

# **An exploration of how academic staff construct social identities in the career transition from the performing arts into higher education**

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# Abstract

For delivery of practice-based degrees in performing arts, universities often seek to employ lecturers with a strong professional profile which is considered to add value to the student experience. The transition from performing arts to academia is a major event in the development of social identity and this study was designed both to explore the social identities of staff who have transitioned from performing arts careers to academic roles in higher education and to examine key influences on their process of social identity categorisation.

The study involved in-depth narrative interviews to explore participants' social identity in both the performing arts and higher education with insights drawn over the course of participants' lives. A range of potential patterns were identified in the participants' narratives with regards to the construction of their social identities in career transition. The findings were evaluated and a set of recommendations made for stakeholders.

Key findings emerged regarding the value of formal and informal socialisation in career transition and a variation in perceptions of prototypical academic identities. Examples of social creativity by participants was observed, along with examples of social mobility and competition. The key finding in relation to social identity theory was that participants were observed to have a high salience in their performing arts social identity and broad patterns of layered multiple social identities were observed.

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

*'The universities of the world have entered a time of disquieting turmoil that has no end in sight'. (Clark, B.1998: xiii).*

## 1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores how academic staff construct social identities in the career transition from the performing arts into higher education. Employment in the performing arts is typically precarious, which incentivises the establishment of local networks and a variable mobility power of workers, especially where there is excessive labour supply and insufficient demand (Caves 2000; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005). This unstable nature of work pushes some practitioners to seek employment in what they perceive to be a more secure environment. However, the higher education sector is seen as an increasingly unstable employment environment (Henkel, 2010; Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Fanghanel, 2014), with a progressively neo-liberal approach to management as universities try to remain competitive in a period of global change (Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie, & Henkel, 2000; Enders, 2006). As part of this change, there has been a growth in newer university subjects which seek to employ dual professionals, those who have experience in another sector prior to appointment (Locke, Whitchurch, Smith and Mazenod, 2016). This has led to an expansion of the number of practice-based performing arts degrees which provides more career opportunities for performing arts specialists.

This thesis argues that there are differences between employment experiences in the performing arts sector and in universities which potentially impact on the experience of career transition and the process of social identity and categorisation. However, the thesis also recognises that there are also increasing similarities in approaches to work in the two sectors (Gill, 2014), particularly in the increasing necessity to be entrepreneurial, which need exploration. Also, Dashper & Fletcher (2019) noted that individuals from



industry backgrounds may experience a lack of 'legitimacy' within academic social groups which can add additional pressures on new academic staff. These sector differences and pressures may lead to tension for individuals between their social identity as a new academic and their social identity as an experienced practitioner (Shreeve, 2011). The thesis aims to develop understanding of experiences of career transition between the sectors and how this impacts on the construction of social identities and experience in the academic workplace.

This thesis surveys the different sectors and investigates the transitions between them, highlighting participants' social identity response. A range of existing literature on social identity, social categorisation and social identity in the workplace is explored to provide an evidence base for the research. The research aims to explore social identities in the career transition from performing arts to academia through in-depth narrative interviews. Social identity theory (SIT) enables us to understand why academics identify with one group as opposed to another, the processes of stereotyping and their reasons for doing so and provides insight into what performing arts academics experience through the career transition process. Using SIT can help to explain the categorisation processes participants' go through, which social groups they see themselves as members of and how membership of those groups influences their behaviour. This is valuable to understand as they transition between different industry sectors and have to adjust to new organisations and expectations.

The thesis notes that there are a paucity of studies into social identity within the performing arts sector, although a small number of studies focused on musicians' identity and artistic identity do exist (see for example Bain, 2005; Gotsi, Andriopoulos, Lewis, & Ingram, 2010; Hoedemakers & Ybema, 2015; Beech, Gilmore, Hibbert, and Ybema, 2016). Higher education research has expanded in the last twenty years, highlighting that the sector has become progressively more differentiated and exposed to intensifying external checks and expectations (Fanghanel, 2014; Henkel, 2016), and the resultant impacts on academic identity will be explored further in this thesis.

This chapter highlights the importance of the two different contexts – performing arts and higher education - and the implications of this for the research. The brief overview draws attention to the push and pull factors for career transition: the insecurity of performing arts work as a push factor and the pull of higher education seen as a potentially safe environment, offering a route into a new career. The chapter continues to introduce the concept of social identity and outline why the social identity approach is relevant to this research. The chapter concludes by outlining the aim and objectives of the research and subsequent research questions.

## 1.2 Working in the Creative Industries

Whilst the research focuses on performing arts, this is only one of several diverse creative disciplines which come under the umbrella of 'creative industries'. The origin of the creative industries concept dates from 1997 and the formation of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) by the then Labour government (Hewison, 2011; McRobbie, 2016). The performing arts sector, one of the thirteen sectors identified within the creative industries, was noted in the DCMS 1998 Mapping Document as encompassing ballet, contemporary dance, opera, drama, and music theatre. For DCMS purposes, music was identified as a separate sector but, in this research, music as a live performance is considered under the banner of performing arts. The 1998 report recognised that the sector was not just about performance but encompassed 'core activities of content origination, production, performance, touring, costume design and making, set making, lighting and sound' (DCMS, 1998: 079) and this has been considered in the research sample.

The range of occupations employed within the creative industries share some sense of precariousness and job insecurity which exists in the market for creative goods (Caves, 2000; Gill, Banks, & Taylor, 2013) which may provide some explanation for the predominance of middle-class workers in the sector. Increasingly, those working in the sector do so as freelancers or are engaged in short term contracts which means that the issue of insecurity and 'precarity' increasingly exists amongst creative workers (Watson, 2012; Gill, Banks, & Taylor, 2013). Benhamou (2003) highlighted that short-term contracts, part-

time work, self-employment and the need to have a second job are more common in the cultural sector than in the general workforce. This means that workers or self-employed are more likely to be in a state of uncertainty whilst there are reduced demands on employers (Sennett, 2006). This can create discontinuity of activity for those in the sector as many are working on time-limited projects and requires individuals to build a strong reputation as the basis for employment (Caves, 2000; Benhamou 2003). There is also a strong pull to undertake unpaid work, such as the propensity for unpaid internships (Ross, 2013), which can act as a barrier to those entering the profession and has led to a situation where the creative industries workforce demonstrates increasing levels of social inequality.

The precarity of work in the sector encourages creative workers to be part of local networks and establishes a variable mobility power of workers which depends on levels of talent and demand. Whilst some areas have professionalised, such as musicians and actors who have professional associations or unions representing their interests, entry to the professions is still unregulated and has multiple entry routes with no requirements for formalised training to be able to practise (Haunschild, 2003). The inequalities and insecurities of working in the creative industries make it a precarious choice of profession. However, working in the sector is often viewed as the romantic ideal of the creative worker who has control of their own work and craft and, in the broadest sense, creative artists might be viewed as craft workers, taking craft as a form of skilled labour that is driven by quality and motivated by internal as well as external rewards (Adamson 2007; Sennett, 2007; Banks, 2010).

In the performing arts, the creative process is often a collaborative one and some argue that a focus on the creative individual is inappropriate. For example, John-Steiner (2000) suggests that, whilst creative outputs are often credited to a single individual, there is usually more than one person involved in the creative output. This is reinforced by Sawyer (2003) seeing the outcomes of improvisations within groups of actors and jazz musicians as the result of collaborative creative activity involving the whole group. He sees patterns emerging from the group interaction which relies on each individual

to willingly respond (Sawyer, 2004) and prioritises group over individual. More traditional performing arts approaches might involve a director or conductor who seeks to direct the actors' or musicians' performances to their particular vision but require performers who can interpret and creatively contribute to the final performance. So whilst there might be limitations on performer's artistic licence within this process (Senegupta, Edwards and Tsai, 2009), the performer's desire to produce high-quality work, the co-operative nature of the production and the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards achieved through the work, create a tension between the identity of creative workers as craft workers and a need to maintain the external professional identity required within the changing conditions of employment and job insecurity. These tensions can impact on an individual's own creative identity, how they respond to career transition and what most influences their social identity during and after that transition. Work in the creative industries will be explored further in Chapter 3.

### 1.3 Working in Higher Education

Higher education in the UK and around the world has undergone significant changes in recent years, attributed to a range of strategic demands including more requirements on universities to increase student numbers and widen the diversity of students, the need to offer a wider range of subjects and qualifications at multiple levels to remain attractive in the market-place, and to be more accountable to a diverse range of stakeholders (for example see Henkel, 2010; Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Kauppi, 2015).

The higher education sector (HE) is varied in its makeup and the term is defined by Universities UK (UUK) to include 'universities, university colleges, specialist higher education institutions and other higher education colleges' (UUK, 2012). At the time of writing there are 162 HEIs in the UK in receipt of funding from one of the UK funding councils (UUK, 2017). Since the millennium there has been rapid growth in the sector, with total student numbers increasing from just under 2 million in 2000–01 to around 2.28 million in 2015-16, with particular growth in undergraduate studies (UUK, 2017). As the challenges of funding education grew, the *Browne Report 2010, An Independent Review of HE Funding and Student Finance*, proposed radical changes to funding in England and Wales, reducing government funding,

teaching grants and allowing universities to charge higher fees for students to open up competition in the sector. However, as education is a devolved issue, the Scottish Government pledged to not introduce fees. The additional removal of a cap on student numbers in England and Wales in 2013 again changed the sector, escalating a neo-liberal approach to higher education with an increased focus on commodification and marketization as universities compete for students in an ever-changing marketplace. The difference in funding structures in England and Scotland has a potential impact on how academic work is changing in each country.

