as inferior, a "combination of prejudices" were tightly knitted together. These combined to increase the distinctions between different sub-genres of the Performing Arts. Frankly, Neil continued, these are "to do with ability, levels of seriousness, and sort of status [*some sort of symbolic status?*] Yes exactly! … Performing Arts students on the course themselves *felt* that. And they *felt* that they were being treated as inferior" (Neil, 05/02/16). Neil's observations suggest that all Performing Arts students, some more than others, can be affected at an experiential level through the discourse of jazz hands and its interwoven associated prejudices. This may generate negative experiences during the course, presenting challenges for some students across their transition *within* and *beyond* the university (P2, A1, S3 investigates both of these themes further). Consequently, the struggles for cultural legitimacy that were associated with these forms of performance can prove to be constraining for these bodies-in-transition if they are positioned on the wrong sides of the division and become a target for symbolic violence.

In an acknowledgement of the negative consequences of symbolic violence against jazz hand type performances Neil described how he has attempted to combat damaging languages and discourses. The main issues were that language needed to be confronted because "drama colleagues that have been teaching Performing Arts students and would say things like 'I hate musicals' and so on. Which isn't very useful when people in the group love musicals". While the programme leader's interventions aimed to curb, or censor, language that (de)legitimises jazz hand performances he does not go as far as to question the cultural tastes that generate this discourse, adding "you can think it. But please don't articulate it". Through these mechanisms alone Neil claimed successes in this department "we have not necessarily eradicated that totally [symbolic violence against jazz hands], but I think we have taken massive steps towards changing those perceptions".

In spite of any declared progress in this area, the cultural sensitivities that surround jazz hand types of performances continued to shape the experiences of (former) BTEC students. This claim is based on the observed dynamics regarding performances that are (de)legitimised within the Arena for Performing Arts Transition - as illustrated in this Scene. In Bourdieusian fashion, these dynamics set the *external determinants* from which opportunities and constrains are

distributed to these bodies-in-transition on the basis of the types of performances they do. Symbolic violence and the experience of feeling like 'second-class' students provided just a couple of examples of "the structural constraints inscribed in the field that set limits to the free play of dispositions" (1993, p.66) and performances. In contrast to the phenomenological perceptions derived from and evolution of semantics, this analysis supplies explanations that speak of processes that order embodiment and bodily gesture. Yet, the subjective conditions of the experiencing body, be it through a theory of evolutionary semantics or other *internal determinants*, should not be overlooked. Therefore, some of the more intricate and messy experiential processes that collide with the phenomena of 'jazz hands' are explored further in the following Scene.

A life history interview with Gabby (05/02/16) was illuminating because it unveiled how one student's former bodily experiences and ontological/theoretical convictions interacted with the *hidden curriculum.* Moreover, unpacking these interactions helped to illustrate some of the complexities regarding the 'processes of the experiencing body'. In her individual case, the collision between the experiencing body and the wider context resulted in something unique and central to her ever-changing corporeality. Gabby was an articulate and reflexive student who appeared to speak plainly, and in detail, about her bodily experiences and what they meant for her development as a student and a person. She reflected on strategies she has been implementing in order to develop her artistic performances, to make them more valuable to the artistic community. But also these same strategies were viewed by her as a medium through which she could enhance her ability to 'express' herself better. Developing these abilities to express herself was, to her, a valuable end in itself.

Importantly, Gabby's reflexive articulations of her bodily experiences throughout her life and education pointed towards the highly subjective and deeply embodied nature of transition. To frame these messy transitional processes Shilling's (2012) notion of 'body projects' was useful to help discuss the manner in which Gabby converted some the cultural codes that relate to bodily performance into an embodied schema for personal development. Body projects "involve individuals being conscious of, and actively concerned about, the management and appearance of their bodies" (2012, p. 7). They are reflexive projects in which an embodied student is engaged in an ongoing process of transforming their body - how it looks, how it moves, and how it feels. Gabby was engaged in such projects and these influenced her transitions. She vividly recalled an ongoing process, through which she was conscious of, and concerned about, her body. Primarily her project was to change how she manages her body in a space.

This body project may be described as a continual working towards *presence.* This required her to strike a line between being too demanding of attention and being physically present, but still absent. The presence she wanted to achieve was very different from the type of presence that

one may achieve through jazz hand types of performance. Gabby drew on a theorist that she has been exposed to while at university, Patsy Rodenburg, to describe how she strives to be present in "the second circle" because "actors should always be in the second circle". Gabby's explanations summarised Rodenburg's (2009) conceptualisations eloquently, "now, as humans we are born into the second circle. We are very aware of things. Babies know that they are there, and that you're there - they are very there… It is just very interesting because then she [Rodenburg] talks about the first, second, and third circles; the first circle being very inward, this was what I was saying about you being here but not. Your energy is very inward [Gabby mimics a body sitting inwardly]… Then I guess the alternative, the other extreme, is the third circle where very superficial energy is pushed out. You are like [Gabby smiles, leans forward, and shakes her hands] [*very jazz hands?*] Yeah! Like you just miss that everyone else is there". Her recognition that performing artists should always be in the second circle connects her personal project to an external idea of what legitimate performances consist of. And this does not include 'superficial energy' and outwardly dominating performances that demand attention, such as jazz hands (see P2, A1, S1).

Through Gabby's attendance at an independent acting school, developing an awareness of presence has been further instilled as central to artistic performance, "they get you to just notice everything about yourself. I noticed that I push my head forward when I am speaking. I don't have a straight neck". In discussing the *skills* that she hopes to develop' Gabby noted her desire to continue to develop an awareness of her body, "I have literally done a month of it [at the acting school]. Like I hunch my back a lot. And like even just the way I hold myself. I'm not as aware of myself as I think I am…. Like when I am acting on stage I need to do something because I often find that parts of my body are disengaged. They are not doing anything… If I am shaking your hand; like what is this hand doing? It is like, it is not part of me… I mean obviously in a hypothetical sense. It is about keeping everything engaged, and I just don't, all of the time".

What Gabby is describing here in relation to her hands is not a pathological experience of the body. In phenomenological terms it is a natural occurrence of "the body's tendency to disappear from awareness" (Leder, 1990, p.69). It is the receding of the body from experience in the

absence of complex movement, pain, hunger and so on. By noting a desire to become (re)engaged with the separate parts of her body, even when they are not the main acting/sensing competent of her corporeality, importantly framed as a (performance) skill that she wants to develop, Gabby illustrated how her body project towards *presence* is rooted in performance culture. A culture that, contra jazz hands, calls for social actors to connect with their bodies and audiences in subtle and complex ways - in order to be *expressive* under the spotlight. Not only has Rodenburg (2009) dispensed practical advice[59] for artists in developing these awarenesses, these *skills* were also claimed to have a function beyond the realms of performance. Rodenburg prophesied that by pushing oneself into the 'Second Circle' an individual begins a life-long journey to reconnect, and through this ongoing process all the "tools required to survive physically, intellectually and emotionally are taught" (*ibid*, p.3). These 'lessons' have experiential value for Gabby's body. The core value of these skills, or awarenesses, then have more breadth than improving the quality of her gestures within acting spheres.

The personal importance of these teachings stem from her childhood, "so there have been many times in my life where I have been there, but I haven't been there at the same time…you feel really passive. Do you know what I mean? You could almost be like part of the scenery". But Gabby's solution to counteract these negative experiences was not to employ jazz hand type performance because she believed that being overly demanding of attention "is just as destructive as not being present at all". Against these two poles this student's project has been to strike a balance (through her bodily gestures and movements) where others come to "know you are there without being overly '*Hey* I'm here' [throwing out her arms and shakes them], but you need to be like 'I am here' [the tone of her voice changes as she speaks slower]. And you can see that I am here. I am very aware you are there". Inviting Gabby to elaborate on how she attempts to strike this balance, she recounted very specific details about her former educational experiences, including the role the BTEC, and the Performing Arts in general, have had in helping her *feel* (and perhaps be) more present.

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[59] Rodenburg(2009)provided her readers, of which Gabby is one, with a number of exercises to work on the second circle body (pp.49-61). These exercises include devolving how you should connect to and posture your: feet; knees; hips; spine; shoulders; and head position.

In telling me a story of her educational history Gabby outlined that the most significant transformations have been in her abilities to express herself, "I am quite good at… *expressing* myself and being heard. But that was never the case really". She recalled episodes from secondary school of being bullied, not 'physically' but 'manipulatively', and through this she "really drew in, like a lot" and became really self conscious of her body[60]. She admittedly retreated into the 'first circle' through her bodily movements and gestures; for example, in social situations. "when I was being bullied I was very tense. I was very closed off, to the point that I always had to hold my hands like this [demonstrating her hands closed and towards her body]. All of the time". The way in which she demonstrated how she held her hands was in many ways the antithesis of jazz hands; closed fist, close to her chest, and motionless. Another example was that she felt uncomfortable to "stand still and be assertive with it" so she "used to pace a lot". In recounting these times she characterised the time as a period when she was unable to express herself, she didn't feel free in her body. During this time of her life Drama lessons at school presented an escape for her because she had "permission to look like an idiot and I have never been in a space that allows that". In addition to this, her Drama teacher had a profound influence, "she would listen to you. You know, like one of the most important things in education, or any training environment, is being able to trust the person that is teaching you and the fact that they can understand you. And she just did". These experiences in school had a sacred affect on her transition and decision to pursue the subject over other options, "thinking about it, literally I think that something is forcing me to do Performing Arts. [*What like the gods?*] Yeah! It is some kind of *destiny*".

These experiential transformations continued while she was at college studying her BTEC. The practical side of the course continued to encourage her to be aware of the space and her body in it - but also to develop her presence. It was through these growing awarenesses that Gabby stated that BTEC represented "a period of *freeness* in my body that I have been developing". These experiences and developments reflected the subjective value of the Performing Arts for her, concluding "I think that is what you achieve through the BTEC". Her project of presence

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[60] At this time she was developing anorexia, that eventually led to her moving into supported housing at the end of her BTEC and before she moved away to University. Having spent "years living with the disease" it got worse again in the first few weeks at City University, before the support had been put in place for her to restart counselling.

shaped, and continues to shape, her transitional experiences "and then you continue it on. Because you *need* to". The growing awareness of her body was, however, a double edge sword,

> the thing about Performing Arts, and acting, is that it is separate to any other subject because it is really about improving you…. The thing with a BTEC is that you are training yourself. The thing is with acting, the profession, is about being vulnerable and being yourself. And it is quite exposing. And it was quite difficult with an illness [anorexia] that is very, you know, there is a lot of self-destruction in that. And self-hatred… The awareness the BTEC would teach you to have, even in the very simplest level, when you were doing dance you would stand in front of mirrors. So you are *so* aware of yourself… I guess when you are going through therapy or recovery, mentally you try to become very detached from it… You want to be in the moment, and with your surroundings rather than with yourself. Whilst in acting, as well as having to be in the moment you need to be aware of your body. It was very conflictual. It was very therapeutic, but very destructive at the same time.

The double edge sword of experience shows some transitional opportunities and constraints that emerge through processes of the experiencing body. On one hand, subscribing to Rodenburg's school of thought her body project was described as a necessity for her physical, intellectual and emotional survival. In Gabby's world this was more than an opportunity, it was *destiny*, it helped to develop a feeling of *freeness* in her body. Developing presence also had the perceived added benefits of improving her acting skills and avoiding the perceived pitfalls of jazz hand type performances. On the other hand, her project of presence and desire to develop awareness was recognised as a potential threat to her experiencing body. Again, in Gabby's world this was more than a constraining factor for her transition it was potentially *destructive*. Her body project was intimately tied to experiences of mental health issues and eating disorders. These relationships were messy, yet the combination of processes of the experiencing body outlined in this Scene were shown to direct the course of her transition thoroughly.

Gabby's experiences of an eating disorder and mental health issues were powerful in shaping her current imagined trajectory - to an extent where she had been considering the possibility of becoming a 'drama therapist' in the future. She believes that she would find it 'rewarding' to help others through the medium of the Performing Arts and expression. This was not an isolated finding. Danni was in "year nine [when] I was first diagnosed with depression. And then I got really bad in year 10 and 11". This has been an enduring aspect of her experiencing body, "continuing to now really I have been struggling with depression. I have had ups and downs and

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all of the sort of things you would expect really". Like Gabby, Danni reflected upon how theses experiences, and having a close friend with Aspergers, have influenced her to consider a future career in Drama Therapy,

> And drama therapy is kind of like a performative way of counselling, it really helps and I really want to - there are the two goals, two dreams in life, there is the being on stage and being a performer dream and then the other one is I would really like to set up my own acting company - like the [name of a company she used to attend] - but that is specifically for children with Autism and Asperger so they don't feel like they are the odd ones out at all. And that they feel like they have a safe place to work and *express themselves*[61]. I think it also comes from that I know how much doing [name of a company she used to attend] help me through my depression. I know it helped me. So I would like to do that for someone else one day (19/03/16)

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[61] At University Danni had learned that "drama therapy is really really good for children with Asperger's and autism because one of the worst things about it is it expressing their emotions in the right kind of way".

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ACT 1: VALUED FORMS OF EXPRESSION
SCENE 3: TRANSITION WITHIN CITY UNIVERSITY

A pattern was appearing at City University. Performances of one kind or another would break out organically, i.e. not in response of the demands of a set activity or in relation to any formal assessments. 'Performances' in these observations covered a wide range of Performing Arts, for example:

• Dancing, in many different styles;
• Comedy routines;
• Enacting monologues from a play, film, or television programme;
• Singing (including duets and several people harmonising);
• Group renditions of theatre; and
• Playing a musical instrument.

Ordinarily these performances would emerge through an improvisation of an interaction between students during the 'contact hours'. As previously illustrated at City University, contact time had an element of 'free time' embedded within it, due to less disciplinary techniques and a greater emphasis on independent learning. And as such there were fewer regulations in terms of how they should be spending this time productively (see P1, A2, S2). Students often chose to spend these freedoms *playing* performances with each other. In addition to this, it was not unusual for students to arrive early, stay during their 'break', and remain afterwards so that they could use the space and equipment to *practise* performance. The dynamics of playing and practising performances could therefore be understood as an important pillar of the student culture on the Performing Arts course at this university. Through my reflexive diary entries, this theme became immediately clear. These realisations however raised four complex questions:

1) To what extent does student *identity* depend on being recognised as someone who can perform?
2) How important is it to be able to 'perform to a certain level' in order to *belong* to part of the course culture?
3) What are the mechanisms by which students come to make *judgements* regarding how good a performance, or a performer is? And how much weight do these judgements carry socially?
4) What implications might these internal cultural dynamics have beyond the course? How might the culture of performance set the *opportunities* and *constraints* available to particular bodies in transition?

When I met with Pat (a lecturer) for coffee during a period when I was mulling these questions over. From previous passing conversations she had indicated to me that she was 'very interested', in this research and symbiotically I was intrigued to hear her perspectives - on this

occasion I was particularly keen to ask her about what she thought was the role of these performances.

Cultural Capital and Performance: 13th November 2014. Sat in one the numerous University cafes, tucked away in a quite corner, with coffee and cake to hand, I divulged some of my recent thoughts, and questions, to Pat. I approached the subject by saying "I find it very interesting that the students are always breaking out into some sort performance…". Pat was already equipped with explanations for these occurrences. Agreeing with my observations she responded:

"I find the way they always perform to each other and practise is very telling. And it actually becomes even more important for them in the third year. It's like to say 'I may not very good at the academic side but look at what I can do'. Sometimes I think it is a very deliberate act where they intentionally go through their full range to show off their abilities. It would be really interesting if you could come to my third year group. You would see completely different things regarding performance. It is even more important to them then".

It is clear that Pat's understanding of the centrality of performance are charged with her own theoretical knowledge. As she continues to offer her analysis, she reveals that student performances (that become an increasingly important aspect of the social dynamics of the course) are fundamentally bound to the cultivation and exchange of 'cultural capital'. Feeling like my suspicions surroundings this phenomenon were being corroborated by another (academic) external body, I invited her to continue to enlighten me on the details.

Pat did so by providing an example of how crucial performances (and the cultivation of cultural capital) can be in framing transitions *within* the course; "one of my students has a very specific ability to play piano and sight read music. And this has really helped him integrate. He has used this ability to become more involved and be part of the university so much more…it has given him so many more *opportunities* and status within the group".

In this conversation Pat put forward, from my perspective, a sound analysis of the events we had both witnessed. Her vantage of working with the Performing Arts students across the three years of the course meant that she was in a position to expand an analysis of 'cultural capital and performances' into a model for transitions within City University. Through examining this model, that was supported through additional ethnographic observations, the initial questions that I considered in my reflexive diary that related to belonging, identity and the valuation/ judgments of cultural capital were illuminated.

To handle these illuminations in turn, educationalists often overlook that there is much more to students' identity then their academic achievements. Yet it is plausible that a student who struggles with their attainment, or with 'the academic side' of University, may identify (or be identified) with that low position within the community of students. In some cases they may come to associate themselves or be accosted with failure (Quinn, 2010). These types of identities would decrease their stocks of cultural capital, from the institution's perspectives at least. This is because the University would be responsible for ratifying this capital, that on one level exists in an institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1986). This is solely done through attainment levels, that students accrue over the three years, and takes no (formal) account for the student's ability to perform. This would not however necessarily leave them bereft of cultural capital but it may be of some concern for students in their third year that are expecting a lesser degree classification. This deficit can, however, be plugged by other means because a student identity consists of far more than their coursework grades. Namely this deficiency of one type of cultural capital can be offset against the accumulation of capital through 'performances'. Through the means of play and practice, performances are honed and become integral to the embodied student because it is a form of capital that is "so closely linked to the person" (*ibid*, p.48). What is formed is an identity as a dancer, an actor, a comedian, a musician and so on and these positions allow them to say, without speaking, "I may not be very good at the academic side, but look at what I can do". This represents a clear strategy that is available to some students where they can rely on culture capital "in its fundamental state, [that] is linked to the body and prepossess embodiment (*ibid*, p.48). However, what are the experiential consequences when students cannot, or do not, accumulate sufficient levels of capital through performance - or through other available means?