As part of the sector growth, there has been a significant increase in performing arts courses, and this increase can be mapped over the last twenty years to the value placed on creative industries in 1997 by the then Labour government. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data captures the growth in performing arts courses, which sit under the main categorisation of creative arts and design. This demonstrates that numbers of drama, music and dance students have tripled since 1996 and, as a percentage of the total undergraduate students in creative arts and design, performing arts courses have risen from approximately 24% to 29%.

Table 1: UK Undergraduate Student Data (selected years)

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Creative Arts and Design</b>	<b>Music</b>	<b>Drama</b>	<b>Dance</b>	<b>Total Music, Drama and Dance</b>
1996/97	71,460	8,706	8,256	-	16,962
1998/99	79,851	9,922	9,664	-	19,586
2001/2	91,230	11,635	11,955	-	23,590
2006/7	125,420	17,860	18,010	3,265	39,135
2010/11	132,975	18,560	19,425	4,150	42,135
2014/15	166,935	24,620	22,130	4,650	51,400
2017/18	177,965	25,685	22,775	4,365	52,825

(Data collected from HESA annual reports available at - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications>)

The growth in performing arts courses and the resultant need for industry-experienced lecturers has led to a growth in performing arts professionals making the transition to higher education. In the UK, Locke, Whitchurch, Smith, and Mazenod (2016) identify a growing proportion of people moving into higher education from professional practice, people embarking on a second career as a higher education academic after (or combined with) a first career. These dual professionals are considered experts in their field, but early career academics in the education environment. Dual professionals' experience is valued by students as it exposes them to industry expertise and supports the integration of industry approaches into the curriculum. This helps universities to frame responses to graduates' job-readiness (e.g. Moore and Morton, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017), bridging 'the disparity between industry needs and higher education provision' (Jackson 2013:778), and to the value-for-money discourse around degrees (e.g. Belfield, Britton, Buscha, Dearden, Dickson, van der Erve, Sibieta, Vignoles, Walker, and Zhu, 2018). However, there has been a range of discussions about a perceived divide between academics and practitioners, or between theory and practice (e.g. Brew, 2006; Briner, Denyer, & Rousseau, 2009; Austin & Bartunek, 2012). As Dashper & Fletcher (2019) noted, individuals from industry backgrounds can be well thought of by students but may experience a lack of 'legitimacy' within academic social groups. This can lead to additional pressures felt by new staff in these subject areas to be not only excellent in their practice related field, but also to become more academically relevant.

Changes to student numbers and funding regimes also mean that HE institutions face an increasing challenge to be more entrepreneurial (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). The changing nature of the HE sector has seen transformations in how universities are managed and governed, in how they have structured themselves and in how they engage with external partners and social issues (Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie, & Henkel, 2000; Enders, 2006). In a progressively neo-liberal environment, UK universities have become increasingly managerialised and metricised with a growing number of different audit frameworks: quality assessment audits (QAA), student satisfaction surveys (NSS), the teaching excellence framework (TEF), the research

excellence framework (REF) and the imminent knowledge exchange framework (KEF). There has also been an increase in competition between institutions seeking funding from research councils and other sources. These changes have impacted on the role and demands of academic staff, including increased demands to meet targets on student satisfaction, research outputs, and grant income, and require academics to be more entrepreneurial in approach (Fanghanel 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2015; Nixon, 2015). Gabriel (2010) argues that institutional expectations of being an academic are idealised and, as the neo-liberal managerialist culture develops, these ideals are emphasised by increasing pressure on academics to perform (Clarke, Knights & Jarvis, 2012). Knights and Clarke (2014) highlight how researchers have argued that academic identities are increasingly fragile and insecure given the intensification of performative demands. Indeed Gill (2014:19) highlights that 'precariousness rather than security is one of the defining experiences of academic life'.

Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan (2013: 7) contend that each 'discipline has its own concept of success as a vehicle for prestige', which means that discipline context is significant for understanding academic identity. Performing arts (drama, music, dance) are relatively new subjects and also highly vocational subjects. This may add additional pressures on academic identities as they struggle to find a place in the academy that traditionally values new knowledge and high research outputs (Dashper & Fletcher, 2019). In trying to find a place both in their institutions and in the rapidly changing HE environment, academic staff in these disciplines may experience additional pressure to validate their inclusion in the academy, which may come through increased pressure to engage with research (Ek, Ideland, Jönsson, & Malmberg, 2013). This combined with a possible tension for individuals between their identity as a new academic and their identity as an experienced practitioner (Shreeve, 2011) and the challenges of learning how things are done in a new environment can make the transition process extremely difficult for some staff. Bartunek and Rynes (2014) highlight that one approach for institutions is to acknowledge there is a divide between practitioners and academics and to

highlight the value that those coming from industry add, for example in bridging industry and academia and providing valuable networks.

This changing academic environment has significant influence on the social identities of academic staff, as the changing role of employers affects the employment relationship, often creating conflict for different groups within organisations. The changing expectations of academics and the impact on academic identity will be explored further in Chapter 3.

#### 1.4 Social Identity

The changing academic environment into which performing arts professionals transition has significant influence on the social identities of academic staff, with the potential to create tensions and conflict. How these staff fit into different social groups in higher education through and after their career transition can be explored through the social identity approach (SIA) which encompasses social identity theory and self-categorisation theory.

Social identity theory (SIT) focuses on the process of developing social identities, which is how individuals develop group relations through social and emotional attachment with different groups (Tajfel, 1978). By defining themselves through group memberships, people demonstrate the behaviours and values of the chosen group they wish to be viewed as part of. To develop a social identity, there is a need for individuals to categorise themselves as part of a group and to develop a degree of identification with the group on both a social and emotional level. Self-categorisation theory (SCT) builds on social identity theory (SIT) to highlight these social categorisation processes and emphasises that feeling as though they belong to a group accords individuals a sense of status and value, and allows them to feel distinctive and special (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994a; Haslam 2004; Hogg, 2016). The significance of this is how people establish why they believe they are members of that group (Tajfel, 1979) and, according to Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell (1987), the way an individual identifies with a group is a process of aligning their behaviour and way of thinking with that group. This sense of belonging brings with it an emotional and value attachment and gives the way



people behave in a group a distinct meaning that reflects part of who they are (Tajfel, 1979).

In SIT, Turner et al. (1987) suggested that the way an individual identifies with a group is a process of aligning their behaviour and way of thinking with that group. This dictates how strongly a person feels a member of a social group at any time and guides their behaviour as part of that group. This is important to consider in career transition as people move into new social groups. SCT also adds value to the debate as it highlights that any perceived similarity or difference between groups is accentuated by a group prototypicality, a subjective representation of the attributes that are seen to define a social category (Jetten, Spears & Manstead, 1998). The way individuals assess to which group they belong, as they perceive and act as embodiments of the in-group prototype, transforms them into group members and individuality into group behaviour (Haslam, 2004; Hogg, 2016; Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). Group membership also brings with it a feeling of belonging and emotional attachment which can be important to individuals' feelings of self-worth. This sense of belonging can appear under threat in career transition as individuals move from one social group to another which can affect their behaviour. This highlights why the social identity approach adds value as a theoretical approach with which to explore the thesis aim and objectives. SIA provides an approach to explore differences in social identity between the work sectors and develop understanding of career transition experiences and how this impacts on the construction of social identities in the academic workplace.

### 1.5 Career Transition

Breakwell identified that a career transition might be seen as a threat to identity. He believed the structure of identity was usually understood as having 'two planes: the content and value dimensions' (1986:12). For those in this study, the content dimension could be seen as their role as a practitioner or their role as an academic. The value dimension is focused on the process of identity, assimilation, accommodation and evaluation. It is therefore how people deal with this threat that impacts how they develop their social identity in a new role. In SIT, people have to categorise themselves in new social

groupings as part of the career transition, deciding which different groupings they align with and what each group contributes to their sense of self (Haslam, 2004). SCT also highlights concepts of how individuals feel they fit in social groups and whether social groups are accessible to them, which can be important to consider in career transition as not all social groups in the new career may appear accessible. The social identities that people derive from their new group memberships can affect how they behave and the threat to identity from career transition occurs when the process of identity is 'unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem, which habitually guide their operation' (Breakwell, 1986:46). Social categories are not mutually exclusive and in transitioning career, individuals may have an increasingly complex level of multiple social identities which interact with each other (and highlight the potential tensions in the transition process from the different work contexts of performing arts to academia and between different social groups).

#### 1.6 Implications for Research

With the increase in dual professionals entering higher education, there has been a lack of research into social identity in career transition which can be problematic as new staff not only have to establish themselves in a new organisation with different practices, but also have to navigate into a new social group. When employing new academics, senior management hope that people can perform at their required level as quickly as possible. However, support for transition and the development of new staff in their academic role is often lacking and this means that new staff are reliant on informal socialisation to learn how an organisation's processes work (Knight, Tait, and Yorke 2006). This can be challenging and lead to feelings of insecurity. There may also be a mismatch of expectations between new staff and senior managers. Many of those entering academia have some experience teaching, usually in a casual or part-time role. But these roles do not allow people to experience the full expectations of a full-time academic role, which can lead to further frustrations and feelings of inadequacy when managers and counterparts believe they have the requisite knowledge (Shreeve, 2011). This problem is particularly highlighted when academics are transitioning from a

performing arts background. The working environment and practices of performing arts appear different from those of a university, however there are increasing similarities in approaches to work (Gill, 2014). Lack of familiarity with how things are done or frustration with different processes can negatively impact on the transition process and mean that it takes new staff a long time to acclimatise and work at full potential. For staff moving into academic roles from performing arts, the career transition can be challenging and threaten their established social identities. The need to engage with new social groupings and go through self-categorisation processes can be challenging if the career transition means their sense of 'continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem' is broken (Breakwell, 1986:46).

The transition to academia is also challenging as the changing higher education environment has meant that academic identities are becoming more insecure (Knights and Clarke, 2014) and the increasing pressure to perform (Clarke, Knights & Jarvis, 2012) has led to differing views of what is a prototypical academic. The traditional view of an academic being strong in both teaching and research is changing and the debate about practitioners being different from academics provides a shifting context within which those transitioning have to find their social group. It raises the question for the research of what dual-career professionals expect an academic role to be, what they see as prototypical and whether they feel they fit that prototypical social identity or a different social identity in academia. The processes of managing multiple social identities in new work environments might also be considered challenging in this context. These questions are important for university managers to understand so that staff can be better supported in transition and future career development and potential mismatches between expectations and reality are overcome. Through the outcomes of this research, the thesis aims to support higher education managers in research led interventions in supporting those transitioning from the performing arts.

This perceived problem will be explored in this thesis through a social identity perspective. The social identity approach opens pathways to examine

strategies utilised by individuals in the process of social categorisation and also those utilised by social groups to enhance or differentiate their status.

### 1.7 Aim and Objectives of Research

The overarching aim of the study is:

To explore how academic staff construct social identities in the career transition from performing arts to academia.

Building on this, the objectives of the research study are to:

- explore the process of social identity and self-categorisation and the subsequent social identities of staff who have transitioned from performing arts careers to academic roles in higher education;
- examine the key influences on their process of social categorisation;
- examine the impacts that the fit and salience of social identity has on participants' sense of belonging in higher education;
- develop recommendations to support academics transitioning from performing arts careers into academia.

These objectives are underpinned by several research questions:

- To what extent do social identities of staff, who have transitioned from performing arts careers into higher education, change?
- What are the key influences in developing new social identities in academia?
- To what extent does the changing nature of higher education impact on social identity and categorisation?
- How strong is the fit and salience of both their performing arts and academic social identities and how does this impact on their new role?
- Where staff manage multiple social identities, how do they view them and how does this define them?
- How is their career transition and subsequent social identity affected by the transition from expert to novice?

## 1.8 Personal Motivation

The research is closely related to the researcher's role both as a creative industries practitioner and as a Dean of School. Up-to-date creative practice and knowledge is a key requirement when seeking to recruit new lecturers to teach creative subjects, yet this can mean that staff are recruited into universities with little experience of education other than their own time studying or short periods of working on creative projects. With a rapidly changing higher education environment and ever-increasing importance on student experience and developing pedagogies, understanding how individuals view themselves and how their social identity affects their adaptation to the education environment is vital for senior managers to be able to ensure any adaptation processes are supported.

## 1.9 Thesis Structure

Chapter 2, the literature review, is designed to provide a contextual overview of social identity theory for the research.

Chapter 3 continues the literature review, exploring sector-specific literature on the performing arts and higher education and career transition.

Chapter 4 describes and explains the design of the research methodology and the research methods utilised in the study.

Chapter 5 is a detailed account of the research findings, presenting the participants' voices.

Chapter 6 is a detailed discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and considers the social identity approach in light of the study's findings.

Chapter 7 provides the opportunity to revisit the research questions and for the contribution of this thesis to be formulated.

# Chapter 2 – Social Identity Approach

*'Becoming what one is, is a creative act comparable with creating a work of art'.*

*Anthony Storr (1998)*

## 2.1 Introduction

The social identity approach offers potential new insights to understanding the experiences of staff transitioning into higher education and the impact of this on social identity construction. SIA allows these experiences to be examined from a person-centred perspective to enable managers to develop understanding of how events potentially influence social identity and any subsequent impacts on the engagement of staff in the workplace.

Social identity theory (SIT) focuses on the process of developing social identities - how individuals develop group relations through social and emotional attachment with different groups (Tajfel, 1978). By defining themselves through group memberships, people demonstrate the behaviours and values of the chosen group they wish to be viewed as part of. To develop a social identity, there is a need for individuals to categorise themselves as part of a group and to develop a degree of identification with the group on both a social and emotional level. Social categorisation theory (SCT) builds on SIT to highlight how people categorise themselves and emphasises that feeling as though they belong to a group accords individuals a sense of status and value and allows them to feel distinctive and special (Turner et al. 1994a; Haslam 2004). The significance of this is how people establish why they are members of that group (Tajfel, 1979) and, according to Turner et al. (1987), the way an individual identifies with a group is a process of aligning their behaviour and way of thinking with that group. This influences how strongly a person feels a member of a social group at any time and guides their behaviour as part of that group. This sense of belonging brings with it an emotional and value attachment (i.e. group salience) and gives the way people behave in a group a distinct meaning that reflects part of who they are (Tajfel, 1979). Together

social identity theory and social categorisation theory form the social identity approach.

This literature review chapter examines the social identity approach and the constituent theories of social identity and social categorisation. The chapter considers how individuals categorise themselves within different social groups and how this process of identification can affect behaviours. The chapter critically appraises both social identity theory and social categorisation theory and also several related aspects including fit, the salience of group membership and issues of social mobility. The chapter will provide a definition of SIT used in this study and outline how SIT developed. It will go on to appraise SCT, which developed from SIT, and explores social identity from the perspective of intra-group processes and behaviours rather than inter-group relations. In discussing SCT, the chapter will explore concepts of social identity salience, fit and accessibility and prototypicality. The chapter also considers different aspects of change related to social identities such as social mobility, social creativity and social competition.

## 2.2 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

SIT was developed to attempt to explain inter-group relations and provide a theoretical underpinning on which to develop an enhanced understanding of the relationship that exists between how people envision themselves and their relationships with a collective self (Turner & Brown, 1978; Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003; Ellemers, De Gelder & Haslam, 2004). People's involvement with different social groupings changes depending upon the context and conditions within which these groupings take place. The assumption that group membership influences self-definition lies at the heart of the social identity approach (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003; Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, 2011) and highlights that the relationship between an individual sense of self and memberships of groups have a mutual influence over each other.

Stets and Burke (2000:226) distinguished social identity theory from identity theory as:

Having a particular social identity means being at one with a certain group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective. In contrast, having a particular role identity means acting to fulfil the expectations of the role, coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners, and manipulating the environment to control resources for which the role has responsibility.

At a basic level, identity is about knowing who we are as an individual however, as Jenkins noted, to establish identity involves a comparison of similarities and differences with others (2014:18). Therefore, social identity, which establishes these similarities and differences through self-categorisation, offers that understanding of who we are in relation to others.

SIT emerged in the 1970s with Tajfel's proposal that the groups people belonged to (e.g. social class, family, clubs etc.) gave a sense of social identity or a sense of belonging (1972). SIT suggests that a person's view of who they are is based on their membership of groups or categories. Tajfel (1979) also proposed that these groups contributed to the self-esteem of individual members and offered them a sense of status. So an individual's social identity is their understanding that they belong to a social group or category (Hogg 2016), outlining who they are through their similarities and differences with others (Reicher, Spears and Haslam, 2010).

A social group can be any group of individuals who have a shared social connection and perception of a shared identity (Stets and Burke, 2000). These groups may exist on a meta-scale for example, nationality and religion, or at a more local level, such as clubs and societies. SIT suggests that groups may seek to enhance their self-image by making themselves appear different from other groups or enhancing those perceived differences. This type of behaviour is commonly seen in supporters of football clubs, who represent their differences through the wearing of football club strips or through partisan chanting at matches. Through this group comparison process, those perceived as similar are categorized as the in-group, whilst those perceived as different are categorized as an out-group (Turner et al. 1987:20).



Individuals may belong to many social groups and these different social identities all contribute to an individual's overall social identity but, dependent on the context, the importance of each will shift and change. Many of these social identities are distinct and do not overlap; having multiple social identities mean that an individual's overall identity can be complex if their multiple social identities do not have similar attributes and values (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Hogg, Abrams and Brewer 2017). In career transition, this may mean that if the social identities are not well connected, the career transition process might be more difficult.

Tajfel (1974) did not suggest that social identity was more important than other aspects of self-identity but tried to highlight the importance of 'intergroup' contexts, asserting that social identity was an individual's understanding that they fitted certain social groups and that these groups offered them value, self-esteem and emotional belonging. He also asserted that the core of SIT is the assumption that group membership contributes to self-definition (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003; Haslam et al. 2011). For this study, social identity is defined as the way an individual classifies and evaluates themselves through their membership of a social group or category.

SIT began with the 'minimal group paradigm', an attempt by Tajfel to explain inter-group discrimination (Tajfel, 1970). Tajfel divided participants in his experiments into two groups, where they had no prior knowledge of, or engagement with, other participants in their group. Each participant was then asked to allocate points to other participants. The experiment appeared to show that, without any knowledge of their group members, participants tended to give points to participants in their own group, so creating an 'in-group' and differentiating from an 'out-group'. Tajfel concluded that it was the participants' sense of belonging to the group that made them do this as there was no prior interaction, so the process of being categorised produced a shift from inter-personal to inter-group relations and behaviours (1970). Members of the groups appeared to accept their place in the group as 'a relevant self-definition in the situation' (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999:8). In exploring this further Tajfel outlined his belief that members want to make their in-group more

positive than comparable out-groups and want to maintain a positive social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and by favouring in-group members the self-esteem of the group is enhanced (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). Whilst this minimal group paradigm as a basis of competitive discrimination had its critics, the process of social identification with groups became the basis of SIT which highlights that how people connect with groups helps define not only who they are but also who they are not.