Success across the HEA (2016) student lifecycle apparently "depends on the extent to which students… belonging is fostered within their programme and wider institution" (p.1). Strategic objectives and funding streams to Universities particularly focus on enhancing a sense of belonging for students from Widening Participation backgrounds. Statistically BTEC in PA will be disproportionally from less advantageous backgrounds (see Chapter 2). In looking at the social dynamics of City University, however, class backgrounds can only speak to one aspect of a sense of belonging. This assertion rests on thinking about what a 'sense of belonging' actually

is but also considering how it might be affected by the noted dynamics of performance in this context. Bourdieu provides useful directions here as well. The experiential core of habitus means students make "classification judgements of places for us to places for others' (Reay, David & Ball, 2005, p 160) through their bodily *senses*, not only through a logic of reason. Quinn (2005) reminded educationalists that these senses are not only related to the middle class-ness of buildings, customs and locations, but are also intimately tied to the social and cultural workings of the specific university course. As already discussed, performances can have an important role in forming the embodied students' identities, thus for students to belong and feel that they are accepted within this culture they may need to demonstrate that they can perform to 'integrate' into this culture. Without this, Pat suggested, it becomes increasingly difficult to 'become more involved and part of the university', and to ascend in social status. It limits their opportunities on the course but also restricts them beyond. These difficulties may be thought of as a more culturally specific lack of a sense of belonging within this course.

There are however cultural mechanisms that lie underneath the role of performance in the process of identity formation and a sense of belonging. These are processes that influence the valuations of the 'cultural worth' of a performance - some performances promote positive identities and can help foster a sense of belonging, some do not. Because the transmission and acquisition of capital in the embodied state is more disguised than other forms (institutionalised and objectified), performances are predisposed to function as symbolic, or "to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.49). Legitimate competencies (i.e. being able to sight read music) can then be translated into social capital and facilitate transition within a group. Inevitably, for students to make judgements regarding what is legitimate and what is not fuses an individual's performance to fields of cultural production (see Bourdieu [1993] for a general overview or Chapter 4 for a selective account of the Performing Arts). These judgments are in part based on taste that derives from the same forces of production (and having become embodied over these students' historical engagement in those fields) that creates abstract (idealised) criteria from which the performances are assessed. Jazz hands are one type of performance, *par excellence*, that valuable performances are valued against. Yet it is not just abstract criteria that guide the value of performances, they can also be

externally validated. This too plays a role in the social transitions within City University, as Gabby's history in certified performance indicates:

'Just a Film': 2nd of October 2014. Only a couple of weeks into their first semester the students are still getting to know one and another, form bonds and establish social groups/statuses. A small group of students seem to have already found some association with each other, or at least a reason to arrive to the lecture together. They are walking towards 'the hut' laughing, joking, and in conversations. Positioned in the middle is Gabby. She is telling the others that she is tired today as she only got back from another city "late last night". She continues to explain that she was there for some filming. In a very brief elaboration Gabby makes this event appear like more of a casual and normal part of her activities she clarifies "it was *just* a film, it was nothing really special, or anything". The other students seem either impressed, interested, or polite as they probe her for more details.

Later when I had a chat with that group, Gabby showed concern over the time frame of my research, "So if you're not doing it for 3 years then how will you see us make it? I will have to email you".

During a time of induction, in a public manner Gabby exposed her involvement in "film work" and her expectations to "make it". The strategy demonstrates how credentials (that assume a validation of her ability to act) were used to assure other students of her competencies to perform. It was a demonstration of performance prowess without actually needing to perform. Having already worked in some capacity in the industry was her justification to presume openly a 'successful future'. Like the example given by Pat, this strategy employed by Gabby helped her to integrate into the forming social groups - the other students seemed either impressed, interested, or polite as they probed her for more details. Besides, this integration is not limited to making transitions within this specific group but it can also be important for these students *beyond* those immediate confines moving around the wider cultural field. This is because entry into a field requires sufficient levels of capital to do so (Bourdieu, 1977).

Performances in this Scene are more than neutral forms of expression, they are a powerful means to accrue cultural capital in its *embodied form* (Bourdieu, 1986). In City University the students are not graded on their abilities to perform. The performance culture of the course therefore only runs at a tangent to the educational demands - it is always a present, and relevant,

factor but officially student performances are not what gets converted into grades and eventually degree classifications. In principle then, the ability to perform is not bound to the cultural capital accumulated and ratified in its *institutionalised form* (*ibid*). This was a point that Neil was keen to reiterate, "the criteria that we use are always very specific, and it is not about 'oh you were brilliant in the way that you acted it'. It was how did you actually meet this sort of learning outcome?". Due to the power of a culture to perform however, Danni recognised that some students still get confused about how the University evaluates their assessed performances, "there's been some people on our course that have complained about the grades" because of a perception that more competent actors and singers "get higher grades"[62].

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[62] Whilst this is a statement of others' perceptions Danni herself does not share these suspicions, "I think the grading criteria for our practicals is put out in a way that if you study something and you strive to do it and you build it as a skill then you can get a really high grade in it. Just because you're talented in it doesn't mean your grade will be any higher" (29/02/16).

ACT 2: BODY SYMBOLISM
SCENE 1: DEVELOPING SYMBOLIC AWARENESS? A TALE OF TWO BODIES

> The social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other (Douglas, 1996, p.69)

There are *two bodies*[63] according to Douglas (1996) that command attention when examining the meaning of bodily symbols; the social and physical. The constraints that the social body places on the physical are twofold: how bodily symbols are perceived, and, how bodies experience the social. In reference to these two bodies Douglas encouraged ethnographers to ask, to what extent are the bodies that they observe dislocated from the social body? Because "sometimes they are so near as to be almost merged; sometimes they are far apart. The tension between them [the self and society/the physical and social] allows the elaboration of meaning" (p.87). In other words this analytical quest prods the researcher to develop an awareness of the meaning of bodily symbols in that space and time. It was not, initially at least, Douglas's (1996) call to examine the interaction between these two bodies that led me to observe tensions between what may be thought of as the social body and the physical bodies that I encountered in the Arena for Performing Arts Transition. My awareness of the role of *body symbolism* was at first stimulated through some differences between the physical bodies I encountered. These came into contrast through an ethnographic mapping exercise.

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[63] As the reader may have gathered from the Plays thus far and my critical commentary on events I am not so interested in restricting or counting typologies of the body. This stems from my corporeal realist position where 'the body' may house numerous typologies (even those that are sometimes seen as contradictory such as docile/creative or prehuman/posthuman bodies). These contradictions may be held together analytically through the multi-dimensional ontology of the body; from which the conceptualisation of the embodied student is born, lives, and dies (see Chapter 6). Indeed, in terms of how bodies are used as symbolic sites further categories are available e.g. O'Neills (1985) five bodies, Turner's (1984) four bodies, or Frank's (1991) revised four bodies. Nevertheless, while these extended categories have their uses, for this ethnographic data, Douglas's (1996) framework offered a rough but illuminating contrast that allowed for detailed and important discussions. These avenues relate to how some students appeared to develop an awareness of the self and society, the physical and the social. This developing symbolic awareness can express itself through bodily transitions - such as the dyeing of one's hair purple as P2 A2 S2 illustrates.

Bodies and symbolism, a discussion of theory: 15th of October 2014. This module is taken by students from Drama, Performing Arts and English[64] programmes. Today is one of the rare occasions where students are sitting at desks (only for the first hour). The desks are arranged in a U shape. As an ethnographic activity I tend to roughly sketch out the social space and the students within it. In this mixed group these drawings have an added benefit of allowing me to keep track of the Performing Arts students (access to a photographic register facilitated this visualisation). Through this activity I noticed that the English students (all female) stood out within the group due to their notably different appearances.

The Logic of Theatre Blacks[65] has not been adhered to in any way by these English students. There is an array of colour on each of their persons. The most distinct student is wearing what I would describe as an emerald formal vintage dress. Adding to the use of colour the English students' style includes accessories such as brass brooches, large wooden hair clips, and bright badges. There are many *symbols* located on their bodies (in terms of colour, accessories, images and words) that are in contrast to those on the Performing Arts students' bodies. I am acutely aware that while I am in the process of recording a symbolic divide in the group Pat is introducing the concept of symbolism in theatre.

After I had finished recording these details, and Pat has finished her opening gambit, the group are set off on a task. In pairs, the students are invited to discuss and identify the symbols on their bodies and clothes. After these short discussions Danni (a Performing Arts student) begins the group conversation by highlighting that she has a concealed tattoo of a bird. She claims that this symbolises her freedom. With prodding from Pat a few exchanges occur in which some students in the group acknowledge that symbols do not have fixed or natural meanings. In this short debate some generic (rather than personal) examples of symbols are suggested by students. One student contributes a reflection, "I guess that some symbols can mean different things to different people and can change their meanings over time".

In contrast to Danni's tattoo, the next example to be taken directly from one of the students' own body comes from an English student. She picks up her bag (that is covered in badges) and points to one very specific badge, one of the newer looking ones. It is bright yellow. Speaking very quickly she declares that "this badge is symbolic of a movement that I was involved in Edinburgh…". I miss the details as I was straining my eyes to see the small badge from a distance, but she elaborates on the origins and meanings of the movement as she sees them. Both physical examples, so far, present their bodies as fertile pastures for politically charged symbols to grow. Both *freedom* and *solidarity* were symbolically represented on their bodies.

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[64] All the students enrolled on an English programme that I encountered at City University took A-Level examinations, and not BTECs, sometime in the past. This information was gathered through their consent forms.

[65] This analysis featured in the Prelude but at this time it was just one theme that was emerging within my reflexive diary.

This level of symbolic reflection is not an uniform trait amongst the group. After these two examples the room went quiet. A silence filled awkwardly with a lack of a confident voice willing to share their perspectives. The long seconds of uncomfortable quietness breaks as one student jangles their keys just saying the words 'Tesco Clubcard'. This releases a quickfire round where other students shout out objects on their key ring, 'Nissan', 'Budwiser', etcetera. In a matter of seconds students have managed to name numerous brands that have been attracted to their bodies and attached by some temporary means.

These contributions are lacking the relative awareness shown by the previous students. It is not long however before one student evolves the discussion towards the raison d'être for their *branded bodies*. She suggests that "a lot of these companies use *subliminal symbols* to try and get you to buy stuff". The student continues to provide some examples including Disney Films and Coca-Cola advertisements. This again showed some wider awareness of the role of symbols in consumerist societies. It shows a developing understanding of how symbols not only have political meanings, they also have corporate incentives. The assumed subconscious tactics of businesses also shows a comprehension of how these social bodies can infiltrate and regulate *their* bodies and their symbolic presence. This mediates which symbolic expressions are possible but also which meanings audiences are able to recognise from symbolic displays[66].

This group discussion showed that many students have only a limited and partial grasp of the correspondence between social bodies and their bodies - in their first year of HE at least. At the same time, however, it also hinted towards an emerging awareness for other students. There were two main areas of awareness being developed: (1) that their physical bodies can be used as a site of political expression; and (2) that corporate interests are taking over the body as a symbolic site of advertisement (Wolkowitz, 2010). The discussion activity was designed to promote a greater awareness of body symbolism. This is not surprising in this educational environment because artists (alongside academics) share a professional commitment to critique society, including the social body (Douglas, 1996). Developing an awareness of body symbolism is, in other words, a prerequisite for modes of artistic production. This awareness provides the students with *opportunity* to critique society, and make valued art through these
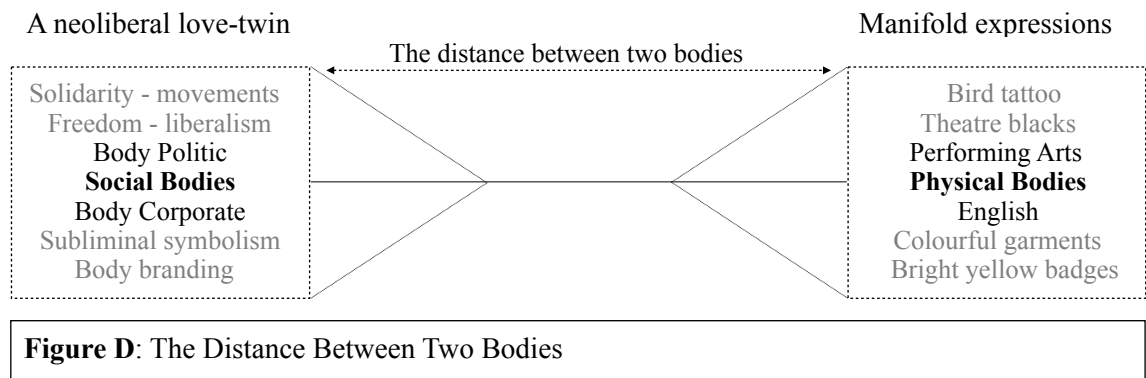
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[66] The reason this fieldnote lacks the quantity of direct quotes than I am usually able to record was because the main part of my focus was on the visual landscape. I was focusing on documenting the visual appearances of the students, adding these details to the map. During those discussions I felt that it was too intrusive to ask for permission to take photographs of their bodies. It was challenging to multi-task and quickly scribble down fragments of conversations verbatim in real time.

expressions. To develop these critical awarenesses students must first get a grasp on the myriad forms the social body takes.

For me, this encounter illustrates how the body politic of today is conjoined with the body corporate. Some students showed an awareness of this neoliberal love-twin (see Figure D) but also a distaste for the Siamese attraction. An example of this awareness (and an inherent distaste) was when a student alluded to businesses' underhand, or subliminal, tactics that are designed to extract money from them - to bring their bodies to desire consumption. It is through this their bodies become consumed by symbols, symbols that then encourage further consumption. In this discussion it was also evident that there was a symbolic tension here. For example, both Danni and the English student expressed an unease towards the body corporate in favour of retaining a body politic. They wanted to ring fence parts of their bodies for overtly political expression. In Danni's case this was a patch of skin she engraved permanently. For the English student this was her bag that was overwhelmed with political symbols (including a large CND badge) that there would be no room left for corporate logos. To maintain these free spaces, that are untainted from neoliberal dominance, demonstrates an understated rejection of becoming a *branded body*. This suggests some form of critical awareness - they are resisting commercialised insignia in favour of politicised symbols. Yet the sheer amount of corporate logos on other bodies tells a different story. A story where "the symbolic worlds of youths are meshed with the currents of a commodity culture" (Best, 2009, p.255). Large numbers of symbolic outputs displayed on their bodies were orientated towards the body corporate. These bodies were being consumed by franchised symbols. Nike, for example, was stamped onto no less than four of the twenty students; in a quick scan I noticed shoes, bags, and a t-shirt bearing the recognisable tick logo.

In this mixed group of students there were contrasts between the symbolic profiles of the physical bodies present. Of course, there were variations between individual bodies but more interestingly there was also a splintering along lines of educational enrolment. By proxy this also indicated an approximate fracturing across educational histories (the English students had

not done a BTEC whereas many of the Performing Arts students had[67]). These manifold symbolic expressions created contrasts between groups of physical bodies that was maintained throughout my immersion in the field (e.g. Performing Arts students = Theatre Blacks & English students = Colourful Garments). While this was an interesting observation it only provides a partial insight into the role of body symbolism in this arena. So in order to progress these accounts Douglas's (1996) analytical call was accepted. This call encouraged me to examine the distance between the social body and these physical bodies (see Figure D below).

A neoliberal love-twin   Manifold expressions

The distance between two bodies

Solidarity - movements	Bird tattoo
Freedom - liberalism	Theatre blacks
Body Politic	Performing Arts
Social Bodies	**Physical Bodies**
Body Corporate	English
Subliminal symbolism	Colourful garments
Body branding	Bright yellow badges

Figure D: The Distance Between Two Bodies

It became clear to me that the distance between these two bodies is relational to students' interpretation and abstraction of individualism. Towards the *abstract* and social end of this scale, when the body politic conjoins with the corporate, fusions create images of an individual body; this is a free body that is "identified and separated by marks, numbers, signs and codes" (Shilling, 2012, p.81). The observed contrasts between physical bodies are also made even more readily through an *interpretive* process of individualisation; where the student forms their own perceptions of these separated marks, signs, and codes into a corporeal form. Through subsequent enactments of attaching these symbols to their physical bodies the social body is reified, and sustained. What followed within City University, was a rough symbolic categorisation of physical bodies along the lines that have been previously stated. Indeed, if there were no differentiating processes of interpretation, within the experiencing bodies, then it stands to reason that all of the physical bodies would be the same. Their bodies, would be made in the exact image of a vivid social body. On the other hand, if there were no abstract guiding principles whatsoever that regulate how an *individual* should look then there would be no correlation between any of the students' symbolic repertoires. The observed levels of variation

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[67] There were some Drama students also mixed into the group. I did not record anything of note in relation to this group because nothing immediately came to my awareness. Moreover, the bulk of my attention was directed towards outlining the symbolic divides between the English - Performing Arts students.

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therefore were generated in this context through an abstract conjoining of different social bodies and an interpretive splintering of physical bodies.

In the Arena for Performing Arts Transition, individualism can therefore be viewed as the bridge that joins the abstract and real bodies. It was not surprising to see this in 2014-15 because according to Bauman (2000) the need "to *become* what one *is* is a feature of modern living" (p. 31). The social pressure to be an individual is a hallmark of an era in which these bodies-in-transition are *situated*. For these students there are incalculable and indefinite choices to be made in order to become that individual. There are daily symbolic decisions to be made: what should I wear? What should I buy? What can I eat? Who should I follow on social media? and so on. These are elements of body symbolism that are often referred to as the 'choice biography', or as "the culture of individualism which expects that people actively shape their biographies" (Heinz, 2009, p.3). Through these expectations, individualism places social pressures on the students. Here students' physical bodies become a "microcosm of society, facing the centre of power [that is a neoliberal power], contracting and expanding its claims in direct accordance with the increase in relaxation of social pressures" (Douglas, 1996, p. 71). These social pressures are intensified in the CCIs because they have been at the forefront of an individualistic economy and society (Nixon & Crewe, 2004). These expectations are also manifest in the education these students receive. For example, individualistic pedagogical approach was built into the BTEC at Journeys. Sandy explained that "there needs to be a whole variety of different tasks for people whose work is going in different directions… there is that amazing space of creativity and *individuality*. But that means that you don't know what's coming next sometimes" (12/05/16).

Through consumer culture, the alignment with the CCIs, and the pedagogical emphasis within the BTEC the overarching restrictions that mediated all of these student symbolic expressions, therefore, was an expectation to be an *individual*. These students' physical bodies have responded to this pressure in manifold ways, but "the scope of the body as a medium of expression is limited by controls exerted from the social system" (Douglas, 1996, p.74). There is no neutral social system or social body since both exert a symbolic control over their subjects - and the prevailing emphasis on individualism in this context and this culture is no exception.

Whilst it would be futile to list and individually examine all recorded symbols that were attached to these bodies in some way over the duration of the fieldwork, Danni's tattoo provides an illuminating case study[68].