According to Tajfel, 'the knowledge that we belong to certain social groups, together with the emotional and social significance to us of this group membership' (1979:31) is what makes group behaviour important from an SIT perspective. This view is reinforced by Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam (2009) who highlight that people's sense of being part of something and their place in the world is due to the status associated with different group memberships. These group memberships make them feel distinctive from other groupings and contribute to their personal feelings of security in their social identities. SIT proposes that social identification involves developing 'a reflexive knowledge of group membership' and then forming 'an emotional attachment or specific disposition to this belonging' (Benwell & Stokoe 2006:25). Having a social identity as part of a group does not require there to be a personal relationship with the group but is seen as a process of internal definition by a collective of people where members of a group can recognise each other as members (Jenkins, 2014). So there is something that binds a group together and creates some expectations of group members, whether to do with values, behaviour or conformity.

Ellemers et al. highlight that the process of building identity is significant and is derived from the 'cognitive and motivational framework of SIT' (2004:6). The cognitive aspect of SIT is how people try to comprehend other people's viewpoints, as well as investigating how these different viewpoints shape how people react (Haslam, 2004). From this cognitive standpoint, three processes support self-identity development: social categorisation, social comparison and social identification (Ellemers et al., 2004). These processes show that people look to reinforce their social identity through social groups and then

they build a positive sense of who they are based on processes of comparison, which take place both within the group and outside with other groups.

The process begins with social categorisation, where individuals define and categorise themselves into social groups, find out things about themselves and add value to their self-identity by knowing what categories they belong to. Here Tajfel offered a broad approach to social categorisation, which was later extended in self-categorisation theory, referring to social categorisation as 'the ordering of the social environment in terms of groupings of persons in a manner which makes sense to the individual' (1978:61). It is here that people start to understand the different social groupings around them and to identify what it is about themselves that allows them to commence their categorisation process with the preferred social group(s). So it helps individuals orient their way and introduces the perceptions of intra-group differences and similarities (Dashtipour, 2012). Individuals evaluate the social groupings they either categorise with or they see as different, and these evaluations are either positive or negative. This categorisation process highlights differences between groups and helps individuals with their identification in a group enhancing similarity with other group members. For example, in the career transition process when individuals join universities, the first social identity might be ascribed by the department or school they join, but individuals will begin to assess the different social groupings and decide which they wish to be associated with (Nixon, 2015).

In the second stage, social identification, once people have categorised themselves to a social grouping, they adopt the identity of the group they feel they belong to and at this stage, an individual's self-esteem becomes intertwined with their group membership. It is in this process that a group develops a collective understanding of the group's values and relationships (Tajfel 1978) so that their behaviour becomes reinforced by 'a sense of connection informed by common norms, values, beliefs and goals' (Reicher, Haslam and Platow, 2019:129). There are a range of factors including perceived shared values, beliefs, and behaviours, learnt through socialisation processes, that affect how individuals choose which groups to identify with

(Ellemers, de Gelder & Haslam, 2004; Ashforth, Harrison and Sluss, 2014). There is also evidence to show that individual differences, such as personal values and previous life experiences, can impact on the choice of group identification and may predispose individuals to identify with the groups they believe they are similar to (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquil, 1994; Ellemers et al, 2004; Jansen & Kristof-Brown 2006). Bizumic, Reynolds and Myers (2004) referred to this as a 'person-group fit' and saw this as based on personality, individual tendencies and previous social identities. But whatever the factor that brings individuals to identify with a group, it is from this shared identification that groups begin to assess their social standing and compare themselves to other groups. In relation to the research, this means that as individuals undertake formal and informal socialisation processes in the university, they learn the expected behaviours, values, and roles of academics via their chosen groups which can affect their later perceived place in the academy.

The final stage is social comparison as, to categorise with one group, people need to have other groups with which to compare themselves. Social comparison is the method through which they assess the meaning and value of their group and it is here that the concept of in-group and out-group takes on meaning (Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Ellemers, De Gelder & Haslam, 2004). In essence, individuals reinforce their personal sense of identity and self-esteem through identity with a social group. Through the process of comparison, they build a positive sense of who they are and see other groups in a more negative light. So individuals can enhance their self-value through their identification with a group, and through this, look on their group more positively than other groups. This is referred to as the in-group and out-group, whereby the group to which an individual belongs becomes the in-group, and groups that are viewed as different become the out-group. This can be seen in music where groups might define themselves by the genre to which they listen and see themselves as different from people who listen to another style. SIT considers that the in-group will maintain a positive sense of distinctiveness from the out-group(s) and highlights this as a potential cause of discrimination (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Inter-group behaviour is based on group comparisons

and whether people perceive their group to have a high or low status in comparison to other social groupings. The view of the status of the group can then determine how strong the identification is as a collective group and whether there is a sense of in-group favouritism. But Dashtipour (2012) believes comparison does not necessarily lead to discrimination and, for discrimination to occur, there must also be a motivational reason which is based on how group members 'interpret and give meaning to the intergroup situation in line with the collective frameworks of their culture and community' (Wetherell, 1996:218). It is this sense-making that determines whether comparison leads to out-group discrimination or in-group favoritism.

The status of a group can also affect the self-esteem of group members, (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). SIT suggests this is because people derive a sense of self from being a member of the group as it allows them to identify what is different or unique. Tajfel & Turner (1979, 1986) believed that all individuals are motivated to have a positive self-concept and need to have a positive social identity which enhances their self-worth and is determined by comparisons between the groups to which one belongs ('in-groups') and relevant comparison groups ('out-groups'). This is important to consider within career choices where work is precarious and roles are constantly changing, as self-esteem factors could vary.

Hinkle and Brown (1990) suggested that how individuals choose dimensions to favour the in-group in this comparison process is important and developed a model with two dimensions. Firstly, an individualism/collectivism dimension that highlighted a range of in-group identifications, from individualism (where people are more interested in their own goals) to collectivism, (where people tend to be more interested in achieving the group's goals). However, Hinkle & Brown (1990) noted that the individualism /collectivism construct alone was not enough and so proposed a second dimension that expresses the intergroup context as autonomous/relational. This dimension goes from autonomous (where the group has a pervasive ideology and comparisons are made to an abstract group standard and not directly to other groups) to

relational (where the group directly engages with intergroup comparisons). Hinkle & Brown (1990) believed that the relationship between identification and differentiation would be strongest for collectivists in a relational inter-group context, so groups which emphasize collective approaches and achievement and which compare themselves directly to other groups may be more likely to highlight perceived differences between groups in order to enhance their identification with their in-group as a collective entity. This is significant because it highlights both how groups might behave in response to other groups and how individuals might act collectively within their group.

Group belonging and perceived differences are built on stereotyping which Tajfel proposed is based on the propensity of individuals to group things. The way an individual identifies with a group is a process of aligning their behaviour and way of thinking with that group (Turner et al., 1987), and the awareness that they belong to certain groups develops a sense of status and well-being that contributes to their self-esteem. So their motivation to stereotype is based on the desire to increase levels of status through group membership (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). According to Tajfel the realisation that they belong to certain social groups, 'together with the emotional and social significance of this group membership' (1979: 31) is what makes group behaviour important. This view is supported by Haslam et al. (2009) who highlight that being part of an in-group can make people feel distinctive and special and identifying with a group moves social identity from an inter-personal perspective to inter-group behaviour. The other rationale for identifying with a group is that individuals wish to have a sense of self-esteem and that being seen to belong to a group with a positive status can allow individuals to be evaluated, and also to evaluate themselves, positively (Brown & Capozza, 2006). By discriminating in favour of the chosen in-group, members can enhance the social identity of the group and increase their self-esteem in the process. The strength of identification with a group is determined by several factors including the need to enhance self-esteem, the need for certainty in their self-concept (Brown & Capozza, 2006) and the impact of the external environment within which the social group operates. This is significant in this research because it begins to explain how individuals use their sense of group membership as part of

building their self-esteem in their new career and how inter-group behaviour is significant in group membership and social identity.

Whilst SIT has been shown to develop understanding of shared behaviour, and of how individuals behave in groups (Tajfel, 1970; Turner, 1974), some limitations to SIT have been identified (see for example Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Billig, 1996; Brown & Lunt, 2002). The core of these criticisms is that SIT views relationships only from an inter-group perspective, based on in-group and out-group perspectives and does not address intra-group situations, how individuals view their membership of groups and how this impacts on behaviours. To address these limitations, social categorisation theory has developed as a separate but interlinked theory, which elaborates on how individuals self-categorise and explores intra-group processes instead of just inter-group relations.

### 2.3 Social Categorisation Theory (SCT)

SIT demonstrates that social categorisation is the basis of group formation whilst SCT identifies the social categorization process as the cognitive foundation of group behaviour (Hogg & Terry, 2000:123). SCT elaborates on how people distinguish one category or group of people from another (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994b), and how individuals decide on the groups they want to be a member of plus the rationale for that choice (Haslam, 2004). SCT moves on from SIT by focusing on intra-group processes and behaviours rather than inter-group relations and is fundamental to understanding how groups develop collective behaviour.

SCT suggests that social categorization works on three levels: the superordinate, intermediate and subordinate levels (Dashtipour, 2012). The superordinate is concerned with being part of the human race, the intermediate relates to group membership and the subordinate level is how individuals define themselves. So, for example, an actor in the performing arts might see themselves as part of the broad acting community and part of a local network but also might define themselves more specifically as a musical theatre actor or a comedy actor. But they also relate to how they are viewed

within the broader society and their worlds. Dashtipour (2012) noted that individuals' social identity is built on how they see themselves as an interchangeable member of a group, so individuals categorize themselves into a group when that category becomes salient to them. SCT builds on SIT, highlighting that the greater this shared sense of identity in groups, the higher the salience to individuals and the more cohesive a group structure.

There are several key intertwined concepts to consider in SCT: salience, fit and accessibility, and distinctiveness and prototypicality.