Immediately after Danni shared with the group that she had a tattoo of a bird on her body the students began to unpick that "some symbols can mean different things to different people and change their meaning over time". These discussions reflected the fluidity of social bodies. In this case what symbolic variants could there be for a bird?

• The stork brings a baby to its parents. It is wrapped up with the wonders of birth.
• In ancient Egyptian societies birds were often associated with death and the afterlife.
• The magician pulls a bird out of a hat and through this spectacle the winged creature becomes a symbol for magic.
• In folklore the magpie steals gold. This bird is associated with capital and wealth.
• The Reichsadler was the name of the eagle of the Third Reich. For some this animal is a symbol of power and pride and remains intertwined with nationalist politics.

These are only a few examples. Birds like any other object or body do not reflect a 'natural expression' but are 'culturally determined' (Douglas, 1996). Birds in other words have a social dimension, they fly around in the abstract realms of symbolic bodies. For Danny, the bird that was etched onto her body expressed "her freedom". It is a political expression. An expression of being a free individual able to be herself and do her will. The symbolic expression intends to convey that she can fly anywhere that she wants, without being restricted to the ground. Bodies may exhibit intentions as it was reflected upon in the group discussion and fleshed out in the examples above "what ever of the social is being written their [on the physical body] is fundamentally open to reinterpretation, to re-inscription, transformation through context, situation, and position" (Grosz, 1994, p. 137).

The fact that this symbol was written onto her body provides further insight into how Danni has interpreted the social body and turned it physical. According to Turner (1991) anthropologists have attempted to describe tattooing as a marker of social membership within a tribe. In addition to this Grosz (1994) contended that "inscription on the subject's body calculate

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68 It was outside of the remit of this research project to analyse in depth the interpretations of individualism that were common amongst the English students. This is because none of them had been enrolled on a BTEC course. The rationale for including them in this scene is only to highlight the collective contrast between groups of students.

corporeal signifiers into signs, producing all the effects of meaning, representation, depth, within our social order" (p.141). In this context the idea of tribal tattoos (Turner, 1991) or tattoos of the savage that fixes his identity onto his skin (Grosz, 1994) are at odds with the conjoining social body (as illustrated in Figure D). Yet students may interpret bodily scriptures in a different light, "tattooing has become part of fashion rather than the necessary aspect of religious culture and the stratification system" (Turner, 1991, p.6). Washed by the tide of neoliberalism the potentials for birds to symbolise freedom (liberalism) is amplified. The chances of her tattoo being mistaken for an expression of religious belief in the afterlife are diminished. This shows that bodily engravings do not have natural or ahistorical meanings. It shows that students "bodies are made amenable to the prevailing exigencies of power" (p.142). Grosz continues to argue that marking the body with ink makes the body the particular type of body. In Danny's case this ink goes towards making her body that of an 'individual', a 'performer', and 'free-spirited'. Indeed Univeristy was for her a period of feeling more free, going where she wanted and doing what she wanted to do. While attaching symbols to her body like this, and allowing her to become an individual it also permits her to be the type of individual that is expected in the Arena for Performing Arts Transition. Moreover this symbol is quasi-permanent – it is quite likely to stay with her through her transitions to come. It may change its meanings over time, to her and to observers, but it will always be present where her body is (even if it is concealed/ conceivable to others). This tattoo in her future may grant her opportunities or constraints through its symbolic radiance depending on the context in which she is located.

Unlike the other elements of Play 2, this episode is not built upon a *hidden* part of the curriculum because it was initiated through the subject matter. Symbolism in theatre was the gateway into these group conversations. The awarenesses that may be developed through discussions and performances of an overtly symbolic bent however plays a role in the more hidden aspects of educating expression in this Arena. Such as having toll on the social transitions within City University. This can be illustrated through the forming of the purpled hair neo-tribe, of which Danni is again a central figure. It is through these discussions, where this Scene is levied onto the mining efforts to uncover how expression is educated as part of a hidden curriculum within these educational contexts.

It started with just the two of them. It quickly became four[69] and then after a year it was all over. Not the friendship just the hair. Their hair was typically *feminine* in style, well looked after, groomed and long, to list three of their shared characteristics. But their hair was also purple - presented in four different shades, one shade per person. Paving the way for this trend to purple hair in City University was Danni. She was one of two founding members. It only took a month before the other two had joined the ranks. No two students replicated the other totally, each colour and style was unique. The most contrasting hair to Danni's was a second year student who was retaking the first year. She made the transition from dark brunette to a blackish colour that had dark shades of reddy purple. At the same time as these students' hair was undergoing stylistic transitions so were they themselves. Alliances and friendships were being formed. And in this process a body symbolism loosely bound together the neo-tribe of purpled-hair performers.

According to Hodkinson (2009) there has been much cultural analysis that examined the link between hair styles and *subcultures*. For example, in Britain technicoloured hair, and shocking colours (including purple) were reported to have their origins in the new wave punk rockers movement in the 1970s (Synnott, 1997). At this point in cultural history, according to Synnott, regular haircuts had already been adopted by other alternative and popular movements that preceded so punks "had to make a creative leap if they wanted to look different and therefore be different" (p.117). Shocking hair became one of the subculture's most powerful symbolic statements in terms of how they looked. From this field of research it is contended that hair has a unique place in body symbolism. The keratin based tiny cylinders that grow from follicles all over the body, particularly on the top of the head are transformed into markers of individual and group identity - across many societies. Synnott argued that this is because hair is both private and public, it is given genetically but it is also highly malleable with the range of styles only limited by one's imagination (*ibid*). In modern times a range of technologies and hair products

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[69] Out of a cohort of 20 students (the number of students in the smallest of their seminars groups) this is 20% of the total members. On the 15th of October the four students worked in a group together in a group activity. It was at this moment when the visual effect was this powerful I started to take a focused interest in their activities, what bound them together, apart from the hair colour? And what were this group's internal dynamics and external identities?

have only intensified the limitless options available for hair. While the potential of hair is pushed and tested in fashion industries, hair is also extremely constricted through gender norms. This cannot constrain symbolic expression through hair, for example, all of the members of the neo-tribe had long feminine hair - and so did the other female students on this course.

The increasing ability to style one's hair to new endless possibilities has occurred through the same period in which there has been a rise of individualistic uses of fashion and body symbolism (see Hodkinson, 2009 for a generic overview or P2 A2 S1 for a specific account). In this context the notion of subculture is not as useful as it once was. In contemporary British culture, hair symbolism is clearly more complex and nuanced today than the strong categories of skinheads, punks, hippies and other subcultures (Synnott, 1997). Shilling reflected these cultural shifts by recollecting that whilst "flamboyant clothes, hats, make-up and wigs were once fixed markers of social position, the flexible 'presentation of self' is now seen as signifying the real character of individuals" (2012, p.39). Therefore, although the social body may still retain remnants from the origins of movements that saw purple hair emerge, it is wrong, in this case, to think of these four students' hair choices of reflecting 'subcultural field'. They were not neo-punks.

Instead of the term subculture it is more accurate to think of the common style within small groups as elements of a neo-tribe. Neo-tribes refers "to groupings which offer an emotional attachment but whose boundaries are porous and whose membership is transitionary" (Hodkinson, 2009, pp.278-9). It is less about belonging to an already formed tribe with strict rules of membership and strong collective identities, it is more about coming together of like-minded individuals around a set of common interests. In this respect a neo-tribe is a partial and temporary grouping of individuals, that represents incomplete and provisional symbolic meanings. In these areas, the term neo-tribe was a more fitting label for this particular group than a subculture. This group was only loosely formed around shared interests and identities. At the same time they strongly maintained space for their own individual interests and identities. It was not one political viewpoint or cultural taste (in music for example) that bound them together. Yet at the same time they shared similar political viewpoints and cultural tastes. The style did not endure the test of time. Nevertheless it served the function for the period it

existed. Common interests and shared tastes were a noted strength of their group dynamics and, more importantly, were crucial for Danni in her social transition into HE. This positive social transition was also, arguably, feeding into supporting her in other transitions and with mental health.

According to Danni the formation of the group was based on *clicking* with each other not being *clumped* together. In this process, purple hair was not a prerequisite for membership nor did it define their collective identity in a coherent and homogenous way. The group's distinctive look was only really shared through a hair colour (of which they all went for different shades and styles) and this was merely a byproduct of the transitional nature of the neo-tribe. Even as a founding member, when in the second year of the course Danni's hair was no longer purple (at interview). To get a handle on the transitional nature of the neo-tribe Danni's experiences during the first few months of the degree are useful. In reflection she gave a detailed insight into the social formations that occurred within the cohort of first year students in those initial stages - but she also described the role the group she affiliated with had in shaping her profoundly. Danni elaborated a 'positive' social transition that supported her through other transitions that were occurring in her first year, including 'academic' transitions (e.g. the transition to independent learning, see P1 A2 S2).

Before arriving at City University, Danni's biggest worry was to do with the transition into new social circumstances, "I think the most difficult thing about coming to university is the initial anxiety stage that everybody goes through, meeting new friends, new place, you know, new teachers, new modules. It's like starting a new job, you always have those worries and I think it's the most difficult thing to actually get through because it's all in your head". Danni elaborated on this further by stating that, "I think it's the whole being scared of the unknown, as a human you're always scared of what you don't know… I think that was the biggest difficulty. Your own fear of what if people don't like me? Am I going to end up in the toilet eating my own lunch on my own?". These worries are not unfounded. There are always possibilities that social transitions will not be positive experiences for some students. Neil had noticed the challenges some students have faced becoming integrated into the social networks that the students form. In previous years at City University there have been "little kind of groups [that] emerge and you

can kind of see there may be someone who is more isolated" (Neil, 05/02/16). Neil also reflected that isolated students may be more prone to struggle on other aspects of the course as well. This implies, like Danny suggested, that there is an importance to social transitions that can transcend the social and flood into student learning and development. The stakes could be high. Set against these high stakes, Danni was anxious about her social transition in terms of meeting friends and forming social bonds with the new bodies. She anticipated that this would be a different experience compared with her last 'transition' from school to college.

In her BTEC the cohort size was much smaller, as it was in Journeys. Having asked Danni what she thought about the social dynamics of both her BTEC and HE she told me that "they're very different. Well, I feel they're very different. With college… we walked in on the first day and it was a group of girls, only twelve of us girls… there weren't so many that you couldn't be one friendship group. So we always *clumped* together. Whereas here [at City University] we're in separated into groups of like four or five friends". Clumping together in the BTEC was possible and served a purpose within that social environment. This same type of social dynamics was not an option in City University because of the group size. Also, students rotated more in their class configurations across the modules - meaning that they met more people on different courses, and with different interests. Under these conditions Danni described her positive integration into the social life of the course through a process of *clicking*[70]. She stated that "we fitted with the people that are most like us within our class. And I do feel like this kind of the time [in comparison to her BTEC] that I've made my friends for life". After outlining some of the different social groups within the cohort Danni told me who she clicked with "then you've got like me and three people in my class". Coincidently, these students were the neo-tribe of purple haired performers. As will be illustrated further, this group was a coming together of like-minded individuals, that became more like-bodied individuals, and spent portions of their time together doing like-performances.

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[70] The process of *clicking* together was well-defined by Danni. For her this group was not exclusionary but a natural forming together. For example, she stated "it's not like the course is cliquey, it's just that I have obviously found who I click with most in the group so stick with those people but we all see each other together as the course group". In this definition the boundaries of their group are porous and transitionary in the sense that they are only bound together while they share interests etc.

In theory, like-minded individuals should share some cultural tastes and have the same views of the world (including on arts and politics). Danni described these similarities in detail while at the same time retaining the uniqueness of each individual in the group. She also emphasised that their shared cultural tastes were based on an openness to all forms of arts. Stating that we (the purple head neo-tribe) have,

> "got a very wide range in music so we listen to like classical to screamo… we can put our phones on shuffle and whatever plays, everyone's happy with it. And then there's like books and film interests and stuff and like our political ideas. It's very, very rare we contradict each other. But then that sounds like we don't have conversations, we do, we chat about things but it's more often than not we agree" (15/03/16).

While they tend to agree with each other they have conversations where there remains a space to contradict one another. In which to put forward their own individual opinions and identities. Danny described this group as very close - and this closeness is maintained through like-performances, "we're constantly laughing and singing and I've never had that before. I've never had such a close group of people". It was this closeness, and constant singing, that Danni associated with support. This group helped to develop her confidence over the course of the year, even when facing academic challenges. This explanation is not unlike the importance given to friendship at younger ages; such as the transition from primary to secondary school (Weller, 2007). With the transitional significance, shared interests and performances outlined, one question remains: What was the symbolic meaning of their purple hair?

Although the four students would listen to 'screamo music' it was not the girls' affiliation to one type or genre of music that bound them together. As opposed to the punk movement in the UK these students' purple hair did not mean that they had a taste for alternative and anti-establishment music. Their physical appearance was even less symbolic of an anti-establishment social body, as demonstrated by the great care they took in their grooming practices. The group always ensured their hair was very neat. And this aspect of their appearance distanced them from the symbolism of 'shaggy hair' "as a form of protest against resented forms of social control" (Douglas, 1996, p.77). Therefore the typical body symbolism of purple hair, in this case, has clearly become detached from its cultural origins - the remnants of the subcultural beginnings have all but evaporated. As a founding member, Danni's interests provided a

potential explanation for the symbolic function of purple hair for this neo-tribe. It was tied to a sub-genre of *performance* and stage make-up,

> I originally applied for hair and beauty because my mum told me that I need something to do, to follow a career, all of this sort of stuff. And then I actually went to the open day for hair and beauty, it did seem interesting and I am quite into make-up and stuff, but I am more into stage make up. It is like a sub genre of what I am actually interested in (Danni, 29/02/16).

For Danni at least, purple hair can be seen as an offshoot of her interests in stage make-up and bodily appearances. Interests that for the most part are shared with the other three students with whom she clicks. It stands to reason therefore that elements of this symbolism extends to the other members of the social group that spend lots of time together playing, singing, and performing. The colour of Danni's hair provides a means to express her individuality within the acceptable aesthetics of how bodies may appear on stage. In combination with theatre blacks (a code that Danni, and the other members of the neo-tribe tended to comply informally) the dying of hair may be understood as a move to retain an individual identity while forming small group identities within the learning environment. Like Danni's tattoo then their hair style may be partially understood as a less permanent body modification that demonstrates an attempt at individualism.

Sometimes hair is just hair. But in this instance, I argue that hair reveals one type of body project that drastically contributes to the symbolism of bodies. But more than this the hair styles of four students contributed to their initial transitions into the course as they formed a friendship group, or a clique. For them hair was a marker of neo-tribe identity and facilitated social transitions.

The Blind Man's Stick: 8th of December 2014. There is a general consensus that something isn't *working* in this scene. The four students and Sandy feel that the entire stage dynamics lacks "*authenticity*". Movement and gestures are thought to be "too scripted", there is a lack of nuance to their group performances[71]. Liam is never blamed directly yet there is a suggestion that his performances may be one of the root causes of this problem. He is playing the part of the blind man, and apparently unconvincingly so. As a result of these discussions Mason, the technician, is asked if he could find something to act as a blindfold. The idea is that Liam may recreate the experiences of a blind man more accurately - the hope is that this will address the issues relating to authenticity.

Mason returns shortly with a thick piece of blackout cloth and the team assist Liam in putting it on. To me this intervention makes Liam look less blind; it is rare to see a blind person cover their eyes with a heavy and clunky blindfold. Despite his appearance the team are eager to run the scene again with this new adjustment. In this performance Liam clearly moves in a more vulnerable and sensitive way. The mannerisms of his body alter, they are not as direct and certain:

> instead of walking from point A to point B in a straight line he feels his way to a rough location (he uses the stick to navigate himself around the stage);
> he is no longer looking at the other actors in their eyes but tilting his head towards the direction of their voice;
> and the stick begins to become incorporated into his hand gestures. The long piece of wood is now a tool to communicate to others with.

At the end of the performance Sandy praises the effects of this experiment "the blindfold makes your head and body move differently, which works really well as it makes it more believable that you are blind". The group agree and add their positive feedback. After this Liam adds "yeah, and it helped me get into character better". Even my initial view that the blindfold made Liam appear less blind was no longer true. The modification did in many ways make this scenario more authentic and believable. What is more, as Sandy continues to analyse, this adjustment made Sam more expressive. Sandy praises his improved animations, "you used the stick more effectively. It was more than just something to feel you around - you need your stick to function so it becomes part of you".

The moment Sandy said this I pictured in the image of Merleau-Ponty's famous "blind man's stick" (p. 165) where the "stick has ceased to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived for itself; its points have become an area sensitivity, extending the

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[71] These types of movements that the group of actors are yearning for may be thought of as the opposite of jazz hands types of bodily expressions (see P1 A1 S1).

> scope and active radius of touch, and providing parallel to sight" (p.165). From this perspective, in this instance authenticity was a product of the stick becoming part of Liam's extended body. The prop became part of a system which is open to the world and correlated with it. In this synthesis an experience (or perception) was formed that was deeply connected to the process of grasping meaning and expressing oneself.

To understand the expressive nature of this performance a phenomenological account enabled me to think of the relations expression has with the processes of the experiencing body. Whilst the narrative of *body symbolism* in transition (P2 A2) illustrated how the physical "body itself is a highly restricted medium for expression" (Douglas, 1996, p.69) a phenomenological account of the physical body would recognise that "the body is essentially an expressive space" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.146). These are not necessarily irreconcilable stories of how theses bodies-in-transition become symbolically expressive. Even when symbolic meaning is derived from the social, the physical body retains some form of limited status as a medium for expression within Douglas's (1996) configuration. And an 'in-depth' analysis that phenomenologists aspire "takes the vertical dimension of experience more seriously" (*ibid*, p. 75). Both dimensions contain realities that were important to tell[72]. Therefore some of the specific processes of the experiencing body warranted further attention. Consequently in this final Act of Play 2 the analysis provides a sustained attempt to look at the 'processes of the experiencing body' (6.5) in isolation - as far as this was possible. Unlike Act 1 little reference was given to the processes that order embodiment and performance through setting the value for types of bodily movements. Nor is this analysis concerned with mapping out how an awareness of the social body can help to frame the meanings and expressions through the symbols on the students' bodies. In order to achieve this the discussion is limited to the plane of bodily experience alone - offering up the field notes to phenomenological lenses. As will be illustrated in this Scene there are different processes and mechanics operating on this plane of experience that are akin to the principles of method acting as a means to generate authentic performance.