### 2.3.1 Salience

SCT implies that individuals identify with a range of social categories and groups and these construct their social identities. The range of different contexts within which individuals exist means that different social categories are more salient than others dependent on the environment. Salience is defined as 'the probability that a given identity will be invoked' (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001:32) and, where someone has multiple social identities, these can be ranked in a hierarchy according to their salience in different contexts. Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds and Turner (1999) highlight that it is how people define who they are in terms of the categories or group memberships they share with other people that is significant in terms of salience. According to SCT, as individuals categorise themselves into groups and the salience of that shared social identity increases, so individual self-perception becomes more depersonalized. Individuals have as many social identities as the number of groups they feel that they belong to and for each person, these identities will vary in importance and value depending on the context. So at any time, the salience of one social identity may be stronger than another. Hogg, Abrams, Otten and Hinkle (2004) noticed that social identities change in response to contextual changes, so confirming that social identity is context-dependent, but Ashforth (2001) argued that salience is also determined by the subjective importance of the social identity. So a social identity that is very important to an individual's sense of self or their value (i.e. driven by internal values) may have a strong subjective salience that overcomes situational salience (driven by external contexts). In individuals moving from one career to another, this suggests that the salience of their social identities may change as the



employment context changes, but that one identity may remain subjectively salient in different contexts.

In relation to salience, Doosje, Ellemers and Spears (1995) identified a difference in commitment to groups between those individuals they termed high and low identifiers. High identifiers are those who feel very committed to the group, suggesting that the social identity of the group has a high salience for them. In contrast, low identifiers are less committed to group goals and preserving the group identity, so suggesting a lower salience with the group identity and greater insecurity as a group member. Whether people are high identifiers or low identifiers can drive some of their behaviours and decision making within a group. A high identifier is more likely to make decisions to support and enhance group identity and perceived status, whereas a low identifier might make decisions which mean they disengage from the group. This suggests that for groups to retain a strong group identity, they need a large percentage of high identifiers. If there is an increase in the number of low identifiers, this can make the group identity less stable and less attractive to others. This is important in a situation where increasing numbers of staff are transitioning in their careers, as their identification may not be as strong as those who have worked in an industry for a long time. But, as noted, salience needs to be seen as fluid. Where the importance of an in-group and out-group distinction is greatest, individuals tend to perceive themselves as being part of the in-group (Brown & Capozza, 2009), so are high identifiers, increasing the salience of their shared social identity.

However, in Brewer, Manzi and Shaw's study (1993), it was found that people sometimes preferred to be seen to belong to a minority group regardless of the perceived inferior status if it highlighted that their group was distinctive. So the need to be seen as distinctive overcame the need for positive self-esteem which suggests that people identify with the group which allows them to feel integrated and accepted, but also which highlights their distinctive characteristics. This demonstrates how the salience of a category or group membership is affected by how individuals view the category, how it meets

their internal values and how it matches their personal contexts, a concept known in SCT as 'fit'.

### 2.3.2 Fit and accessibility

Fit is a key concept that affects salience and refers to 'the degree to which reality is perceived to reflect social category differences' (Dashtipour, 2012:60). Oakes (1987) originally identified two aspects of fit: comparative and normative. Comparative fit is related to the differences between categories, so a given category becomes more salient when the differences *between* groups or categories is greater than any differences *within* a group (Haslam et al., 1999). So, the differences between groups must be believed to be bigger than the differences between in-group members for the given categorisation to be most salient. In contrast, normative fit demonstrates that the salience of categorisation is related to the context someone finds themselves in, so relating to how the group fits their current context (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999).

The principles of fit are key to determining group identity salience in interaction with accessibility or perceiver readiness (Oakes, 1987). Accessibility relates to how accessible a particular self-category appears to be, while perceiver readiness is the readiness of an individual to use a particular categorisation (Dashtipour, 2012). This readiness, and therefore accessibility, is affected by an individual's past experiences as well as their current motivations and expectations. In relation to career transitions, this can be an important concept and Ellemers, Spears, Doosje, (1999) highlight that the extent of identification with the group and how it is valued is an important factor in an individual's readiness to define themselves through particular social categories in different situations.

Fit suggests that a categorisation is most salient when there is a large difference between the chosen category and other categories, but that this difference is also consistent with the values and beliefs of the perceiver in their current context and reflects their readiness to be perceived as part of the chosen category. When a given social identity is salient, the members of that

group are more likely to internalise the given group characteristics, and more likely to define themselves in terms of the shared attributes that define the group. It is these shared attributes that create similarity between group members and allow people to define themselves as the in-group as opposed to differences highlighted in the out-group(s) (Turner, 1984). Through seeking out differences between categories, groups look for 'distinctiveness', which helps them to evaluate their self and group worth in relation to others (Haslam et al. 2009).

### 2.3.3 Group Distinctiveness and Prototypicality

Through the process of social categorisation, the perceived similarity to the in-group and difference from the out-group is accentuated and highlights a group prototypicality, a subjective representation of what are believed to be the defining attributes of a social group. This process of categorisation highlights the distinctiveness of each social group and increases levels of differentiation between groups. Distinctiveness is what is important to a social category and if the level of distinctiveness between the in-group and the out-group appears to change, then the social group will react and find ways to maintain or increase distinctiveness (Jetten et al. 1998). This can be achieved in several ways, but where distinctiveness appears under threat this may be achieved, for example, by putting down the other group, being negative about them or finding ways to enhance the in-group distinctiveness. These behaviours can be seen as efforts to maintain the perceived high status of the in-group but can lead to bias and differential treatment (Ahmed, 2007).

The social categorisation of the in-group effectively brings behaviours and self-perceptions of members in line with an in-group prototype, which is constructed from the available information in the current social context (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The influence of the group prototype on how people stereotype themselves is key as the 'prototype is closer to a representation of the ideal than any typical group member' (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003:245). Those who view themselves as closer to the prototype might be considered high identifiers in the group as they have taken on the behaviours and values represented by the prototype. In contrast, those who are more distant from the in-group prototype in their behaviour might be considered low

identifiers. Prototypes are often represented in the form of exemplary group members, those seen as embodying the group characteristics (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) which accentuate the attributes of the in-group. Hogg et al. (2004) highlighted that prototypes rarely describe an average or typical in-group member as they are cognitively constructed as an ideal, even hypothetical, group member, which emphasises the distinctiveness of the group as opposed to out-group features. As a result, prototypes are dependent on there being intra-group comparisons. In-group prototypes can be viewed as self-stereotyping and enable groups to create greater conformity and group solidarity. In relation to out-groups, prototyping is understood more commonly as stereotyping, where members of an out-group are viewed as being alike. When joining a new group, members might be expected to seek out prototypical in-group members to learn and develop in-group values and behaviours. The possible significance of this can be explored when people change careers, through choices made by new staff such as how their choice of informal mentors reflects prototypical group members.

The way individuals assess to which group they belong, as they perceive and act as embodiments of the in-group prototype, transforms them into group members and individuality into group behaviour (Hogg et al. 1995; Haslam, 2004). So, when someone is viewed relative to the group prototype, they are less likely to be viewed as an individual and their social identity becomes depersonalised. This places importance on group behaviour which influences how people perceive and respond to social situations and links SCT back to SIT. This notion of group identity and behaviour becomes significant when the distinctiveness or status of the in-group appears under threat and the group needs to readjust their self-evaluation.

## 2.4 Social identity and social change

SIT incorporates the belief that being a member of a low-status group can negatively affect how individuals view themselves. The social identity view suggests that the reason for this is that people derive a sense of self-worth by assessing the status of the social categories they belong to, and theorises that individuals are motivated to have a positive self-belief (Tajfel and Turner 1979,

1986). SCT argues that, depending on the salience of an individual's membership of a group, the level to which individuals perceive themselves to be part of the in-group can change (Turner et al., 1987; Turner et al., 1994). This may be due to a number of factors including context, the relative status of the in-group or fit. Being in a situation in which an in-group is negatively compared to a significant out-group can increase categorization on the collective level and threaten social identity (Turner et al., 1987). This can challenge members' self-worth and perceived membership of the group. However, when a group is socially devalued or stigmatized, members of the group do not have to be passive but may seek methods to manage a perceived social identity threat (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Levin & Van Laar, 2006).

In addition to this, research which explores the permeability of group boundaries (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Wilke, & van Knippenberg, 1993) suggests that perceived permeability should be considered important to the possibility of mobility from one group to another. For example, Ellemers, van Knippenberg, de Vries and Wilkie (1988) asserted that permeability of group boundaries was critical to establishing whether collective or individual strategies should be used to attempt to change social groups, but believed that collective strategies would be more effective when boundaries appeared to be impermeable. So if it appears relatively easy to change group membership, this could be attempted on an individual basis. This theory built on Tajfel and Turner (1979) who identified that members of perceived negatively viewed in-groups can realise an enhanced positive social identity by using different strategies including social mobility, social creativity, and social competition. Each of these strategies is discussed below.