Sheets-Johnstone's (2015) *Phenomenology of Dance* provided an overall direction for the consideration of the body as a medium for expression through movement. In her account "the

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[72] From Shilling's Corporeal Realist perspective the body is held as a multidimensional medium for the constitution of society (see Chapter 6). Therefore in order to recount a narrative of bodies-in-transition more than one of these dimensions require attention.

meaning aspect of the symbols derives from the specific sensuous surface which embodies and reflects it, and the sensuous surface is *sine qua non* of the specific meaning reflected" (pp.65-6). In simpler terms, "it is the sheer form of the dance which is expressive" (p.66). Sheets-Johnstone elaborated that when we watch performance we do not interpret the movements on stage in terms of feelings it might evoke in us, we see a form which, because of its organisation and its dynamic flow is itself the medium of symbolic expression (*ibid*). Unlike other forms of bodily expression, for example, a bird tattoo, bright yellow badges, theatre blacks or colourful garments, the expressive form of a performance "has no significance beyond its inherent, self-contained meaning" (p.68). Its symbolic meaning begins and ends with the performance. There were less restrictions on this plane and the physical movements/expressions it can muster were only limited by the capabilities of the 'objective body' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In the example of the blind man's stick, Liams 'objective body' was configured differently than that of the character he was playing. Liam's vision was intact; his character could not see. Of the same importance, the 'phenomenal body' (*ibid*) of actor and character were like night and day. Liam was used to experiencing vivid colours and shapes through his visual field of perception and the blind man sees the world through different senses. To close the gaps and to narrow the phenomenal chasm Liam's vision was taken away by way of blindfold. This intervention was akin to method acting[73]. Authenticity therefore was seen to be achievable/achieved through the accurate recreation of the experience and the body-object-world synthesis of the blind man. Put simply, to generate the 'correct' experience was seen as a prerequisite for generating authentic expressions. The phenomenological conditions were therefore a central component in allowing the performer to transcend their corporeality and convince the audience that they were someone else. Liam's reflections after the scene cite the role he thought these authentic experiences had played, "it helped me get into character better". These observations led to a pedagogical statement to accompany these assumptions that are akin to method acting: the replication of an authentic expression can be taught through a mimicking of authentic experience. This statement may provide some further detail to the hidden curriculum for education expression that was

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[73] According to Harrison (1998) 'the method' is to rouse your subconscious (through your experiencing body in this case) to produce creative works. Developed from Stanislavski, method acting is an applied approach to help the actor experience the authentic realities; or to "make you feel you were actually *it* and *it* was going on" (*ibid*, p.156).

prevalent across the Performing Art learning environments. This also formed a 'method[74]' of acting that relies on the actors/students experiencing bodies. And once these experiential conditions are met then it, "is about following your impulses rather than your logic… Just like to *feel* it I guess" (Gabby, 05/02/16).

It was through these types of *feelings/experiences* that Liam's movements and gestures altered, not in response to a logical or discursive recalibration of his bodily movement. And through these subtle alterations his performance was deemed more expressive as well as authentic. Liam's enhanced expression was noted as a more effective use of the stick to communicate. Therefore the absence of sight changed the dynamics of this performance by bringing the stick in from the peripheries. The stick went from being a prop to part of Liam's body as a medium for expression. On the level of the experiencing body this phenomenological event is known as the process of incorporation (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Leder, 1990).

On the first attempt (before the blindfold) the stick was little more than a stage prop, part of the costume. The stick was on the periphery of the performance, it was integrated so far as it was there and added to visual effect by indicating that Liam's character was blind. But it failed to create the theatrical illusion that Liam was blind. Sandy noticed this when she stated that "you used the stick more effectively…". The effective use of the stick was that it had become a part of Liam's 'extended body' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Here the piece of wood took on additional theatrical roles, similar to those of a hand, becoming an instrument to gesticulate in the attempt to communicate meaning. The stick mapped onto his senses, the external object was now charged with proprioceptive powers and new possibilities of engaging with the world.

These observations and reflections on the processes of the experiencing body uncover some further details on the hidden curriculum for educating expression. For example, the *authentic* actor does not learn about the objective meanings of his gestures (through an analysis of spatial positions on stage and the shape of his body or through any other physical orientations). Rather

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[74] This method held value for students in the BTEC and in HE. At City University students were discussing their appreciation for method acting outside 'the hut'. One student was particularly impressed by the dedication; "method actors, wake up in character and stay in it all day" (02/10/14). This dedication did not feature in the 'Blind Man's Stick' episode at Journeys but the processes of the expiring body were manipulated to mimic some of the underlying principles of the method.

he incorporates those movements into his body and then moves with an intention that is based on those experiences.

Feeling the Spotlight: 15th of December 2014. I am feeling a bit COLD sitting in 'the pit'; the temperature has really dropped this week. Sandy has also noticed the change in climate telling me this room is really difficult to keep warm because of its size. All the students have left their outer garments on, there are a couple of comments about the temperature. When all the equipment is set up for the full day of rehearsals the students begin to prepare for the first scene - off come their thick jumpers and coats.

They are about to run their first technical rehearsal. It is their earliest chance to practice their production with all the lighting, sound, props and equipment that will feature in the 'live performance'. A *spotlight* is projecting a narrow beam on the middle of the stage it is only wide enough to frame two people standing close together in conversation. It is an intensive white light beaming down on an empty stage. The rest of the room is pitch black and quite dark. Just Mason, Sandy and I are sat in the temporary seating that faces the stage today (an elevated platform that can seat an audience of 50). A week later these seats will be filled with family and friends looking at the same light, anticipating the opening scene when the students will step into the *limelight*.

After a moment of suspense, Jen and Tina walk onto the stage. They begin to enact the scene with more animation and concentration than I have seen in any of the rehearsals before. As soon as the final line was delivered Mason passed on some advice "do not come too far upstage because you're dropping out of the light a little - you can feel if it is not on you, there will be a lack of warmth. So in that case just take a step back". As soon as the technician has finished offloading his advice Tina and Jen (who perform regally outside of College) glance at each other as if to say, 'we know that'. They do not respond but merely nod their heads to show that they had heard him.

When the students are in the heat of performance this ability may not be so easy - the two seasoned performers did step out of the light. Being 'in the spotlight' is something that performers are encouraged to *feel*, not see. This is because when the light is directed on you, on your face, in your eyes, it is no easy task to pinpoint the illuminated area. The actor is too close, and lacks the audience's perspective. The light bounces around in the approximate location reflecting off them and their immediate surroundings. When the actor looks out into the audience there are no close surfaces for this light to rebound off in their perceptual field, without looking at the floor. Because the lamp is angled, even the floor can not give them an exact location of where to stand. Facing outwards all that the actor can see is space, darkness, and their audience.

An almost identical piece of advice was dispensed in City University. On this occasion it was George who was directing students towards the thermal qualities of the light. The difference was that this time it was explicitly framed as a skill, "there is a very important skill we are going to teach you now… As an actor, with light, you want to be in it!". To illustrate this George asked for a volunteer to stand where they think they are lit up properly. When the student walked towards the light they squinted their eyes. George noticed this and recommended to the student, "if the light is burning your eyes don't look at it". After the student is in an approximate position George instructed them to feel their way into the centre of the beam by the feeling of warmth on their face (09/10/14). During my time in the field I stood under these lamps and they project beam of light intense enough to warm my skin. The experience of the heat from the light was intensified in both of the examples through physical and seasonal factors. The pit and the hut are both expansive enclosed spaces that are filled with cold air, during the winter at least. The relative differences in temperature may be narrowed during 'live performances' when additional heat from the audiences' bodies act as bio-thermal radiators. However, these live performances can bring extra heat to the students' bodies through senses akin to anxiety. So even if the heat generated through the spotlight remains a constant, or diminishes in relative terms, the heat generated through the limelight[75] is greater.

There is more significance to these sensory dimensions within the Arena for Performing Arts Transition than merely being a 'performance skill'. These fieldnotes provide a set of phenomenological descriptions that expose experiences that can be extended to their bodies-in-transition. In order to develop this line of augmentation a sensory scale between hot and cold shall first be set up. Positive temperatures (warm-warmer-HOT) and negative temperatures (cool-cooler-COLD) are *directional* senses that can attract and repel bodies - bring them towards, or push them away from the limelight. As figure E implies the limelight is more than the literal heat of the spotlight. It is the intensity of attention directed at the students' body; the size of the audience, the scrutiny of the audience, the closeness of the audience, the personal nature of the performance and so on. While this is quite different from the spotlight, on stage,

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[75] Harrison(1998) stated that in 1816, for theatrical purposes, calcium oxide was heated in cylinder tubes omitting an intense white light. This light was used as a manually directable beam that could follow the principal actors around stage. This, he traced, gave rise to the phrase 'in the limelight' that is still a commonly used term "for being the centre of attention" (p. 142).

the two work together to generate heat in the actresses' body. This stated, it is not as simple as warmth equating to attraction and the cold as repulsion. There is a zone (in the mid ranges) that individuals are attracted towards and there are lines of repulsion (moving to the extremes) where the students get too cold, or too hot. So while the magnetic poles (COLD-HOT) push and pull bodies in opposite directions, students have a hunger to find a temperature they are comfortable with. Everyone is moved to find *their* own temperature. And some like it hotter than others.
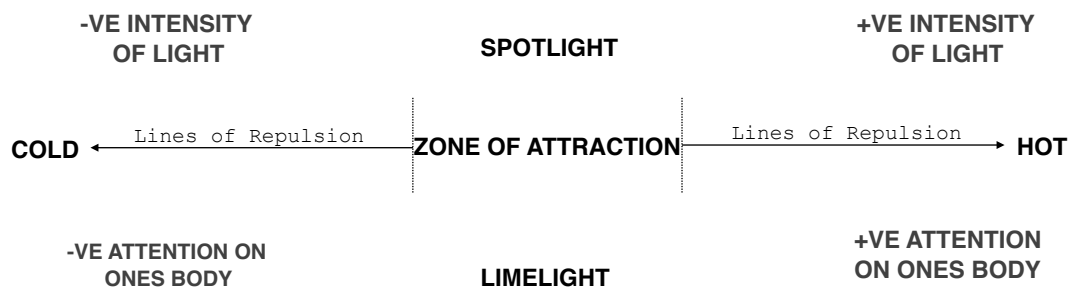
-VE INTENSITY OF LIGHT	SPOTLIGHT	+VE INTENSITY OF LIGHT
COLD ← *Lines of Repulsion*	ZONE OF ATTRACTION	*Lines of Repulsion* → HOT
-VE ATTENTION ON ONES BODY	LIMELIGHT	+VE ATTENTION ON ONES BODY

Figure E: Sensory Scale. COLD-HOT

In City University a group of students had a conversation about stage fright and pre-performance nerves (02/10/14). They recalled how their bodies felt in anticipation of stepping into the limelight. Their bodily responses consisted of heightening senses akin to anxiety. Physiologically speaking anxiety arousal is similar to excitement arousal (Brooks, 2013). Universally accepted symptoms accompany these types of arousals include, a pounding heart, hot skin and sweating (*ibid*). The body therefore becomes HOT as a reaction to the limelight. In relation to this the students referenced heat producing emotions such as being 'excited' and 'nervous'. The bigger the performance the more these emotions move to the extremes. Listening to the students briefly share with one another their embodied states before a 'big performance' indicated that their bodies do experience the heat of the limelight - some more than others. One female student stated "I was sick before going on to sing once". Feeling sick or actually vomiting in anticipation in medical discourse would be explained as a physiological symptom of anxiety. So regardless of whether this student was excited or nervous, or a combination of both, their bodily temperature had increased. This heat can get too much for some.

To regulate their temperature students can employ methods to cool themselves down. In sharing their experiences another student mentioned that they "shit themselves" (which means to get nervous) before a big performance. To monitor this they take "loads of drugs before hand. [catching my eye she clarified] Not drugs-drugs, but to help with nerves" (02/10/14). This is an explicit attempt to adjust the intensities of heat that they experience. Deleuze and Guattari described how the "junky does not want to be warm, he wants to be cool-cooler-COLD. But he wants The Cold like he wants His Junk - NOT OUTSIDE where it does him no good but INSIDE" (1988, p.178). This is not the same as the student who takes some form of pharmaceutical to take the edge off their nerves; these students do not pursue the cold to the extremes. They are not aiming to freeze their spine and achieve a "metabolism approaching Absolute Zero" (*ibid*, p.178). What they are sensing is that they are too hot, their body is in discomfort. And to move towards their zone of attraction they need to become cooler *inside*. Taking these 'drugs' is a form of self-medication to this end. Even though on occasions like these above the limelight may get too hot, overall the majority of Performing Arts students tend to be attracted to its warming qualities.

This may be thought of as the 'lure of the limelight', when students are longing for some of the warmth radiated from it. Their personal zone of attraction is towards the warmer end of the sensory scale (Figure E). Day-to-day these students desire more heat, they are like moths to a flame. They crave the attention of the limelight and the heat that comes with it. In P1 A3 S1 the example of the 'outtake video' from one group demonstrated a desire to stay in this light for just a little longer. The culture of performance outlined in P2 A1 S3 provided yet another example. A central part of this lure is that the limelight is viewed as a space where they can express themselves to greater effect - to a greater audience. As shown in P2 A1 S1 Gabby is attracted to performance as a therapeutic event where she can develop *presence* - which is in part to develop some attention through, and on, her body. It is body project that aims to help her step out of the coldness associated with being "part of the scenery" (05/02/16). Out of this shadow and into the light she feels that she can become better at expressing herself to others.

Danni's experiences elaborated on the connection between the lure of the limelight and the desire to express oneself to an audience (with an audience comes an intensity of attention - or

heat). She recollected how during the degree course in very public settings they have "been encouraged to explore our own sides of things and express our feelings". This was what she has enjoyed most about the course at City University. Like Gabby, this attention (that is fused to an encouragement to explore/express their feelings) held subjective value. This too was important for Danni in her transition, stating, "I do think you become a lot more expressive… I do think I've learnt a lot about myself from all the work I've done. Because you're putting yourself in the *limelight* but not always in the best light…". What Danni described here was a performance culture where the students are more than happy to put themselves in the limelight. And it is in these positions where they can go about developing expression. In short, attention and audience are required for their expressions to mean anything, to generate value for them.

As a community of performers, Danni suggested members were supportive of other students who are brave enough to expose themselves under these lights. For example, in one assessed performance the topics "got incredibly deep and people in our Performing Arts group went so much into their own issues… No one judged each other for this. And I mean there were things about eating disorders and anxiety and really quite a harsh things to look at. But there was no point that anyone was judged" (Danni 15/03/16). This cultural acceptance of sensitive and personal performances under the spotlight minimises the potential negative repercussions of being in the limelight. It is a necessary mechanism to avoid students getting burnt. The final example of the lure of the limelight reflects industry norms. Both Gabby and Danni have used 'Spotlight' as a recruitment tool at reduced student rates, not the £150 annual fee (see https://www.spotlight.com). Danni described this online space as "a massive catalogue that directors have. So it was quite a big thing [to have a profile on there]". It required her to go and have professional portfolio pictures taken of her and uploaded for others to see. Each of these examples may be associated with varying degrees of heat. Nevertheless, the combination of the evidence provided above suggests that many students have a comfortable relationship with the limelight. They are lured towards it and not repelled away from it. But this is not always the case.

Other students have a more uncomfortable relationship with the limelight. This can be best illustrated through Tina's life history interview (22/01/16). This will be briefly retold in

chronology that follows her timeline (see Figure below). The aim of sharing this narrative is to show how social pressures and expectation have kept her trajectory of flight close to the limelight. Yet over the course of this flight Tina has felt uncomfortable in these positions. At the point of interview she had come to a crisis in her transition. She has become tired and burnt from the heat and longs for a cooler path. Her current transitional crisis can be summarised with this statement "I don't know if I want to perform" but at the same time she doesn't know how to break the news to Sandy, and others.
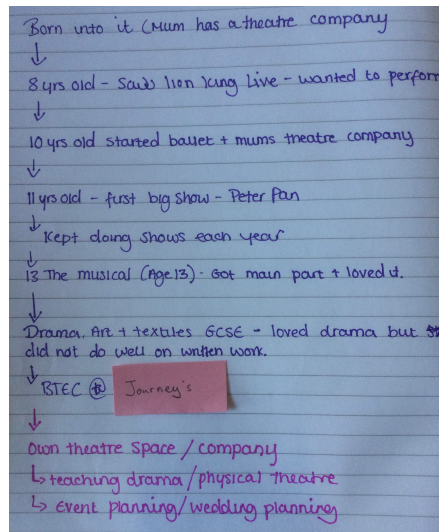
To understand this crisis it is useful to understand the pressure for her to put herself in the limelight but also realise her experiences of being at the centre of attention. As her timeline shows she was "Born into it [the life of a performer]". At a young age she was blown away by her trip to the west end to see the Lion King and as a result began to love live performances and to imagine herself being a performer in her later life. But in her first experiences of performing she encountered feeling of being too hot for the first time. When discussing her experiences of ballet Danni stated "I loved it when I was at home but I didn't when I was with loads of people and I found it really embarrassing…in the end I absolutely hated it. I'd just sit there. I was so shy". Goffman (1962) vividly described the bodily signs of embarrassment that included blushing and sweating. In other words, like nerves and excitement, embarrassment makes the body warm-warmer-HOT depending on the extent of its intensity. The heat was too much for Tina. She stopped going to Ballet lessons.

Then aged eleven she did her 'first big show' but again this was not the most enjoyable of experiences. Even though she did not have a leading role, "I was only a lost boy, didn't have a big part" she remembers some hostilities from her peers. She recounted that "someone said to me, you only got that part because your mum's in the company". These experiences may be described as getting burnt by the limelight i.e. having negative experiences of being in the limelight, either at the time or subsequent to the performance. This experience didn't deter her completely, she carried on annual performances with her mother's theatre company. These were not always negative experiences. Indeed there were some experiences that she 'loved'. Yet, through the accumulation of these performances, Tina was becoming more aware of her unease on stage. She summarised these growing concerns,

> I love performances and I love directing and things like that and I love being the one to kind of put it on. But I'm not confident enough on stage. And I'm not the kind of person that will go to ten auditions a week, get turned down and still keep going.

While she still enjoys performance, her desire to be the one performing was lessened through experiences of getting burnt. Tina had realised that perhaps becoming a performer was not for her. She reflected that,

> You've got to be quite confident in yourself and I'm more confident in myself in the other side of things than I am in performing. It's a little bit of a shame because I would have loved to do it.

These statements suggest that overall her zone of attraction was set towards the cool end of the sensory spectrum (Figure E). She was not as lured by the limelight - there was too much potential for embarrassment, not enough confidence on stage, it was too hot. She was attracted to a cooler climate, with less attention fixed on her body. Tina reflected this by stating that she is quite comfortable in the background, "I've never been kind of the one to push myself to the front of the show". But for her it was not as simple as merely receding from view and not putting herself forward for plays. Instead of finding her own temperature and making her decisions based on how *she* felt under the bright lights Tina felt that she has to keep on performing. In spite of her discomfort, Tina described how she has continued to put herself in the limelight because of social pressures. This she clarified was "not like bad pressure - positive pressure. People going, yeah but we think you're good. And me going, yeah but I don't want to do it". In fact when she revealed to someone at the theatre company that she was thinking about

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becoming a teacher they told her "you've got to perform though". These tensions continued to increase during her time at Journeys. This is because in Journeys there were many public performances and through this Tina "learned… that I am more confident directing and teaching than I'm actually performing. I'm better at communicating with people and designing ideas and stuff like that and giving ideas in my head than just being told what to do performing".

This interview data uncovered two opposing forces, one that originates from inside her body and the other outside. In one direction, there is an attraction towards cooler climates. These climates are still located within the world/industry of performance but are also at a distance from the heat of the lime light. She is attracted to these COLD zones to the same extent that she is repelled from HOT ones. The limelight produces visceral experiences inside her that she wishes to avoid and this cannot be greatly altered from the outside. Tina was filled with doubt even in the face of compliments, this resulted in her spending "hours on it (a performance) and then panic about it. Even when she has expressed these anxieties to Sandy, the typical response would be "you've passed it. You've got a distinction star, get over yourself". But this outside reassurance had little effect on her experience. Nor did Sandy's further advice who "told me to women up and get over it". Her inside temperature remained impervious from outside compliments and rousing battle cries.

These comments start to allude to the force pulling in the opposite direction. While these interventions from Sandy (and others) did little to change her experience of being in the limelight, they are symptoms of the social pressure that kept her returning to the stage to perform. And it was from these two forces (one inside that was attracted to the COLD and one outside that was pushing her into a HOT place) that her crisis was born,

> I was really worried about it! I really had a massive breakdown…I was completely panicked about it. So I was like, I've wanted to perform my whole life. I can't just change my mind now… What's going on? And I was like seventeen - *you're only seventeen*… I can't just not do it and then I kind of felt like I failed and everything like that and I know that Sandy was really excited about my monologues and drama school auditions and I was like, I don't want to do it but I don't want to tell her. I think she kind of […] had her heart set on that and I felt like my mum did. And I felt like all my friends did.

Tina's story is an important one to tell. It shows an aspect of the arena for performing arts transitions that generates transitional crises that can be damaging for the individual. In this case

the crises had originated from the disjuncture between the pressure for her to perform and her experiences of being in the limelight. These pressures had accumulated since birth. There was no catalytic experience that collided with this pressure, it was a slow burn process. It happened as a result of a growing sense that it is too HOT for her in the limelight.

This has clear ramifications for transition. Both attraction and repulsion can be seen as directional forces that there exist within the processes of the experiencing body. The act reveals relative forces that are intertwined with the sensory experiences of temperature. Tina's experiences show how these processes fed into her imagined trajectories (see Chapter 6) that went from wanting to be a performer to wanting to be a teacher (among other aspirations). It also shows how the performing arts as a subject and discipline can break this role of emotional and embodied reactions (e.g. embarrassment, excitement, nervousness) like those elicited by the limelight.

SETTING THE SCENE: THE TECHNICAL-CREATIVE DIVIDE

This Play has a much narrower narrative than its prequels. The sole focus was to unpack how these bodies-in-transition were situated within discourses of skill. To this end the analysis precedes from the notion that skill is fundamentally social and embodied (see Chapter 5). From this, discourses of skills were understood to have been co-constructed between societies and bodies. In this sense skill was not considered as finite abilities that were acquired but relational qualities that were formed through institutional and individual discourse and practice (Payne, 2010). In examining the role of 'skill' in both Journeys and City University from this relational paradigm related discourses emerged to bind to the overarching notion of skill. Terms such as 'employability', 'creativity', 'technical skill', 'communication', 'group work' and 'talent' all came into focus over the duration of the fieldwork. These separate but related elements entered into public discourse in a myriad of distinctive ways. Some were considered to be more important than others in the Arena for Performing Arts Transition. And from these discourses of skill a hierarchy was produced. This will be referred to as 'the Order of the Creative Skills'.

The observed Order of the Creative Skills was made possible through wider tensions within the Performing Arts industry and the CCIs more generally. This can be simply conveyed as mapping onto the "technical-creative divide". Neil explained these divisions in the very first lecture for students at City University. He made the same points on three separate occasions. This meant that every Performing Arts student was explicitly informed that these are tensions that exist within the discipline in which they are situated. Below is a recollection of one of these explanations,

> **"You don't want to be a PC":** 2nd November 2014. Once again Neil is introducing the technical-creative divide. In very clear terms, he argues to the students that "it is an extremely unhelpful division". "The industry", according to Neil, needs to enhance and find intersections between technology and creativity. Today Neil has an analogy to illustrate his point. He draws parallels within "the famous cross roads symbol used by Apple". From this Neil continues to develop a "PC versus Apple" metaphor. In this competition Apple's innovation has made them "market leaders". To achieve this, Neil explains, the company combined "cutting edge technology" with "creative beauty". The advice for the students is that they would need to be able to develop both their technical and creative skills simultaneously, "or what you end up with, why you end up with a PC. And you don't want that!" Neil laughs at his own

> analogy before continuing to warn the students. It is against this backdrop that "the module intends to be that intersection between creativity and technology. You will need great ideas. You will have better ideas if you know how things work! Getting to grips with technology has practical uses as well because if you get a show in Edinburgh you will need to know how to set up in the 20 minute slot they give you before hand and pack up in the 20 minutes after".

So while Neil identified the technical-creative divide that characterises the industry he also put forward a detailed argument against such divisions. That was in his words an "extremely unhelpful division". Furthermore, when Neil referred to the "Industry", initially he was describing the Performing Arts industry very specifically - he was talking about the production of live performances that was the focus of the module. This started the analogy he drew upon to illustrate his argument was taken altogether from a different industrial sector. The intersections between technology and creativity or "the famous crossroads symbols used by apple" was proposed as a way of reconciling the damaging division, as he see them. Despite Neil's rhetoric a collage of encounters taken from both BTEC and HE learning environment suggests that an element of these divisions remain influential. And from this a "skills hierarchy" was (re)produced across the Arena for Performing Arts Transition. To approximate this hierarchical order and to outline the remaining structure of this play, the following tiers were identified.

- Lower Order: Employability Skills
- Middle Tier: Technical Skills
- Higher Order: Creative Skills

The three subsections of this Play that follow attend to each of these orders. Taken together these sections consist of an order that mirrors and recreates the technical-creative divide. A divide in which these bodies-in-transition are situated.

LOWER ORDER: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills received little attention in the day-to-day activities in both Journeys and City University. This was at odds with the dominance of employability skills that is asserted over vocational policy documents and public discourse (see 3.1). This was not however seen as a neglect of their responsibility to close the skills gap in a post-Fordist society. Neither was this seen as a lack of an awareness of the limited opportunities for these student to progress into relevant stable employment from the BTEC and HE into the Performing Arts (see Chapter 2). Instead, employability was seen to be embedded into the fabric at the subject level and so additional efforts to develop these skills were considered unnecessary. Sandy reflected on these sentiments in an interview (12/05/16),

> I think the BTEC prepares them [the students] more for the industry and the world of work because they have the opportunity to do things like present to the room and so they learns presentation skills…They'll have to learn how to manage projects and work cooperatively and collaboratively - all of these things which we all do in the workplace. These skills are embedded.

The range of skills listed in Sandy's statement (e.g. presentation skills, projects management and group work) were deemed to be attributes that students acquire. As finite abilities that their bodies were able to reach by merely producing and delivering performances. In other words these skills were seen to be submerged into the discipline. These assumptions were shared in the HE learning environments,

> we have module statements in the module guideline, we have all that stuff. Especially about transferability skills and those kind of things…as you know we are *required* to talk about employability skills. But it is never a problem for our subjects… the assumption would be that Performing Arts skills are not that useful to employment. Not true. In fact, and arguably, you are more prepared if you have been doing that sort of work than if you have been writing essays (Neil, 05/02/16)

Like Sandy, Neil continued to suggest that the presentation skills and transferrable skills that employers are after are embedded into the performative nature of the discipline. Both programme leaders therefore believed that their Performing Arts students are in advantageous positions relative to other subjects in relation to employability. It was thought then that these students will be better equipped to seize opportunities with desirable employability skills, that

will enable them that are generated in a rapidly changing post-Fordist economy (Wolf 2011). Neil summarised the relative advantage of Performing Arts students succinctly,

> I noticed when I encounter students from other disciplines, like a English students or something, when asking them to stand up and give a presentation, they die. They are terrified at the idea! And it is only in those moments when you see how confident our students are actually in those sort of situations (05/02/16).

With the staff perceiving that employability has been addressed through the nature of the subject it receded from view - employability only remained on paper, to be found inside institutional documents such as module descriptors. An illustration of this within City University was through how the module descriptors were disseminated to students. It was not unusual for modules to be introduced by the lecturer discussing the module content, page by page. This common activity, however, never dwelled on the employability section. On one occasion Sam told the students that they will not discuss this section "because it isn't important" (29/09/14). Students in both HE and the BTEC picked up on the absence of employability within their courses. Gabby, for example, recognised that "we haven't even spoke much about employment on our course". She also noted that the careers fairs were not so relevant for those aspiring to become Performing Artists, stating that "nursing will get employment in nursing and like science will get employment in science but they don't really have like what can you do in performing arts" (19/03/16). This example illustrated that there can be a contradiction between student perspectives of employability and staff assumptions that these skills are mostly covered inadvertently.

While there was a general dismissal of the extent of the importance of giving explicit attention to employability skills in these educational programmes there were acknowledgements about the expected poor progression rates for these students. This was another contradiction based on the massive gap between the reduced emphasis on employability in the Arena for Performing Arts Transition and the relative employment prospects in the industry. The competitive, precarious and tough nature of the Performing Arts industry (see Chapter 4) was frequently a point of public conversations. Through one of these discussions Neil proposed to the students that technical skills are specific competencies that can lead to employment.

Technical Skills can be Traded for Money: 30th September 2014. In addressing, the students Neil states that "this is the only module where we can say with conviction that you can earn money - that is very rare". He continues to outline the plight of budding Performing Artists, "the unemployment rate for acting is around 90%… Even for my friends that worked in T.V. they have to work elsewhere when *there are no jobs*". The chances of opportunities for paid employment in performance appear to be extremely limited from Neil's professional perspective. As a director outside of his lecturing position Neil advises the students that "It is a really tough industry". However, if the students would like some employment in the future within this sector Neil identifies the most promising potential route, as he surveys the labour market, "In technical theatre there is a lack of skills and you will get work - you can turn what we teach you into dollar". By identifying this 'skills gap' Neil recommends to the students that this is the best way to turn the skills they acquire into economic capital. Before providing specific suggestions, "you can go along to the [University's public theatre] and you can get work there with these technical skills".

In this encounter, technical skills were proposed to be a set of competencies that may be exchanged for economic capital. On the surface, these competencies, however, were not the same as the identified skills gaps in CCIs; where "More *generic* employability and workplace skills are therefore in increased demand" (emphasis added, Creative SkillSet, 2012, p.152). Nor did they align with "many careers in the performing arts [that] value *transferable* skills" (emphasis added, Creative & Cultural Skills, 2011, p.125). The skills that Neil was describing in this instance were not the soft currencies of employability such as 'presentation', 'communication' and 'group work' skills that are lumped together under generic and transferable labels (Payne, 2010). Instead, the technical skills that were presented here to have (some) employment value were closer to the 'hard skills' that are more associated with the working class and working class occupational roles (Savage *et al.,* 2013). Neil was referring to a specific range of skills e.g. to work software and equipment that are used in the production of live performances. These consist of the specialist skills that were typically understood to be under the remit of 'the technician'. On one level, the technical skills remained a set of hard competencies within this context. Yet on another, these same technical skills relied upon more social and embodied competencies as well. In the next section two aspects of the technical skills will be elaborated on help to unpack what is meant by these competencies.

MIDDLE TIER: TECHNICAL SKILLS

In open discussions technical skills were presented as having value in their transferability to employment. In City University they were *required* to talk about employability skills whereas they were *compelled* to talk about technical skills. These observations imply that, in these contexts, technical skills gained more attention than the generically cited employability skills that permeated institutional documents. Yet, the details of what these technical skills consisted of were left unsaid. For the most part they do relate to what may be considered as 'hard' technical abilities; such as, operating specialist software or understanding the controls in the control booth for example. This was not however the full extent of the scope of these sets of skills. To further dissect the more embodied (co-constructed and social) dimensions of skills that were located on the inferior side of the technical-creative divide two illustrations will be drawn upon. Both illustrations bind the body to the social. 'Technical languages' consists of specialist industry terms that students need to be familiarised with in order to be "taken seriously" in those social environments. 'Back stage protocols' presents some of the orders of interaction that are context dependent. In both cases students were told, or came to realise, that they need to communicate within the Arena for Performing Arts Transitions in defined ways. These can also be considered as technical skills (or more accurately skills that are to do with the technical side of performance) that will allow them to work effectively within industry. One of these skills was to incorporate the correct lexicon into their vocabulary.

Technical Languages: 9th of November 2014. Both Neil and George work within the performance industry outside of their teaching posts. Neil is a director and George is a technician. In rounding up today's lecture Neil signals to the group the importance of acquiring the language of the industry, "Now this is important industry information, so listen up. Even if you are not interested in the technological side of things". George takes over from Neil to provide the students with insights of the culture of the performance industry. There are lots of little *'codes'* students must be aware of, "firstly, in a theatre there are no lightbulbs whatsoever - these [he picks up a lightbulb] are *lamps*. You'll notice that we make up our own language to give us an air of superiority, and that's just the way is… we also may say that we are *changing the bubbles* but this is more of an American term so perhaps stay clear of that". Gabby found this insight amusing as she laughs before asking "if you want to sound professional why would you say bubbles instead of lightbulbs?". Neil has a precise response to this "it may seem funny but if you go into an outside theatre and you don't use this lingo, you won't be taken seriously. It will signal to a technician that you know what you are talking about. Then instead of having a conversation with you they will

tell you automatically *it can't be done.* Not because it can't be done but just because they can't be bothered to do it. If it sounds like you know what you are talking about they might just consider trying it. Because they will not want to be proved wrong. But if you say the wrong words they will know that they can just say *it's impossible* and you why know any better". After this George and Neil continue to give a little nuggets of insider knowledge, and accompanying this with examples from the experience. In a way they are outdoing each other with a little quirky traits of the trade. George rounds up this conversation with a word of warning for students, "Don't ever call me a techy"… we don't like it, we are technicians, we are professionals".

These technical languages are predominately the language of technicians. George explained how students must become aware of *codes* and these are context specific. For example, if the students were to get work in America or with American productions companies, they should use the term bubbles for lightbulb. Whereas in the UK context both should be avoided in favour of lamps. This according to Neil is no laughing matter. Becoming properly acquainted with these technical language can be the difference between being taken seriously within the industry or not. Knowing the language could also be the difference between causing offence or building rapport with colleagues.

It was not just the word selection that was highlighted as important skill within the Arena for Performing Arts Transition. In Journeys, the students came to realise that they needed to maintain certain orders of interaction for both the front and back stage (Goffman, 1959).

Back Stage Protocols: 15th of August 2014. There is a black sheet that is acting as the backdrop of the stage. It is thick and does not let any light through. The sheet does not stretch the full length or height of the room and is suspended by metal poles. It is for all intents and purposes the dividing line between in front of stage and backstage. At the end of this scene a costume change is required and the actors go behind the screen. Sitting in the audience (just me and Sandy) I hear the actors whispering, moving and changing costumes as they organise themselves. The voices are a combination of male and female voices but I can not make out what is being said and by whom.

The first to reappear are Jen and Tina (they have left the two boys backstage). The whispering continues at a reduced level. Jen, now onstage, breaks character to interrupt the background murmurs "guys, maybe we shouldn't talk when we are backstage!". The noise stops and thee scene begins. Once the dialogue is concluded the two girls join the boys backstage. Seconds later I recognise Jen's distinctive voice,

> perhaps asking a question regarding a costume change. I can even make out Jude's response, "maybe we shouldn't talk backstage".

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis of social interaction is illuminating here. Even in this rehearsal setting the front and back stage have distinct interaction orders that are challenged when broken. The actors were all aware in principle that backstage communication should not spill over into the public arena. Jen achieved a heightened awareness of this when she moved to the front of stage. Here she noticed that the black sheet only blocked the audience's vision and did little to muffle the noise. She therefore reminded the actors of backstage protocols. This was only a dress rehearsal and lacked a proper audience. Therefore there would be little damage to breach these protocols in comparison to making desirable noises during a live performance. Nevertheless, Jen's observations and reminder largely affected the amount of sound that spilled over from behind the curtain. The background noise was greatly reduced apart from one further interaction when Jen herself failed to comply with the advice she had already dispensed. In both of these fieldnotes skills that relate to the technical aspects of producing and performing live theatrical events were connected to softer competencies (see Payne, 2010). Namely these aspects of technical skills were bound to specific industry languages and interaction orders that differ between the region in which those bodies are located.

HIGHER ORDER: CREATIVE SKILLS

While held in greater esteem than employability skills, technical skills were also in a subordinate position within the skills discourse. They were lower in rank to creative skills. This is very evident through a number of examples. One powerful illustration is the role of the technicians within the learning environment. Both Mason and George were almost always present during the 'contact time' and assisted (to varying degrees) in the delivery of the course. In City University, George even delivered some of the seminars on his own. Despite this neither were ever afforded the same status, or held in the same esteem as the other tutors/lecturers that had a more academic and overtly creative roles. Sam made these distinctions clear when he stated to the students "George will be invaluable in helping us with the technological components of this module. I will be holding tight reins over the creative output" (29/09/14). This wasn't simply a recognition that each member of staff has a different skill set that are both held in a parity of esteem. The creative sits above the technical in this arena. Students, for example, were also aware of the junior role of technicians. This inferiority may be illustrated through Tina's statements that Mason was "*just a technician"* even though "he was in some ways, a little bit of a teacher because he was involved" (22/01/16).