#### 2.4.1 Social Mobility

Social mobility was viewed by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) as the only individual strategy available to group members. Social mobility refers to an attempt by an individual to distance themselves from a low-status group to begin a move towards a high-status group, or to realign to a higher status out-group. It has been suggested that social mobility is the main strategy for

achieving a more positive social identity (see Tajfel, 1978, 1982; van Knippenberg, 1978, 1984). Taylor and McKirnan (2011) believed that individuals will attempt social mobility strategies first, and only if these are unsuccessful, will they engage in other collective strategies. So social mobility occurs when an individual feels that their membership of the in-group no longer meets their needs. To overcome this, they may find ways to decrease identification and perceived similarity with that group. At the same time, they might also seek out strategies to increase their personal identification or perceived similarity with an out-group that they believe has a higher status (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, and Hodge, 1996). By doing this, the individual believes the new association of the high-status group will increase their self-worth. However, the ease of mobility depends on the circumstances. The main concern is whether groups are seen as permeable, that is, are they seen as having barriers in place to limit leaving or joining, which can be important in helping new staff to establish their social identity. In the workplace, someone might identify with a low-status group through their role and wish to shift to another role which is part of a perceived higher-status group. This might be relatively simple, but there may be perceived barriers in place such as whether the new role requires a different qualification or level of experience. Some of these might be actual barriers that need to be overcome, e.g. undertaking a new qualification, but many are subjective perceptions of permeability and not actual objective barriers (Ellemers and Van Laar, 2010). Boen & Vanbeselaere (2001) noted that individual mobility was also affected by how individuals perceived their status and worth and whether they felt it was equal with the high-status group. So an individual might think that a higher status group is where they want to belong, and either believe that their status is the same as the higher status group, or believe that they do not yet fit the status of the group. This belief will determine the social mobility strategies they use.

#### 2.4.2 Social Creativity

Social creativity was another way identified by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) that social groups could attempt to improve their status. In social creativity, social groups do not seek ways to move into another group or status but instead seek opportunities to improve their perception of their group's standing

(Wright, 2001; Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2006). So a group could find ways to avoid situations or self-segregate so that they are not confronted with their lower status. They also might find ways to restrict how the groups are compared. Another possible process is for lower status groups to find different dimensions on which to compare themselves to the higher status group. So in an organisational setting, they might say that whilst the out-group is good at organisational tasks, their in-group is good at creative tasks. By doing this, they attempt to change the dimensions on which they are valued and so enhance their self-worth. This was mainly seen by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) as a group strategy and one which is engaged in by group members who have a high identification with the in-group. It also tends to be used when a higher status social group is seen as impermeable (Douglas, McGarty, Bliuc, & Lala, 2005).

In comparison to social mobility, Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) noted that social creativity was a strategy of inaction, being ways for in-group members to cope with their perceptions of the group status, rather than an active method of altering status (see also Crocker & Major, 1989; Spears & Manstead, 1989; Wright, 2001). Because of this, social creativity can negatively affect the in-group by shifting focus away from the dimensions in which the out-group has higher status, and in doing so, reducing the opportunities for the in-group to challenge those dimensions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). However, conversely, Derks, Van Larr and Ellemers (2006) asserted that social creativity tactics would not only benefit the well-being of the in-group members by enhancing their self-worth but could also encourage in-group members to enhance their performance on dimensions in which the out-group has higher status. So there is no current consensus on the perceived value of social creativity tactics on in-group membership.

#### 2.4.3 Social Competition

A third possible process for achieving a more positive social identity is social competition, a type of competition for improved social status in which groups strive to be positively defined from each other (Martiny & Rubin, 2016). Social competition, therefore, can be viewed as an attempt by the in-group to improve their status, which can be achieved through collective action. So a group will

find ways to improve their performance on dimensions that offer a more positive social status and in doing so will discriminate against the out-group. Here social groups can adopt socially competitive strategies which might include aggression and antagonism, conflict and open hostility (Douglas et al., 2005). Social competition is particularly seen in cases of political activism where activities might include political action, protests and revolutions through which lower status groups directly attempt to challenge the out-group (Tyler & Smith, 1998; Reicher, 2001; Douglas et al., 2005). But it can also be seen where members of in-groups continually put down and rate out-groups negatively. Social competition between groups can increase the salience of social identification thereby reinforcing prototypicality and enhancing the salience of individuals' group membership (Tajfel, 1982; Dashtipour, 2012).

The variety of possible social mobility, creativity and social competition strategies available to individuals and groups is dependent on a range of factors. The particular context, the relative status of the in-group as compared to the out-group, fit and the permeability of higher status groups will all be considered before any moves are made to change social groups.

## 2.5 Conclusion

As seen in this chapter, the social identity approach brings together SIT and SCT. The social identity approach is mainly concerned with exploring and understanding how the ways we align ourselves to different groups and the ways we categorise ourselves work together (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999; Jenkins, 2014). SIT views social identity as key to how we behave in groups and different situations. SCT highlights how individuals stereotype themselves into a particular grouping (Tajfel, 1979; Doosje, Ellemers and Spears, 1995; Haslam, 2004). Together the social identity approach highlights how people use these processes to develop their shared beliefs, values and behaviours in groups. SIT also highlights how individuals and groups develop their positive self-images through their shared membership of the group.



The significance of the social identity approach to this research is that it guides our understanding of how strongly a person feels a member of a social group at any time and what motivates their behaviour and sense of belonging as part of that group. This sense of belonging brings with it an emotional attachment and gives the way people behave in a group a distinct meaning that reflects part of who they are (Tajfel, 1979). In the exploration of career transition, the social identity approach opens pathways to examine both the strategies utilised by individuals in the process of social categorisation and also those used by social groups to enhance or differentiate their status.

The following chapter explores the different contextual environments of performing arts and higher education, as well as exploring any similarities that individuals may perceive in their career transition.

# Chapter Three – Career Transition from Performing Arts to Higher Education

*'We know what we are, but not what we may be'.*

*William Shakespeare (2016)*

## 3.1 Introduction

This second chapter of the literature review builds on the previous account of social identity theory and social categorisation theory with a short exploration of social identity in relation to career transition, highlighting the possible impacts on social groupings and the processes of social categorisation when someone moves into a new career. In recent years, the social identity approach (SIA) has developed as an ever more important approach for understanding key aspects of work in organisations. SIA suggests that forms of organizational behaviour come from and reflect people's sense of themselves as members of groups as much as, if not more than, their sense of themselves as individuals (Haslam, Steffens, Peters, Boyce, Mallett & Fransen, 2017). Therefore, the organisational and sector context within which participants work needs to be understood, especially given the increasing numbers of people transitioning from performing arts to higher education.

This chapter explores the key contemporary issues in the two career sectors covered in this thesis, performing arts and higher education. The different working practices and organisational forms in these sectors have the potential to impact on participants' feelings of self-worth and their processes of categorisation with social groupings. The chapter begins with an overview of the performing arts sector (as part of the wider creative industries) to highlight the perilous nature of work, the need for networks and the potential impacts on individuals' feelings of self-worth. Following this is an overview of the contemporary higher education sector, issues affecting academic work and

the potential impact on social identities in the sector. These reviews provide a brief context to review the different working practices, but also seek possible similarities between experiences of those working in each sector. Following this overview, the chapter explores career transition and potential strategies people might employ in categorising themselves into new social groups.

### 3.2 Social Identity and creative industries

This section briefly explores the nature of employment in the creative industries and the impact of this context on social identities of those working in the sector.

#### 3.2.1 Nature of Creative Industries work

Given the high percentage of freelancers in the industry, social networks have a valuable role both in disseminating information about work and also providing a supportive network (Randle and Culkin, 2009). Social network is an umbrella term used to describe 'nodes of individuals, groups, organisations and related systems that tie in one or more types of interdependencies' (Serrat, 2017:39). Social capital exists where individuals are advantaged because of their place in a network, which allows contacts to provide information and opportunities that can be advantageous (Serrat, 2017). Given the precarious employment of the performing arts sector, social networks have an increasing importance for those seeking to develop or maintain employment. But this can mean that social and work boundaries overlap as forced networking and socialising to find work opportunities leads to the commodifying of these inter-relationships (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Workers need to be 'always on' and 'always connected' (Gregg, 2011), able to constantly engage in a range of self-branding activities (Cote and Pybus, 2011). The casualization of some sectors of the creative industries has led to the emergence of what Starkey, Barnatt and Tempest (2000) termed 'the latent organisation' that transcends and incorporates hierarchy and network forms. This has increased the importance of social networks as not just coping mechanisms but for the future viability of the labour processes of the main cultural organisations (Smith and McKinlay, 2009). Yet, whilst the 'network society' characterises the cultural and creative labour market, the reality is that these networks are often thin, shallow relations (Wittel, 2001) and has led to

careers of multi-jobbing, taking on other work often in teaching or the hospitality industries, to supplement the low wages from the chosen creative career.

Valliere and Gegenhuber (2014) referred to the need for entrepreneurial bricolage amongst creative workers. De Klerk (2015:828) explained that this meant 'seeking out alternative connections between, and dimensions of, relational paths, and then to experiment with them to find the best fit'. The collaborative nature of performing arts work allows people to work together (Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009) and adds value by creating work processes that are seen as inclusive and based on creative efficiency (Hon and Chan, 2013). However, these creative processes are often on short term projects and there is a requirement to constantly shift the groups that people are working with. This highlights challenges for those working in the creative industries in relation to how they identify with different social groups. The salience of their group identity would appear to shift and adapt in response to changes in the external networks which could appear to be a threat. McKinlay and Smith (2009) highlighted the possible tensions for 'creatives' with the organizational pressures to efficiently create services or goods which meet commercial demands. Conforming to these demands may constitute a challenge to their self-identity as they are producing work to exact demands and not necessarily to their own creative response. In such circumstances they may find that the work they produce is not consistent with their view of creativity which can produce a struggle or resistance, either individually or within their social groups (Gotsi et al., 2010). But whatever the purpose of the work being created, the value of the creative industries, and specifically the performing arts, lies in the skills of the workforce. Within the creative industries, the asset or skills specificity is highly individualised, especially in the performing arts, and this makes creative labour somewhat distinctive in these cultural activities as opposed to, for example, advertising, where the production systems and skills structures are different (Smith and McKinlay, 2009).