In addition to this, the students themselves tended to be more lured to developing their creative skills over their technical abilities. A prime example of this was the absence of attendance on a 'tech club' that George ran. He frequently advertised this club to students in the most appealing way he could imagine, "come to tech club. You can have the run of the studio, you can come and pop in and mess around with the equipment… it's a social thing. It is a chance to come and sit and chat… I will probably allow cups of tea in for that one… bring me some cake and a tea - and bring yourself" (29/09/14). A month later I asked George if any of the first year students have attended this extra curricular activity. He replied bluntly, "No. Undergraduates rarely come to my workshops". George continued to tell me how the vast majority of the students are not usually interested in the technical aspects of theatre in comparison to the creative components of performance - although he reminded me that they are intertwined (06/11/14).

It was also part of the discourse that the Performing Arts is an inherently creative enterprise. To put on a performance requires *creativity* as an essential component of its production. Sandy

reflected these sentiments by suggesting that "unlike other subjects where you know, there's a right and wrong, for me it's about sharing ideas and thoughts and *creativity*" (12/05/16). Despite this there was limited cohesion around what creativity consists of in both educational environments. Students were, however, given examples of previous work that demonstrated creative skills *par excellence*.

The model Assignment: 18th of November 2014. The first half of this lecture was dedicated to their 'formative assessments' that consisted of short horror films. Now the students are back from their break Neil reopens the lecture by stating "Right, we are right at the point now where we move onto the last thing you do, the assessment stuff". He informs the group that for the next hour they will be discussing their first summative assessment at University. He introduces the task by stating that "You will have to work together collectively on the piece. To be creative". They will be graded upon how effectively they "creatively employ a range of Digital techniques". In urging the students to bring creativity to work he praises the students, suggesting that "this group in particular has been very creative so far… but some people when they get to the assessments, people that have been creative for the past 10 weeks, all of a sudden do something very safe - because it is being assessed. But try not to be limited. Use all the creative ideas and more that you have been doing so far". After this Neil gives some tentative suggestions of experimental forms of performance they can consider. It is all very abstract advice that can be interpreted in many ways. Taking this forward, and providing a more *concrete* illustration of the type of creativity that is expected George mentions a memorable piece by a group two years ago that got a very good grade, above 90%. The reason they did so well was because "they bought in a fish. In a fish tank, of course. And they did Shakespeare. *And somehow it worked…* they managed to do exactly what we wanted from the assessment".

In this discussion Neil and George set out the criteria and expectations for the students' first summative assessment in HE. The *creative* took precedence over the *technical* (in this case digital techniques) in these discussions. Despite there being a clear emphasis regarding the development of creative skills over technical ones, in rhetoric at least, there was a lack of clarity concerning these skills. There were some abstract pointers that may lead to creative processes followed by a brief example of a previous submission that somehow worked. There is a subtle difference in discourse here: employability and technical skills consisted of learned skills whereas creativity must be unleashed.

Conclusion of Fieldwork

Each Play focused on a different dimension of the *embodied students* transition. The trilogy was set in the Arena for Performing Arts Transition as defined in the prelude. Portraying this arena as a fluid and mobile site was reflected in the composition of the three plays. There were intentional and explicit attempts to incorporate a wider spatiotemporal frame into each of the narratives than the 30 months of linear transition captured by direct ethnographic fieldwork (see 7.5. for an more specific account). The fieldnotes, or deep writings, on display in Chapter 8 were disproportionately centred on Danni, Gabby and Tina. This was through design not through a lack of rigour. On one hand, these students were purposively sampled because they were each closely connected to an emerging theme from phase one of the ethnography. On the other, while writing and crafting the ethnography the data pertaining to these students was favoured if it illustrated generic observations where other student experiences would also be used to make similar points. The reason for this was because by doing so it would allow the reader to become more familiar with the main characters in this study. Not only did this help with creating central narratives that run across the trilogy, it arguably added to the depth of representation. Narrowing the focus to place these three students to the front of the stage was an effective method in illuminating the subtleties and complexities that surrounded each of their transitions.

The full range of ethnographic processes that encapsulated the methodological approach from which these Plays were written was outlined in Chapter 7. Far from being an isolated 'Methods Chapter' the orientations outlaid in this Chapter provided a key bridge between the working theory (bodies-in-transition) and the empirical terrains on which the analysis was grounded. Moreover the methodology allowed for both sets of research questions to guide my observations in the field(s) and reflections regarding these students' transitions. With these guiding questions being returned to throughout the process, the findings in Chapter 8 were always discussed in relation to the main themes identified in Chapters 1-5. And in relation to the working theory developed from the pilot study as unpacked at length in Chapter 6. On occasions, however, encounters from the field(s) required me to step outside of these reviews and source alternative contextual and theoretical literatures. Sexualities for example did not feature in the review of

Performing Arts Transitions (see Chapter 4) but quickly became a powerful dynamic within Play 1. This required me to revisit literature that was not to do with transitions *per se* but explored sexualities in the Performing Arts. Theoretically, my conceptual tool box (6.5.) that accompanied me in the field was restocked appropriately and responsively. Before I was confronted with four of the twenty bodies having purple hair I was unfamiliar with much of the work around body symbolism. As I sought explanations from Douglas (1996) I came to also understand other data that I had yet to come to terms with. In realising this Douglas's conceptualisation of two bodies (*ibid*) only then became a lens from which to probe my deep writings on purple hair (P1 A2 S2) and developing symbolic awareness (P1 A2 S1).

The reason for concluding FIELDWORK with reflections on the internal workings of the ethnographic adventure is that it begins to develop a thread that is taken forward in CONTRIBUTIONS. This thread is a main contribution of the thesis - that is a new theoretical and methodological approach to transition. This ethnography, as will be argued in Chapter 9 and 10 demonstrates that a new flexible, adaptive and transitionary (bodies-in-transition) model is best equipped to capture the messiness of student transition - in comparison to other contemporary typologies of transition - see Chapter 5. The internal dynamics of this research project partly uncovered above were instrumental in the development of this new approach. It was through these ongoing reflexive qualities of these research endeavours where the theoretical, methodological, and contextual advances were made.

PART 4 CONTRIBUTION

Introduction to CONTRIBUTION

The thirteen scenes in total across three Plays each presented a self contained analysis. These independent analyses extend discussions in the reviewed literatures. Small claims that supported and/or challenged some of the established knowledges on vocationalism, BTECs, skills, and Performing Arts were made throughout. Instead of repeating or emphasising the details of individual contributions, this section presents a meta-discussion of the total findings. These discussion are structured towards arriving at a point where bodies-in-transition can be offered as a new, adaptable theory of transition. To develop these contributions the following structure was developed.

In 'To Messiness and Beyond' (9.1.) key data is recalled to add substance to the messy processes of transition. By exposing complexities at the heart of bodies, time-space, and systems of transition the CONTEXT for the study (Chapter 1 - 4) is enriched. The reader will know more intimately than before the messiness that is associated with being a BTEC body in the Performing Arts. 9.2. then takes forward the contributions to THEORY by offering a new adaptive theory of transition.

Chapter 9
Contributions

9.1 *To Messiness and Beyond*

There have been many words to describe the nature of student transitions in recent years, fragmented, fluid, complex, non-linear, interrupted and multidimensional (see Chapter 1.) In the field of Vocational Education, transitions are understood to be inherently messy (Wolf, 2011, Atkins *et al.,* 2011) in both process and outcome (see 1.4.). There are competing arguments and evidences within the field of transition studies and vocational qualifications (including the BTEC in performing arts). Together these can represent greater opportunities for students on the one hand and more constraints on the other (these positions were qualified in Chapter's 1 - 4). The unclear findings and arguments are symptomatic of the of cited messiness of transition: this is a well established recognition in contemporary, sociological, political and educational literature or transition (Eccleston *et al.,* 2009, Furlong 2009a). These realisations, however, fail to explain why, how and to what extent transitions are messy. Nine years ago, Worth (2009) recognised this, making a persuasive point that it is not,

> "enough to say the transitions are no longer neat and linear, or to briefly mention their complexity… a new theoretical option is needed to help explain the dynamic process of growing up, including personal motivation, the fluid experiences of time and perceived constraints to future (p 105).

There has been some progress towards these goals in the form of 'life-as-transition' (see Chapter 5) but on the whole this call has remained largely ignored. Detailed understanding of this messiness are mostly absent from the literature. Theoretical approaches that should respond to these complexities are also underdeveloped (Gale & Parker 2012). This ethnography was under taken in response.

To guide the study, two sets of research questions were formulated through detailed reviews of transition studies. The first set was drawn from fields that shed light on the contexts in which BTEC in Performing Arts students' make their transition. They were:

- What are the *opportunities* and *constraints* that BTEC in PA students face?
- How are discourses of *skill* created and transmitted within the learning environments. Does this begin to frame transitions in any way?
- To what extent are these transitions framed by gender, and class?

In refining the focus for this ethnography, theoretical reviews of the literature and the pilot study conducted in 2012-13 were reflected upon. Through these reflections, a second set of research questions were developed to complement the first set. Also these questions provided directions for the fieldwork and finally they indicated where the main claims contributions will lie. These questions were:

- how do students' transitions become ordered?
- how do students experience transition?
- how might the situatedness of transition mediate transition?

With the working theory having framed this ethnography the remainder 9.1(a-b) will be devoted to unpacking the messiness of transitions. In doing so, the six research questions will be implicit addressed. The following structure is designed to add substance to these statements: (1) the body in time and space is messy; and (2) systems of transitions are messy. Referring back to the empirical data these reflections below begin to generate new explanations of why, how and to what extent these transitions were messy.

9.1a. The Body in Time and Space is Messy

To qualify the statement, 'the body in time and space is messy', the three different processes of embodiment should be drawn out so that messiness can be identified within and between each dimension of the body. Then under these three banners a more detailed discussion can commence to unpack the specificities of transition as a messy process. To make these threads explicit the opening statement becomes three:

1) The processes that order embodiment are messy;
2) The processes of the experiencing body are messy
3) Situated processes are messy.

The contributions will be grounded in reference to the Arena for Performing Arts Transition. Processes that order students embodiment were shown to contain contradictory directions throughout the trilogy. Play 1 demonstrated this par excellence. Act 1, for example, illustrated the contradictory ways in which gender was being embodied. In Journeys (P1 A1 S1) typecasting occurred based on gender stereotypes. This limited the opportunities for both male and female students to experience playing a wide range of roles. Tina went as far as to suggest "we were all stuck" (22/01/16). They were trapped in the gendered stereotypes that fitted with their bodies. Typecasting was made possible through, and reinforced normative constructions of male and female bodies, adding weight to O'Brien *et al.,* (2017) findings. In the opposite direction, the discussion beyond the script provides a collaborative learning environment in which students could explore feminist issues and come to terms with the ways in which female bodies are often subordinated. This activity had limited success in making Jude alter his masculinised performances. In every single scene in this Play, contradictory processes of embodiment may be identified. Some may be more powerful than others (in time and space). Some may have relativity short term effects; others might have longevity. Regardless of inertia to (re)order bodies, the existence of forces that pulled students in opposing directions demonstrated clearly one element of messiness. It is through these contradictory ordering processes that it is inconceivable to assume that bodies move towards a unified subject (see Chapter 6) - the body remains in flux.

Processes of the experiencing body are also messy, but for different reasons. There are many possible directions that could be elaborated here. Example may be given regarding how Tina, Gabby, and Danni all had experiences that have shaped their participation in the learning environments and their imagined futures (e.g. P2 A1, S2; P2 A2 S2; P2 A3 S2). Further examples may be given in consideration of how students perceived gestures, such as Jazz Hands type performances (P2 A1 S1), or, how they experienced performing a character that has a different phenomenal body than them (P2 A3 S1). To make this point I might also draw on the ways in which students perceived and adhered to the pressures of individualism (P2 A2 S1). Yet the clearest manner in which to make this assertion might be to illustrate the role of expression. For bodies in the Arena for Performing Arts Transitions, expression was culturally and socially expected from them but it was also a medium through which their bodily experiences could be attended to. Gabby's story brought these messy, highly subjective and powerful dynamics to the fore. Her life story proved a highly reflexive account of her former and current experiences. These reflections revealed how one former BTEC student body has come to experience the *hidden curriculum* for expression. This personal narrative also unveiled the subjective value of 'becoming expressive' for her. This powerfully shaped transition including her gravitation towards the Performing Arts. This gravitation towards the discipline was however a double edged sword. Gabby described vividly and emotively the combination of therapeutic and destructive experiences "at the same time" (05/02/16). Therapeutic and destructive experiences were shown to exist at the same time; and in the same body. This again revealed a tangible aspect of messiness that has escaped the transitional literature.

Embodied students were always situated. The situatedness of bodies-in-transition was clear to see in every fieldnote presented across the three plays. The deep writings provide detailed accounts of the immediate surroundings. The commitment to multi sensory ethnographic practises meant that the lighting, physical arrangement of space, temperature, soundscapes and so on were all taken into consideration. The purpose of this was to map out the immediate situation in which these bodies were placed. On a different plane, P3 showed how students' bodies were situated within their frames. By identifying the 'order' of the creative skills students were also positioned inside a hierarchy of skills. Their positions in this and their perceptions of it shaped how their bodies were educated and evaluated.

In these environments, the holy grail of skills were creative skills. These were understood by both educators and students to be qualities that are not taught but need to be encouraged to be drawn out of the individual. Absent from the public conversations were employability skills. This was a reversal from the policy documentation reviewed in Chapter 3 that gave priority to these skills so that students could compete in post-Fordist societies (see Bill, 2009). Whilst there was a discord between policy and practice there was also disjuncture between both student and staff interpretation of the skills hierarchy. Programme leaders at Journeys College and City University both thought of employability as a "non-issue" as the subject nature of the Performing Arts (i.e public performances) naturally attends to the development of employability skills. In contrast, students in both HE and BTEC missed the absence of appropriate development of employability. Tina, for example, complained that the BTEC "doesn't give you any networks, any contacts or anything the industry relies on" (06/02/16). The Play is fraught between what employability, technical and creative skills are. Students and members of staff also demonstrated contesting views about how each of these can be developed, acquired, or whether they are learned or innate. And finally there was differences in relation to how important each of these particular skill sets are. Despite this, the highest prestige was reserved for creative skills, however there were frequent confusions (and complaints) regarding how students were graded against a creative criteria. These tensions within the 'Order of the Creative Skills' evidence many of the complexities of transition. It is clear that they entail more messiness than can be addressed in a policy document that identifies a 'skill gap' and recommends that consequently students need to be upskilled.

9.1b. *Systems for Transitions are Messy*

Here the term 'systems for transition' refers to the policies, practices and pathways between levels of education and work. More specifically the systems that I am referring to are the root educational beliefs that inform these policies, practices and pathways. In these reflections, two 'systems' are considered (inductionist & developmentalist) to demonstrate how the data showed that student transition does not neatly map to either of these systems.

Inductionists call for smoothness in making the transitions in HE (see Chapter 5). To achieve this smoothness, it is assumed that institutions have the ability (and responsibility) to put 'support networks' in place to facilitate a speedy and easy integration into the new educational context. This view is too 'top down' and simplistic - it fails to account for the complexity of students' experiences. In P1 A1 S2 students were charged with making the transition to new tempos of action (Bourdieu, 1990) and new independent study methods. Students responded to these challenges in many different ways - some it was suggested lay in "bed all day playing Xbox" (Neil, 05/02/16). Whereas, others panicked because of the change in work cycles and external direction. For the individual students to make these 'transitions successfully' was not as linear or straightforward as the system suggests. For both Danni and Gabby, transition involved a complex journey rather than a simple linear trip. For both students these challenges to adjust continued well into their second year. Moreover, the simple, inductionist solution of having even more support systems in place to support the institution's preferred trajectory would have done little to alleviate the challenges these students faced as they acclimatised. They carried with them, in their bodies, a deeply ingrained relationship to time and productivity. These relationships were part of what defines these students at those times. The long and complex accounts of these transitions to new tempos highlighted another messy process of transition.

P2 A1 S2 complicates developmentalist conceptualisations of transitions. It challenges the assumption of linearity held within this system. Retelling Gabby's journey through education, eating disorders, mental illness that all began earlier in her life and continued through the data collection, demonstrated these claims. Her 'body project' (Shilling, 2012) towards presence was about personal (as well as professional/performances) *development*. It was an ongoing project

that had a goal but had no clear 'stages' of progression (see 5.2b) or ends in sight. She worked towards it on a daily basis, inside and outside of the performing arts; sometimes she felt more present (Rodenburg, 2009) and on other occasions she didn't. This body project shared the hallmarks of being a transition set in development but it was messy and unpredictable.

A more detailed account of the messiness of transition has been provided in this section. In synthesising selective data from the field the account given in this Chapter (as well as in Chapter 8) provides a more nuanced understanding of the CONTEXT in which these bodies make their transitions. It is not enough to stop here. A further contribution of this study (and the theory developed from it) is its ability to step beyond merely observing messiness. It can do this by advancing the field of transitional THEORY. Having arrived as a more enhanced image of all the contradictory, paradoxical, complicated processes that is transition advances are on the horizon. The theoretical model of bodies-in-transitions is never static. It is to the fluid futures of this theory I now turn.

9.2. An Adaptable Theory of Transition for a Messy World
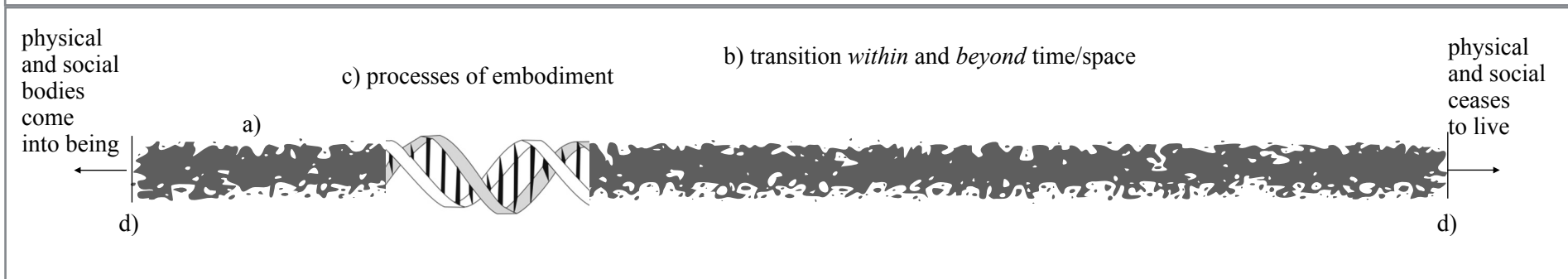
Bodies-in-transition has a flexibility built into it. Its origins can be traced directly to the ethnographic pilot in 2012-13 that focused on BTEC in Sport transitions. Over the last five years the theory itself has undergone vast transitions; this is because the ontological foundations that underpin it and methodological orientations that inform it are intentionally adaptable. The working theory therefore may have a life beyond understanding Performing Arts, BTEC, Vocational and even 'student' transitions. The scope of the theory is broader than has been used in this project. It is a theory that may continue to guide case-by-case investigations of types of transitions (e.g. sporting transitions, performing arts transitions, academic transitions) but also to inform sociological studies that aim to understand change and continuity across time/space in society. Because to study bodies-in-transition is at the same time to study societies-in-transition.

This stated, I make no claims that bodies-in-transition is a grand theory. This is not its purpose or focus, it is an alternative theory of transition (see Chapter 5). At its core, it is responsive to mould and morph in accordance to the realities it tries to explain. The very same type of emergent design that allowed this study to evolve (see Chapter 7) is an intricate part of its methodology. As such, the boundaries of bodies-in-transition are more porous than competing theories of transition. In this respect, the bodies-in-transition will always remain a working theory. The theory therefore shares similarities with 'the body' in as much as it is always in transition - it has pasts, presents, and many possible futures. Moreover, it is a theory that can never be unified into a fixed state, it only exists in a processual form. This adaptability and responsiveness is intentional in order to reflect a *messy world.* In this ethnography this processual form has been utilised to capture the messiness of transition in a finely grained way.

To best illustrate how the working theory has evolved over the duration of the fieldwork, Figure A (see 6.1.) will be revised where appropriate (see Figure F for the revised model). The data collected in this ethnography challenged some of the abstract propositions that underpin bodies-in-transition. Other data supported propositions and extended categories. Whilst Figure A was developed in concert with the pilot study, because of the longer empirical frame of this PhD the

visual representation may now be considered a grounded illustration; rather than a set of abstract proposals. Therefore, an analysis of data is incorporated to this revised figure.

Figure F: A revised and grounded illustration of propositions that underpin bodies-in-transition

physical and social bodies come into being

c) processes of embodiment

b) transition *within* and *beyond* time/space

physical and social ceases to live

a)

d)

d)

n.b. The intention of revising this visual representation was not to set in stone the underpinnings of this theory. The theory remains open and flexible.

The model that was presented in Chapter 6 (Figure A) was instrumental in setting out the foundations of bodies-in-transition, however, the empirical insights and the accompanying theoretical labour throughout Chapter 8 prompted me to develop this model. Therefore, in this section, I will expand upon points a) to d) in order to demonstrate how each of the elements of the original model have evolved as a result of the fieldwork. In doing so, bodies-in-transition will be offered as a theory of transition that is more responsive to the messiness of transition than other contemporary theoretical approaches (see Chapter 5). To conclude this Chapter, the entirety of the model will be reflected upon to generate productive avenues for further research into student transition. From this a set of concrete questions will provide clear directions from which to begin future explorations. More than this, these guiding questions will be accompanied with an outline of the methodological orientations that are needed to 'apply' bodies-in-transition to empirical studies. Before these final reflections are possible the foundations of the revised theory, as set out In Figure F, require further explanation. It is logical to begin with the centrepiece of the theory, that is 'the body' that is 'in-transition'.

In Figure A there was a 'solid' line that represented the body, or bodies, in transition - this refers to point a) in that figure. The line connected birth to death and represented a natural (chronological) time that passes from one moment to the next, keeping the body in liminality. It was argued that it is this relentless progression that characterises bodies as being 'in-transition'. Indeed, Frank (1991) recognised that the only stable thing about the body is that it is always changing. This line therefore presented an ontological proposition that no*body* can ever be static, trapped in one moment, caught in one place, stuck in one state (see Chapter 6). While these assertions remain central to the theory proposed in this thesis, in the revised model this line has become less 'solid'. The straight line has been replaced with a line that is visually fragmented and messy (see Figure F). The rational for this modification was that throughout this study the liminality of the body was not projected with the linear trajectory that was visually represented in Figure A. The findings did not challenge that natural time (see 5.2d) moves in one direction. Yet the 'processes of embodiment' that also flow across, and through, this line (see point c) in both Figure A and F) did not always follow linear paths in the same fashion.

Tensions in P1 A1 S1, for example, exposed the nonlinear 'liminal living' for students in their gendered transitions; in particular for Jude. Jude (like every other student/person) was getting older moment to moment, travelling along this line. At the same time that his body was maturing (or physically changing) he was growing and regressing in a social and political realms. In my analysis this Scene clearly reflected the *messiness* of being 'in-transition'. In the midst of this educational moment Jude was caught between two opposite directions. In this specific case it was concluded that the force with the greatest power in ordering his embodiment was one that reinforces his position as, and moves him towards, the realisation of being the 'lead male'. Nevertheless, his gendered transitions were contested between contradictory powers, that both fought to order his embodiment including how he performs gender (see Butler, 1988) and his worldview of gender relations. And these tensions should not be overlooked when considering Jude's transition because they were shown to have *some* observable affects on him - such as 'toning down' his masculine performances and being forced to reflect on what he considered to be the 'merits' of his provocative positions. In this Scene, gendered politics were unfolding in intricate and contested ways, where social bodies were acting, reacting, and interacting with each other. Conversations and performances based upon and through the script left a mark on the bodies present. The potential trajectories for each of the students was mediated as a result of the (re)gendering of embodiment.

This was not a lone example of contradictory forces that were shaping embodiment, other examples throughout the trilogy also demonstrated similar dynamics. It was not uncommon for some individual Scenes to show how students bodies were becoming ordered in contradictory ways. On the surface student transitions may have appeared straightforward, with linear momentum, yet through rich interview data the reality rarely appeared to so clear. There was often a mixture of confusion, doubt and uncertainty. One extreme example of this was Gabby's reoccurring struggles with body image and an eating disorder (see P2 A1 S2). While she cited progress through some moments and means, she was also acutely aware of vulnerabilities that have risen, and might possibly continue to rise, that constrain her progress towards 'flourishing' (see 6.4.). Specifically, these were a set of complex relationships between her body (how it feels and appears), her history (family and school), and her engagement with the performing arts. These relationships were at times so important that they defined, and

influenced, her engagement in and choices over the course of her education. This Scene provided just one of many examples that illustrated how complex embodied subjects are, but also how their interactions with educational encounters can shape transitions in unpredictable ways. Therefore, as a result of empirical encounters such as these, line a) can now be seen to represent the endless oscillations of a body that moves through time. The transitional narratives presented in Chapter 8 demonstrated more than merely a zig-zagging between progression and regression in certain aspects, they illustrated how in each moment a body can be simultaneously 'moving in competing directions'. In this study, bodies were not becoming unified subjects, they remained fragmented. In this respect, the student transitions were more messy than originally anticipated.

The second element of Figure F, that will now be unpacked, is closely related to the discussions above. This is the 'processes of embodiment', c). In both Figures (A & F), c) provided an image of what flows through the line that represents bodies that are always 'in-transition'. Initially, the three processes of embodiment were informed by Shilling (2005, 2008, 2012) and recognised as important planes of analysis in the pilot study. As detailed in 6.5. the three processes were: (1) processes that order embodiment; (2) processes of the experiencing body; and (3) situated processes. These processes did not fundamentally alter before, over the course, or after, the collection of data. As detailed in Chapter 7, these three processes informed both the analysis and representation of student transition in this study - with the findings presented as three Plays that attempted to portray each in turn. However, the ethnography also called for some departure from Shilling's work regarding the nature of, and relationships between, these three processes.

Shilling's (2005, 2008, 2012) corporeal realism called for researches to try and untangle embodiment, or to pull on the threads of different processes that make up 'the body'. While the three processes of embodiment were very useful in this study to examine the fine grain of transition as a complex process, this complexity muddled and blurred these stratified distinctions. What was theoretically significant for this ethnography was that despite my best efforts, the three processes of embodiment could not be kept separate; each of the three Plays contained each of the other processes of embodiment. Processes that order were particularly reluctant to be dislocated from the experiencing body and *vice versa* (see Play 1 & 2). In

addition to this, whilst I did not not elaborate explicitly on the situated processes of embodiment in these two Plays, these processes always provided a backdrop. These backdrops were stitched into the detailed nature of the 'deep writings' (see Chapter 7) and the willingness to zoom out from that location to other levels of situations, such as, epochs of production, sexual pasts and futures and so on. Consequently, the representation of these three processes in Figure A, or, in more detail in Figure B (see p.118) required revision.

Reflecting upon these methodological challenges I have learned that instead of attempting to analyses these three processes independently, future studies may do well to abandon that analytical approach. In its places a thematic centre can provide the substance from which the researcher can hold up the different conceptual lenses together to generate a periscope image of bodies-in-transition. In the pursuit of capturing the 'realities' of the transitions I encountered I became aware of the futility in trying to keep the three process analytically separate. Key themes and events should therefore be understood through the interplay of each of these processes, and not through the separation of them. And while the initial conceptualisation of c) guided the overall structure of the Plays, and the opening approach to the analysis, a less rigid application was also somewhat present in the final representation of that data (Chapter 8). As a result of these reflections, in Figure F this element of the model now represented by an image of a helix rather than straight lines that have no contact with each other. Figure G below illustrates this conceptual shift through the entanglement of the three processes. The helix shows that processes that order (1) are always in connection with the processes of the experiencing body (2) and both are always situated (3).

Figure G: A enhanced image of bodies-in-transition, the processes of embodiment, taken from Figure F.

(1)　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(2)

(3)

To continue to elaborate on the situated-ness of the body is to consider the time(s) and space(s) in which it inhabits. In Figure A and F these considerations were incorporated through b). This element of the model is located in the space that surrounds the central line. The purpose of b) was to make the model especially attentive to the dimensions of social time in which transitions unfold (Colley, 2007). Initially, in the working theory, this was merely an abstract signal to explore other dimensions of time (see 5.2d.). It was a reminder to me that the spatiotemporal dimensions in which bodies are situated may be a significant thread to follow in order to shed light on student transitions. After the fieldwork more substance emerged regarding the ways in which social time shapes student transition. For example, in P1 A2 Bourdieu's (1977) notion of a 'tempo of action' was utilised to demonstrate how time and productivity was structured differently in Journeys College than City University. The differences in tempos of action were challenging for some students to come to terms with. The evidence presented in this Act confirmed the importance of 'social time' in forming transition while adding specific useful concepts to the conceptual tool box (see 6.5).

In addition to adding empirical substance to this element of the model, selective parts of the analysis also demonstrate how b) can now be expanded. In Chapter 8 there was an acknowledgement that processes that are *beyond* any proximal spatiotemporal dimensions can still shape transitions. This was best illustrated through the analysis of Jazz Hands and Sexual Cyborgs (see P2 A1 S1 and P1 A3 S2 respectively). While it was not incorrect to view transitions as a process of change *within* time, these analysis showed that researches should not limit their analysis to current epochs (i.e. late modernity, post-fordism, risk society, the great deception, an equality if opportunity) in which these bodies-in-transition are immediately situated. Viewing these bodies through both *prehuman* (P2 A1 S1) and *posthuman* (P1 A3 S2) lenses were also revealing. In 'Jazz Hands', for example, it was useful to position student experiences and ways of interacting with one another in relation to a prehuman past - through an application of evolutionary semantics. In 'Snakes or Cyborgs?' Haraway's (1985) manifesto for cyborgs was useful in order to come to terms with the directions of travel for female sexualities in those educational and social contexts. This Scene also raised the importance of the participant's imaginations (of futures that may never be) in assessing social meanings that arose in that moment. Similarly in P1 A1 S2 the social interpretations and meanings contained within

a example of 'sexist humour' was seen to have the potential to affect students' *imagined trajectories* (see Chapter 6). Whilst these imagined futures may never come to pass, they can still shape the future. These examples, therefore, showed that not only were these bodies-in-transition situated *within* time and space they were also *beyond* it. In other words, the participants had some tangible relations to pasts that may have never been and futures that might never come.

The final element of Figure F that will be discussed further, d), can also stretch beyond time and space in a limited sense. In Figure A there was an emphasis that reflected the recognition that bodies are materially 'in-transition' before conception and after death, in a *physical* world. There was also a *social* recognition that even if a body is not physically present (does not exist as an individual) does not necessarily stop it from having an impact on other living, physical, bodies. Based on P2 A2, this category can now be expanded to include Douglas's (1996) second body, and account more so for the social. In the same way that physical bodies continue to change after death and before birth so do 'social bodies' (*ibid*). These social bodies are not born from, and die in, natural time. They live in social time. In P2 A2 S1, an analysis of body symbolism highlighted this dynamic, particularly in reference to the purple haired neo-tribe. Whilst the anti-establishment punk rocker symbolic ties to purple hair have diminished in popular culture, resulting in the death of punk hair as a powerful social body, a symbolic residue of this time and this body has remained. Even when emerging epochs have seen the birth of new social bodies (such as the neoliberal love-twin that was seen as dominant in the Arena for Performing Arts Transition) their bodies were symbolically tainted from other histories. These observations can be mapped onto the same abstract propositions originally raised for the physical body; e.g. unborn and deceased bodies (social & physical) continue to be connected to processes that go beyond themselves. This points even further in the direction of the interconnectedness of *all* bodies-in-transition (see Figure A), both social and physical.

While effort has been afforded to treat a) to e) on Figure F separately in the discussions above it was evident that the revisions to this model share a commitment to account for the messiness of transition. As a byproduct of efforts to capture layers of this messiness the initial model was adapted, and remains adaptable. In response to the fieldwork some elements have been refined,

other have expanded, but core features of the theory have remained. I do not claim that Figure F offers a 'complete theory', rather the usefulness of the model is that it lays out a stable enough foundation that can guide empirical explorations of student transition. From this study, new understandings of these student transitions have been developed and by reflecting upon the theoretical elaborations (in this section and throughout the thesis) has raised new questions. For example, apart from being a important adaptation to the working model, the revisions to a) in Figure F raised a set of significant theoretical questions that could provide avenues for future empirical research. These questions relate to issues regarding 'the liminality of the body' such as:

- If contradictory processes that order embodiment reach an equilibrium, do any changes (transitions) occur?
- Are those bodies temporarily suspended in transitional purgatory until the scales tip again?
- How may this affect those students' transitional experiences when the direction of travel is unclear for a prolong period or for intense patches?
- What are the consequences for the body, and for transitions, when the power balance oscillates between directions?

Exploring the intricacies of the liminality of the body will help to give more confidence to speculations on the direction a body (or a collective of bodies) are travelling, and at what speeds. A necessary stance for ethnographers addressing these and like questions related to bodies-in-transition, will be the adoption of a set of methodological orientations[76]. Her orientations must show the bearings of a 'nomadic self' (Thomas & Ahmed, 2004). Pursuing these questions will require one to follow in the wake of a 'wondering' researcher/theorist, seeking to escape fixed positions, epistemologies and rigid sets of methods "that can sometimes prevent research from reaching the body" (*ibid*, p.293). Particularly as point c) on Figure F demonstrated, this may require researchers to loosen their bindings from the CR anchors - as long as one doesn't get lost in the process. The only unit that this nomadic researcher must try to return is the body so as to not lose sight of their purpose, or get lost in the wilderness.

In these explorations, the researcher must remain vigilant. They must continue to hone their critical positions and not just reproduce discourses of opportunity or deception out of habit, or

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[76] Not only is bodies-in-transition a novel theoretical approach to the analysis of bodies, transitions, and societies it loosely connected to a set of methodological practices: namely multi-sited (7.1.), multi-sensory (7.2.) and reflexive ethnography (7.3.). It also requires an exercise of the sociological and ethnographic imagination (Mills, 1959; Willis, 2000).

from looking for it unintentionally (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005). Over the course of this research as society has shifted, in my eyes radically so, my politics have also evolved. In this changing landscape it was essential for me to realise the tensions that hid within my critical frame. No other theory of transition is reflexive of the critical positions that inform its analysis as bodies-in-transition does. But it also generates a lot of messiness that needs sifting through before critical judgements can be made confidently. The findings were, at times, difficult to navigate through from my critical criteria that were ultimately in service of seeking more opportunities and less constraints for these students. My reflexive diary (see Chapter 7) was my main location to try and cut through the contradictory threads. There is a political need (and responsibility) when studying student transition to at times look beyond the messiness and identify problems that need addressing for a better and brighter future. In this study, the two main social elements that were seen to be areas for concern were related to gender and sexuality. For example, in Act 2 and 3 of Play 1, the evidence pointed towards the a marginalisation and restricted opportunities for female students and sexualities.

For the penultimate reflection it seems appropriate to consider the contributions of the new theoretical approach that is on offer. The litmus test is to ask how effectively has it facilitated the research in achieving an aim to '*articulate the opportunities and constraints BTEC students encounter in the Performing Arts'.* The ethnographic plays have given a loud and clear voice to these students. With guidance from bodies-in-transition this ethnography has not only given voice to students' choices, backgrounds, aspiration, or even what they have said; it has given voice to their bodies. Through these articulations the study celebrates and embraces the 'liminality of the body'. The findings of this study recognise uncertainties and contractions that are associated with being a body-in-transition, in a messy world. In the same spirit as Quinn (2010), flux, change, and transitions are not always flaws in the system - they are a part of transition, a part of being a body. I would perhaps go further than Quinn in this celebration by recognising (as parts of the data in this study do) that sometimes processes of change may lead to brighter and more socially just futures. In a more practical sense these alignments can lend support to a system of education. On reflection of the messy narratives of student transitions in Chapter 8 recommend, like Gale and Parker (2012, p.5) that there should be more,

- Flexible student study modes, including removal of distinction between full-time and part-time study and min./max. course loads
- Flexible student study pathways, including multiple opportunities to change course and enter, withdraw and return to study throughout life
- Curriculum that reflects and affirms marginalised student histories and subjectivities

I would add that these these 'systems of transition' should not only be promoted within HE. These attributes would also be welcome for former, future, and present BTEC in Performing Arts students.

The final reflection of this Chapter ties the CONTRIBUTIONS back to the Preface. Given the elements covered in this Chapter, it would be fair to say that bodies-in-transition has a life of its own. This text, this researcher, this theory, these students, and all of their bodies are in transition. Together we all live in motion. So, to bring the reader to the 'end' of the 'final' Chapter, a question posed by Quinn (2010, p.118) hopes to keep these bodies-in-transition alive:

> What happens when we recognise change as a permanent state of being, rather than a periodic occurrence; when flux replaces pathways as our image?

- we keep on adapting.