### 3.2.2 Social identity in performing arts

Some identify creative people as a category apart: the 'creatives', as what people do creatively is closely related to who they are (Caves, 2000). But this fails to take account of individuals' specific circumstances and the environments in which they grew up, socialise or work. Whilst there is some research into musicians' identity, particularly those in sub genres such as jazz, there is a dearth of research into the development of identities in other areas of the performing arts. Littleton and Miell suggested that exploring identity is an inherent part of creative work which involves the 'continual negotiation and re-negotiation of subjectivities' (2004:3) and Juuti and Littleton (2012) explored the issues faced by young people as they aimed to become professional classical musicians. McRobbie (2002) highlights that identifying with a creative role blurs the separation between a personal and professional identity and leaves workers open to self-exploitation. Beech et al. (2016) focus their study on self-questioning identity work amongst musicians, highlighting the tensions between creativity and commercial work. In music too, Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald (2002) suggest that social identities could be founded on generic characteristics between different categories of music in addition to specific characteristics which run across these categories. They noted that this, in particular, focused on different instruments and genres, and that these specific characteristics are key to the social identities of professional musicians.

In visual art, Tayler and Littleton (2016) explored contemporary creative identities focusing on the nature of a creative subject and theorising images of the creative maker or artist in relation to this. They highlighted the role art colleges play in developing creative identities and how artists sought validation of their self which created challenges between creating work as part of a need to be creative and selling work for commercial gain. There is also a growing body of work which explores identity from the perspective of creativity (see for example Day, 2002; Hagstrom, 2005; Glaveanu, 2010; Glaveanu and Tanggaard, 2014). The overarching conclusion of many of these studies, which supports social identity theory, is that creative identities are dynamic in both space and time, as the networks of interaction which creative individuals

undertake evolves (Gill, 2014), but that creative identity is very much a mediated structure, mediated by social interaction but also social discourse (Hagstrom, 2005). Steffens, Haslam, Ryan and Millard (2107) propose that shared social group membership is a significant factor that has a major bearing on the recognition of a creative output. A social identity approach to exploring creativity implies that the processes of producing and evaluating creative output are 'bound up with concerns that relate to creators' and perceivers' sense of shared identity' (Haslam, Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, and Jans, 2013). So creativity is shaped both by processes related to its creation and by the perception and evaluation of others. For example, Steffens et al. (2107) demonstrate how nationality was perceived as a key concern of the in-group at the Oscars and BAFTAs, for example with British judges voting for British talent, demonstrating how perceivers tend to regard the performance of in-group members to be different from that of out-group members.

One issue that does arise in the creative industries is the constant adoption of different identities to suit different purposes, especially given the working environments of self-employed freelancers. As Jonathan Rees (1990) put it,

the problem of personal identity,(...), arises from play-acting and the adoption of artificial voices; the origins of distinct personalities, in act of personation and impersonation.

The typical actor, for example, is not often working as an actor but is earning money through non-acting work, yet the individual will maintain a strong social identity as an actor (Smith and McKinlay, 2009), so self-definition and working practice are not always concurrent. This is supported by Day (2002) and Glaveanu and Tanggaard (2014) who claim that, from an identity perspective, creative individuals have to be adaptable and contextual, so the potential juggling of multiple identities by arts professionals may be challenging.

This section has highlighted the challenges inherent in developing and maintaining social identity in the performing arts and in these circumstances, social identity can either be kept together in these work environments by the social cement of an occupational ideology of performing arts, or through the

impact of the social networks to which an individual belongs and their role in social identity.

### 3.3 Social Identity and higher education

This section briefly explores the changing nature of the higher education sector and the resultant impact on the social identities of those working as academics within it.

#### 3.3.1 The changing context of higher education

Progressive periods of expansion, measurement and marketisation over the last twenty years have transformed the UK's higher education sector leading to what has been termed the 'neoliberal university' (Gill, 2014), one having to compete in an increasingly marketized economy. The term 'new managerialism' has also been used to refer to the adoption of management processes, organisational structures and values more usually seen in public sector organisations (Deem 1998). As well as pressures for growth, there are increasing expectations on universities to be accountable and meet targets with regard to issues such as widening access, employability and graduate skills, spending and efficiency savings. As universities come under this increased scrutiny and are required to demonstrate 'value for money' whilst also becoming more competitive, so management practices are being seen more explicitly in institutions. This has led to what Krucken, Kosmutzky, and Torca (2011) described as 'multiversities', institutions which have to deal with a diversity of challenges and conflicts in the external environment, which in turn has led to a need for new organisational structures (Henkel, 2016). The resultant changes in governance of UK universities has been covered by, amongst others, Middlehurst (2004) and Shattock (2006) who contend that new business-like management styles have been matched by weakened academic self-governance and an academic community feeling increasingly marginalised. Professionalisation of management within universities has been gradually seen as more important to enable institutions to adapt to the continually changing external environment.

Global trends also play an important part in the drive towards internationalisation of higher education (Marginson and Rhodes, 2002).

Competition between universities now extends beyond UK borders as universities seek to develop international profiles, create international partnerships and enhance income through international delivery of programmes and research (Amaral, Meek, and Larsen, 2003). The need to retain a strong position in university league tables has become a driver for changes in institutions, for example to curricula, academic activity and recruitment of new staff including competition for high performing academics. This internationalisation means that differences between academic contracts including, for example, disparities in financial incentives, work and time are becoming commonplace and eroding a common approach (Henkel, 2016). The increase in neoliberalism and globalisation across the sector has also led to tensions and mistrust between institutions and academic staff (Kauppi, 2015) due to the resultant shift in power away from academic staff to central management.

Alongside this, the age profile of the academic workforce in the UK shifted towards higher age categories with, in 2010-11, almost 60% of staff over age 45 and 8% over age 60 (UUK, 2012). However, recently there has been a small swing back to growth in the 31-40 year age range for full time staff (48.9% of growth), though increases in part time staff are in the older age ranges (UUK, 2017). This increasingly reflects the growth in new academic staff in newer disciplines who have had several years' work experience before transitioning into higher education. These changes to the academic workforce profile present challenges and tensions for many working in higher education. Many institutions face the challenge of balancing localism in a narrative of global growth (Enders and Teichler, 1997; Amaral, Meek and Larsen, 2003) and tensions between delivering local targets and meeting international aspirations create pressure for academic staff as they try to maintain their own roles and positions within this fluid environment. The requirement to be not only excellent in teaching, but also enhance research outputs, develop international contacts and bring in income is seen as part of an increasingly managed work environment in higher education, which impacts on the everyday working environment of academic staff. For academics this is seen as an attempt to erode their academic autonomy, for example, with the



pressure to increase quality and quantity of publications for the research assessment exercises (Henkel and Kogan, 1996). Deem (1998) noted that activities like these are increasingly becoming the performance indicators that universities need to achieve in order to maintain their public profile, for example through league tables, and this can lead to changing motivations for academics as to where they want to focus their activities, which may not always be in line with university strategies. This will be explored in the next section.

### 3.3.2 Contemporary academic life and impact on social identity

Given this state of flux in higher education, the academic profession has experienced significant change or, as Cummings and Finkelstein noted, 'things are not like they used to be' (2012: v). Henkel (2016) also asserted that what is meant by academic work these days is uncertain, as academics now work in multi-dimensional environments. As well as the increasing mistrust noted above, academic life is also pervaded by an increasing audit culture, or 'performativity' (Fanghanel, 2014). As noted in chapter one, academic staff now have to engage with a range of different external audits; it has been argued that the proliferation of these performative demands have ensured that academic identities are increasingly fragile (Garcia and Hardy, 2007; Fanghanel, 2014; Knights and Clarke, 2014). One of the combined effects of this enhanced scrutiny and sense of managerialism suggested by Smyth (1995) and Cuthbert (1996) is that staff in universities are increasingly finding themselves under pressure to meet greater targets and do more work but with decreasing resources. Recent research has shown that many academic staff are facing high levels of anxiety and stress in their roles (Baron 2014; Gill 2014; Kinman 2014; Sullivan and Simon 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2015). These increased demands have also been shown to increase the competition between individual academics, reducing levels of collegiality in the process (Knowles and Burrows 2014).

Henkel (2000) suggested that academic identities are a 'complex and heterogenous mix of individual and community values, linked to particular forms of knowledge or epistemological frameworks and a sense of worth or

self-esteem' (p255). Nixon, Beattie, Challis and Walker (1998) also noted that there are different ways to construct an academic identity, and all individuals follow different career trajectories (Jawitz, 2009). These varied social identities are influenced by the groups to which academics belong, for example the department, the institution or the discipline, or other social groupings attached to their work (O'Byrne, 2015).

However, whilst the nature of academic work has changed, there is still an idealised image and expectation of what it is to be an academic (Gabriel, 2010) including a range of shared values and norms which are considered necessary to academic identity such as academic freedom, autonomy and professional judgement (Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012; Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan, 2013). Traditionally the idealised image has been based on a balance of research and teaching, but the increasing marketized environment means that these ideals are reinforced with increasing demands on academics to perform in a multiplicity of areas (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012). This range of demands can leave academic staff feeling insecure if they fail to achieve them (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Clarke, et al., 2012; Knights and Clarke, 2018). Clarke and Knights (2015) highlighted a disparity between how business school academics saw themselves and what they saw as the ideal academic. They noted a sense of insecurity in their participants, and the tendency for participants to distance themselves from the activities that are expected, such as research activities. They also identify that academic identity is dependent on the validation and judgement of others (through audit frameworks and journal review processes), which makes academics feel highly vulnerable. This highlights a need for academics to effectively network with those in their subject domain and engage in self-branding activities to ensure they remain externally competitive and also enhance their reputation internally in their organisation. For new academics coming into an institution, this can create a challenging environment within which to find their place. This sense of insecurity can be mapped to that felt in the performing arts sector, where work is precarious and there is a strong reliance on social networks.