Epilogue

The thesis began with a personal account of transition to situate the scholarship that accounts for the main contributions of this project. The main contributions that can be drawn out of this study were given due attention in Chapters 8-9. Before ending the thesis and taking this theory forward it is useful to pause to consider two sets of limitations of this study. The first set of limitations results from the conflict between the overwhelming ambition of bodies-in-transition and the dramatic parameters in which all research is conducted. The second set of limitations relates to the trust an ethnographer can put in their own bodies to capture and represent the interval realities of bodies with accuracy.

Transition from this theory has no time-space boundaries but at the same time fieldwork must be bounded to a set of locations and a feasible timeframe. Although this study had a generous time scale the window into these BTEC students' transition were relatively small. Also, the difficulty with a multi-sited ethnography where you are intending to follow and track 'bodies on the move' (see Chapter 7) is that you have little control over this process. The attrition rates were high for these reasons (50%). This had the additional effect of skewing the sample so that no male students' voices were heard in the same depth as the female ones. Although I had many informal conversations with the male students in both Journeys and City University less accurate recordings of these encounters survive.

The mobile nature of students who are undergoing transition also mean that I was unable to track former BTEC students into employment settings and this would have been able to offer a different complexion. In substitute, I discussed forms of employment with the students-in-focus in the interviews and over email. A secondary, coincidental, window into one potential employment site for these bodies was actually through City University and Journeys. This is because both George and Mason (the technicians) completed a BTEC in the Performing Arts albeit over ten years prior to the fieldwork.

Future study can begin to address some of these limitations. For example, Tina, Gabby, and Danni could be invited to participate in another study in five years. In this study (depending on their future locations and occupations) the investigator could achieve two additional strengths this study could not. Firstly, it could cast an even wider spatiotemporal net to see how bodies change over longer timeframes. Secondly, there might be potential that these students are now in occupational settings so these types of context can be better explored first hand.

The second set of limitations regards the elusive nature of the body in social theory (Williams & Bendelow, 1998). Not only is it a difficult subject to keep in your sights in theoretical terms it can be slippery to capture through observation-participation and interview techniques. Even the visual methods employed in this study failed to accurately capture the body in movement. There were two barriers for me when straining to interpret and represent bodies-in-transition faithfully. The first was that all bodies are different and therefore as a researcher you can not be sure of their sensory responses to stimuli the bodies are experiencing. The second hurdle I encountered was to represent phenomena that does not exist in words or language through a textual medium. Both of these difficulties can never be eliminated but a couple of research practices helped me become more confident in my interpretations and representations. Deep writing was only possible after deep listening within the field. Practicing this skill outside of the field helped me in my observations when in it, to focus my bodily attention towards the humming of the phono jacks or the heat of the light. Secondly, I invited the three students-in-focus to look at any of the later drafts and their interview transcripts to identify if I had interpreted something incorrectly.

The short term future of this theory is to form the basis of studies that explore transitions within other contexts. An immediately available potential avenue would be to fully write the Sport's data from this study - in a similar monographic style. Potentially, this may lend itself to a juxtaposition where the context specific processes of embodiment stand out from more general ones. While the BTEC in Performing Arts and Sports are two obvious sites (because of the centrality of the body in both contexts) they are by no means the only future areas where the theory can be used. As a flexible theory, critical analyses regarding the students' opportunities and constraints that face anybody may be pursued.

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Appendices

Appendix a: An alignment of BTEC qualifications alongside their 'Academic' counterparts in the Qualifications Credit Framework

Level	NQF examples	QCF examples	FHEQ examples
Entry	- Entry level certificate - Entry level Skills for Life	- Entry level award, certificate and diploma - Entry level Functional Skills - Entry level Foundation Learning	
1	- GCSE (grades D-G) - Key Skills level 1 - NVQ level 1 - Skills for Life level 1 - Foundation diploma	- BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 1 - Foundation Learning level 1 - Functional Skills level 1 - OCR National	
2	- GCSE (grades A*-C) - Key Skills level 2 - NVQ level 2 - Skills for Life level 2 - Higher diploma	- BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 2 - Functional Skills level 2	
3	- AS and A level - Advanced Extension Award - Cambridge International award - International Baccalaureate - Key Skills level 3 - NVQ level 3 - Advanced diploma - Progression diploma	- BTEC award, certificate and diploma level 3 - BTEC National - OCR National - Cambridge National	
4	- Certificate of higher education - Key Skills level 4 - NVQ level 4	- BTEC Professional award, certificate and diploma level 4	- Certificate of higher education - HNC
5	- HND - NVQ level 4 - Higher diploma	- BTEC Professional award, certificate and diploma level 5 - HNC - HND	- Diploma of higher education - Diploma of further education - Foundation degree - HND
6	- NVQ level 4	- BTEC Advanced Professional award, certificate and diploma level 6	- Bachelor's degree - Graduate certificate - Graduate diploma
7	- BTEC Advanced Professional award, certificate and diploma level 7 - Fellowship and fellowship diploma - Postgraduate certificate - Postgraduate diploma - NVQ level 5	- BTEC Advanced Professional award, certificate and diploma level 7	- Master's degree - Postgraduate certificate - Postgraduate diploma
8	- NVQs level 5	- Vocational qualifications level 8	- Doctorate

Appendix b: a typology of student transition in higher education. From Gale and Parker (2012, p.5)

Table 1. A typology of student transition in higher education.

Conceptions of student transition	Transition metaphors	Types of transitional change: from one to another	Transition dynamics	Illustrative transition activities/emphases/ systems
Transition as Induction (T1)	Pathway; Journey; Milestones	Inculcation: sequentially defined *periods* of adjustment From one institutional and/ or disciplinary *context* to another	• Navigating institutional norms and procedures • Linear, chronological, progressive movement • Relatively fixed structures and systems • Crisis as culture shock (contextual familiarity)	• Orientation/familiarisation with campus (facilities etc.) and significant staff • 'Just-in-time' information re procedures, curriculum content, assessment requirements • First-year seminars • Institutionist transition pedagogy (Kift 2009)
Transition as Development (T2)	Trajectory; Life stage;	Transformation: qualitatively distinct *stages* of maturation From one student and/or career *identity* to another	• Navigating sociocultural norms and expectations • Linear, cumulative, non-reversible movement • Discrete, singular, consecutive identities • Crisis as critical incident (identity forming)	• Mentoring programs • Service learning and field placements • Career and research culture development activities/emphasis • Career and research culture development activities/emphasis • Championing narratives of student and career trajectories by successful students and staff • Individualist transition pedagogy
Transition as Becoming (T3)	Whole of life; Rhizomatic	Fluctuation: perpetual *series* of fragmented movements Lived reality or *subjective* experience, from birth to death	• Navigating multiple narratives and subjectivities • Rhizomatic, zigzag, spiral movement • Flexible systems/fluid (ephemeral) identities • Crisis as neither period/stage specific nor necessarily problematic	• Flexible student study modes, including removal of distinction between full-time and part-time study and min./max. course loads • Flexible student study pathways, including multiple opportunities to change course and enter, withdraw and return to study throughout life • Curriculum that reflects and affirms marginalised student histories and subjectivities • Connectionist transition pedagogy (Hockings et al. 2010)

Appendix c: List of Participants for Performing Arts

List of Participants for Performing Arts (all names are pseudonyms)		
Characters Names	Current status	Prior Educational Information
Danni	**Student.** Performing Arts student at City University.	BTEC in Musical Theatre before University
Gabby	**Student.** Performing Arts student at City University.	BTEC in Performing Arts before University
Tina	**Student.** Performing Arts student at journeys.	Local School
Jude	**Student.** Performing Arts student at journeys.	Local School
Jen	**Student.** Performing Arts student at journeys.	Local School
Liam	**Student.** Performing Arts student at journeys.	Local School
Timothy	**Student.**	A-Levels
Ellie	**Student.**	Not Disclosed
Neil	**Staff.** Programme leader for the Performing Arts degree. Teaches on various modules	N/A
Sandy	**Staff.** Programme Leader for the BTEC in Performing Arts. Teaches most of the content.	N/A
Sam	**Staff.** Lecturer on the Performing Arts Programme at City University.	N/A
Pat	**Staff.** Lecturer on the Performing Arts Programme at City University.	N/A
Mason	**Staff.** Technician to the BTEC course at Journeys	BTEC in Performing Arts.
George	**Staff.** Technician to the HE course at City University	BTEC in Performing Arts.

Appendix d: Students-in-focus interview protocol 1 (Master copy, each protocol was altered for the participant)

Students Life History Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Participants Name: **Time:**

Pseudonym: **Date:**

Introduction (not transcribed) 5 minutes

- What is going to be covered this interview:

    o Your background, your interests and social groups

    o Hope to make a story of your life with a beginning, middle and future(s)

- Protocols

    o Aim to be more of a conversation than interview

    o Request for honest answers

    o You do not have to talk about something you do not want to (in that case just say, better to be honest than to make up an answer)

    o Silence is fine, give us both time to think

    o Everything said will be confidential

    o If you do decide to say anything that I think may affect your well-being or the well-being of others I have a duty to report it to my supervisor and we will discuss the best action to be take. This may included taking drugs, dangerous eating disorders or abuse. Any questions about this?

    o If you do feel effected by anything discussed I can put you in contact with appropriate support.

- Any questions before we start?

Interview Aims

(a) Build better Report with participant, to help conversation flow when discussing life history

(b) To get participants to tell me a story of their life, and explain their experiences of certain moments.

- Important family/friendship influences

- Key educational/extra curricular experiences

(c) Locate the role of their BTEC experiences within their 'life story'.

Questions/Theme of discussion	Timings + Main Aim(s)
Do you have any idea's of what you would like to be called in my work?	3 minutes
• **Why that name?** • **What do you think that says about you?**	Build report Gain brief insight into how they perceive their identity.
Email questions (follow up) or (use the questions to provoke response)	7 minutes
Go through the students responses and probe them to elaborate on the important aspects of their transitional experiences. Potential probes: • Can you tell me more about this? • It says here that you were (choose word, i.e. struggling), how did that feel? • Is this common, or rare? • What Skill do you think that is helping you develop?	To show participants that I am interested in their experiences. To try and get the used to elaborating on their experiences in detail.
Time line	10 minutes

You might want to include: • Things that have helped you to construct your identity. Help you become someone, or clarified how you think of yourself/how others think of you. • Important educational experiences; classes/teachers you liked or disliked, moments where you become interested/motivated/ disillusioned • Important friendship networks. Our friends and peers, have had an influence on all of us. Who might have had the greatest influence on you? When was this? • Family influences. Have you adopted similar perspectives, ideas or ambitions than family members - or rejected certain things for this reason. • Upbringing - holiday activities, expectations, communities and cultures of influence. • Extra curricular activities, such as sports clubs or drama groups etc. What did you learn from these. How involved have you been and since what age. What does this membership mean to you. Try to get participant to elaborate on their experiences. How did it feel? Was this a shock? Was this just something you did? Tell me in your own words… What was that like? Try to get participant to dictate to events and experiences that have been most important to them. No doubt there a there are thousands of things that you have done and experiences, but what sticks out to you as key when telling your life story? Try to probe them about their classed and gendered background. Were you always expected to play a manly sport like… Were your parents keen to get you to perform from a young age? Did you parents ever go to university? Did they expect you to go? What is their line of work?	Create a time line that will help to guide further discussion
Extend timeline into future	10 minutes Create a time line that will help to guide further discussion
Potential guidance: • I appreciate that we might all have many different ideas of our future, so, if you find it useful we can draw multiple lines. • Think about your aspirations, what you want to learn, what things you want to be able to do (skills), what jobs you want, what sort of work life balance you want. • Why is this a goal? How long has this been a goal? Was there a moment of realisation? • What do you think that job will entail? What skills and experiences might you need for it? Do you think you are on track?	

Where does your BTEC fit in this?	10 minutes Expand on BTEC learning culture and the impact it had on them; plus important experiences, interactions, practices and identities. Identify Skills and type of embodiment that they valued in that environment.
Potential Probes: • Do you feel your outlook changed through your BTEC? • Do you think your BTEC qualification will allow you to achieve your goals? • How has your BTEC experiences prepared you for life and study in HE? • What key lessons do you feel you learned through the BTEC? • What key skills have you developed? • What do you think the ethos was for the BTEC and do you think you brought into this? • Did you learn ways to interact with your fellow students? Change the activities you did because of them? • In that environment, what sort of identity do you think you had? Was it tied to your sport, your work ethic, your performances etc. • As a community of students do you feel that you were becoming [*insert from aspirations*] • Were there individuals that you can identify as struggling to become [insert from aspirations]? and for what reasons. Or were there individuals you think might easily make it [*insert from aspirations*]. Describe them… • What changes to your body (in terms of appearance, ability, way you experience things etc.) took place over this time?	
LifeStory (get as much detail as possible)	10 minutes
Try to assist story to cover points relating to interview aims. Try and get student to really explain in detail their lived experiences. Try to get students to include the BTEC in this and go into detail the role it has had in their life story.	
Debrief: 1. Thank the participant for their input 2. Explain how this interview leads onto the next 3. Ask if they feel that there are any important factors that we failed to discuss, that we can pick up next time 4. Ask how they felt the interview went 5. Tell participant that you look forward to when we next meet.	5 minutes

Students Current Transitional Experiences Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Participants Name: **Time:**

Pseudonym: **Date:**

Introduction (not transcribed) 5 minutes

- What is going to be covered this interview:

    o Discuss the learning culture and your experiences of the learning environment I observed in 2014/2015

    o Looking at the social aspects raised in these discussions, I will invite you to reflect on the role of the BTEC in shaping your future. How might it have constrained you, and how has it enabled you in your current environment.

- Protocols

    o Aim to be more of a conversation than interview

    o Request for honest answers

    o You do not have to talk about something you do not want to (in that case just say, better to be honest than to make up an answer)

    o Silence is fine it give us both time to think

    o Everything said will be confidential

    o If you do decide to say anything that I think may affect your well-being or the well-being of others I have a duty to report it to my supervisor and we will discuss the best action to be take. This may included taking drugs, dangerous eating disorders or abuse. Any questions about this?

    o If you do feel effected by anything discussed I can put you in contact with appropriate support.

- Any questions before we start?

Interview Aims

(a) Drawing on the time of observations (up to now), explore the **corporeal-transitional processes** that have occurred for that student. Identify what processes might have, or have the potential to, *mediate their transition in terms of creating opportunities or constraining them*.

(b) Locate the **social body** and its transformations in relation to their understanding of **skill**, meanings and values within that social environment, and performances that are expected in their current settings.

(c) Invite students to **reflect** of their corporeal-transitional processes and the role the BTEC experiences played in this.

Questions/Theme of discussion	Timings + Main Aim(s)
I would like to hear your perspective of that learning culture.	10 minutes Interview aim (b)

Potential probes:
 	
• **Part of a social group? describe it.**
  Shared abilities
  Body image
  Interests
  Ways of seeing the world
  Ways of interacting with each other (language) etc.
 	
• **How do you interact with tutors, how might this be different to other settings? Why do you think this?**
 	
• **What do you think makes you stand out?**
 	
• **What do you think makes you blend in?**
 	
• **What skills do you have that sets you apart from others? How may this help you gain employment or in education.**	

It would be really useful if I now share with you my interpretations of the course, from an outsiders perspective looking in.	10 minutes Interview aim (a)
Use themes from my analysis to initiate discussion. I will expand on my themes giving a example. Ask for their take, use their previous answers to help clarify and refine my themes. Themes will be organised around what is conceived to be the social body in my research: 1. Identities that are formed 2. Types of student experience 3. Practices students engage in 4. Modes of interaction Crosscutting these themes might be issues of class, gender, sexuality, skill/ability/talent, types of transitions (drawing on transitional typologies in literature that were observed to be present in fieldwork).	

Ok thanks for your input there. Lets return to your experiences and your transition. I know from our email correspondence that you are currently [*insert their course, their job, or their current situation*]. Like we have been discussing already today I am primarily concerned with seeing the effects of the social aspects of environments that have helped to form your transitions, and transitions of other BTEC students. In my observations and through these discussions I have been trying to build a picture of how students form identities, how they interact, the type of activities they engage in, the experiences they have and the way in which they present themselves. For the next 10 minutes it would be good to discuss these processes in relation to your current environment.	10 minutes Interview aim (c)
Potential probes: • What type of bodies are privileged? • Does your gender hold you back, or give you an advantage? • What type of skills do you think are valued • What type of identities are there in this environment? • What type of people tend to succeed here? who struggles to do well? • (if the same course) Now you are in your second year, what has changed? • How do people seem to interact with each other, are there any ways to interact that are unique to this environment.	
I really have a sense of what [*insert their course, their job, or their current situation*] is like now, thank you. I am starting to make links between your 'life story' your BTEC experiences and how you are making you transition into this current setting in my head. What I would like to do now is invite you to reflect on this process.	10 minutes Interview aim (c)
Use content of previous discussions to facilitate this reflection. Pose questions regarding how they perceive both (BTEC and current) spaces. See if anything they learned/embodied in the BTEC is transferable or contradictory to their current environment. Potential probes: • How have you developed? • What effect has the BTEC had in shaping your identity in this current space. • Do you think that being a former BTEC student influences how others in this space perceive you? • Have you had to change the ways in which you interact with peers, team members, and members of authority? • Because of the practical activities you did in your BTEC do you feel that you are more prepared for certain activities in this environment. • Do you think there are any skills promoted in your BTEC that are now redundant, or you frequently need in this environment. • How have you found these experiences?	

Alright, you have begun to reflect in depth about your BTEC transition. Thinking about your transition as a whole, including your BTEC experiences, post-BTEC experiences, life story, and visions of the future, I want to see if you think about them. Do you think that you are held back or propelled in certain directions?	10 minutes
Use themes clarified earlier to promote discussion on potential constraints and opportunities. When possible get them to summarise their BTEC experiences and their considered position on how it has effected their transition to date and the possibilities for future transitions. Attempt to allow reflection on aspects of their 'life story' that might have also influenced the opportunities and constraints they face.	To explore whether students identify opportunities and constrains of their BTEC education in the context of their life story.
Debrief: 1. Ask how they felt the interview went 2. Thank the participant for their input in the entire study 3. Explain how their input will help 4. Ask if they feel that there are any important factors that we failed to discuss 5. Remind participant that once I have analysed there responses I will send them and email to allow them to check whether or not I have interpreted their answers correctly 6. Inform them that there might be scope in the future to further this research, to map their experiences over a longer time frame. So it would be good to stay in touch, if they would like. 7. Tell participant that I can send them the publication	5 minutes