The ethos of neo-liberalist cultures means that, whilst the internal university environment is increasingly managed, individuals have the opportunity to 'manage their own career ambitions' (Adcroft and Taylor, 2013: 9). Clarke and Knights (2015) observed that their participants made very conscious decisions about where to channel their efforts and that these decisions were usually based on their own career strategy or plans for promotion. Brew, Boud, Crawford & Lucas (2017) highlighted there is little evidence of how academics can create career trajectories that address institutional requirements, while at the same time meeting their personal goals. This has led to an environment where academics are increasingly needing to be entrepreneurial, both in how they protect themselves from the increasing demands but also in how they categorise themselves in different social groups, and how they create the opportunities to develop their own career strategies. This need to be entrepreneurial again provides a useful similarity with the performing arts sector, with a mirroring of entrepreneurial approach in managing an arts career.

Nixon (2015) noted in her research that, in joining institutions, people are given assigned social groups, such as subject area or department, but that people generally move beyond this, categorising themselves with groups who share their interests but also provide contexts where they can pursue their preferred professional activities. Trowler and Knight suggested that the socialisation process could be viewed not in terms of the interests, values and concerns of the bigger organisation, but instead in terms of those of 'the individual, the department or other local unit' (1999:181). This suggests that there is a significant role for local induction processes linked to socialisation to enhance the salience of social identities and that this should be an intensive process to develop tacit knowledge about the culture and processes of the local department. From a social identity perspective, socialisation can build group members' understanding of and alignment with the values and behaviours of the in-group.

Clark (1983) supposed that it was both the subject 'discipline' as well as the 'university' that could be defined as the key communities within which

academics developed their social identities. As significant change is ongoing through higher education, this impacts on the ways in which academics construct and manage their social identities. Nixon speaks of academic identity as 'a bricolage, an assemblage, a pragmatic accommodation to contingent events (. . .) necessarily provisional and unfinished' (2015:10), an identity that is adapting in a world of change. Like Henkel writing at the same time, Nixon observed that her participants tended to categorise themselves with groupings that reflected their own views of higher education and their role within it. Some of her participants believed their role was to prepare students for industry and deliver 'industry-informed and industry-relevant teaching' (2016:230). These participants demonstrated strong external networks with industry, maintaining a dual identity between industry and education. This supports the notion that, as they find it harder to gain a sense of shared social identity through their institution, academics seek other groups within which they feel they fit. Boyd and Smith also highlight that the focus of academic staff towards different elements of work are influenced by a 'mixture of formal and informal 'rules' at sector, subject discipline, institutional, and departmental levels as well as by individual agency (2016:681). A sense of disengagement from and low commitment to their own communities has meant that some academics also disengage from a commitment to the principle of 'academic citizenship' and collegiality, as they cope with increasing levels of stress and decreasing levels of organisational commitment (Kinman and Jones, 2003; Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper and Ricketts, 2005). So academics are either seen to be following a more individualistic approach to their careers, or alternatively coming together in their disciplinary in-groups to consolidate their social identity by differentiating themselves from the management of their institution. Either way, there is a sense of academic identities being threatened as they face changes to the education environment which influence and challenge their self-image, and consequently their perceived identity (Nias, 1989). However, as Bauman (2000) identified, being an academic involves having a range of diverse identities in fluid contexts. The increasing presence of 'dual professionals' in the academy illuminates Coates & Goedegebuure's assertion (2012:877) that '(t)he classic conceptualisation of *homo academicus* - the all-round expert in teaching and research across a broad range of disciplines –

[is] becoming less relevant to current practices and future needs.’ This notion of fluid and changing conceptualisations fits well with that of the transitioning practitioner, who might have multiple social identities during, and continuing after, career transition.

As discussed in chapter two, social identity theorists suggest that individuals, in becoming identified with their social group, align to distinctive values and attitudes of the group and start to enact the role expectations they perceive within that group. As the higher education sector undergoes change, the ideal prototypical values of academic staff are perceived to be under threat of change but new alternative entrepreneurial social identities are being developed (for example Clarke and Knights, 2015; Nixon, 2015; Henkel, 2016). This has a knock-on impact in terms of academics’ place in the institution(s) and, particularly within a context of change, can be important when considering participants’ shifts in careers and the change in social identities.

### 3.4 Social Identity and career transition

In changing career, individuals are moving from one social group to another and this reinforces the importance of the social categorisation process. Ibarra (2004) identified processes many people go through when trying to reinvent themselves as they move between different careers. In order to change, individuals have to explore themselves, questioning who they are and considering what the possibilities might be for them in new environments. As they start to change they are still in a testing period, where they have not shifted to their new role or social identity but are testing it. Ibarra (1999) showed that obtaining feedback from and observing more experienced team members influenced the way that professionals explored their ‘provisional selves’ and how they adapted to their new roles. This demonstrates the role of prototypical members in the social categorisation process by highlighting how those new to the workplace observe and learn from those who are seen as experienced and demonstrating the role values and beliefs. Following this there is a period of deep change where individuals align their values and beliefs to their new social groupings. In going through this process individuals achieve two outcomes: the external change which people can see in their

change of career, but also the internal change in how they view ourselves in relation to the new social group and what they do (Ibarra, 2004).

Ibarra identified different strategies that promote successful career transition (2004:18). These strategies fit with social identity and social categorisation theories:

*Table 2: Strategies for Career Transition (Ibarra, 2004:18)*

<b>Aspects of Working Identity</b>		<b>Strategies for Reworking Identity</b>	<b>Potential relationship to SIT/SCT</b>
Working identity is defined by what they do, the professional activities that engage them	→	Crafting experiments: trying out new activities and professional roles on a small scale before making a major commitment to a different path.	Redefining social identity.  Testing 'fit' to new social group.
Working identity is defined by the company they keep, their working relationships and the professional groups to which they belong.	→	Shifting connections: developing contacts who can open doors to new worlds; finding role models and new peer groups to guide and benchmark our progress.	Social categorisation: Identifying social groups in the workplace which match perceived readiness and fit.  Identifying members who display prototypical features.
Working identity is defined by the formative events in their lives and the story that links who they have been and who they will become.	→	Making sense: finding or creating catalysts or triggers for change and using them as occasions to rework their story.	Increasing salience of new social identity(ies).  Potential for social mobility/social creativity/social competition

Breakwell (1986) believed that a career transition might be seen as a threat to identity and it is how people deal with this threat that impacts on how they develop their social identity in a new role. The threat to identity from career transition occurs when the process of identity is 'unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self-esteem, which habitually guide their operation' (Breakwell, 1986:46). Ibarra's strategies show how individuals might deal with this threat and highlight the potential tensions that participants might meet in the transition process from the different work contexts of performing arts to academia, and between different social groups.

#### 3.4.1 Evidence of Career Transition Impacting on Social Identity

There are a number of research projects which explore transition from a different career into education, for example on how the experiences of teacher education training impact on the identity of those transitioning careers. Zeichner and Gore (1990) identified three influences on teacher identity which highlight the importance of social identity theory: previous influences, experiences during training and influences of the work environment and culture when they start teaching. Koeppen and Griffith (2003) concluded that career transition students often resisted new approaches and defaulted to predetermined ideas about teaching which came from their own experiences at school. James (1997) and Mealyea (1989) also discovered a tendency for new teachers to retain a strong social identity with their previous careers, which made them resistant to new ideas, and they often struggled with 'being relegated to the role of a novice' (Mealyea, 1989:190).

Here the salience of the new group identity was not as strong as the salience of the original identity and participants appeared to be low identifiers at this stage in their career transition. Whilst these studies focused on those transitioning to teaching at primary or secondary level, they do raise questions about the impact of career transitioning for those moving from performing arts to academia, and the impact on social identity in transition from expert to novice.

A number of these studies (including Peel, 2005; Sinclair, Munns and Woodward, 2005) highlighted local institutional issues impacting on social

identities, but none reviewed transition in its entirety. Anderson (2009:203) defined the work role transition as:

'The human experience associated with entering a new community of practice. It is a dynamic, developmental process with associated emotional work, critical tasks, and a diffusion through role boundaries to assume the new identity with values and knowledge base for the new role.'

This highlights the social identity aspect as people transition into a 'new community of practice' and try to categorise themselves with a new social group. Previous studies have identified challenges experienced by lecturers in the transition to HE noting a culture shock as most new academics underestimate the impact of the journey from practice to education during the first year in higher education (Boyd and Lawley, 2009). Lalonde's definition of a crisis (2010:2) as marking the 'passage from a so-called normal, familiar and customary situation to an exceptional, unexpected and uncertain situation' could be considered important for transition into higher education. McArthur-Rouse (2008) found that confusion may be due to not knowing how organisations function, therefore the transition becomes challenging as individuals strive to create a new social identity in an unknown environment while maintaining links with practice and managing their existing social identity. Studies have also identified that confidence is linked to the career transition process (Daley, 1999) and Jones (2012), in her reflective blog, highlighted that academics in higher education need 'support and guidance so they can reflect and review their practice to see how they can develop and improve', helping support the academic to reach their potential (Lovett and Gilmore, 2003). It is through this support process that new academics can find identification with a relevant in-group and learn the same values and beliefs as their new social group(s). So the opportunities to learn about processes, practices and values are important in enabling individuals to understand the workplace environment and the different social groups within it.

This learning through work can be explored in terms of the opportunities that either support or limit individuals' engagement in their work (Billett, 2001a).



Whilst workplace structures and cultural factors can affect learning opportunities, so can the personal relationships that people develop in workplaces which can affect the desire for people to participate in new learning opportunities. Most models of skills development follow a stages approach, which moves from novice to expert. For example, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) argued that skill acquisition often develops through five skill levels: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. However, the question of what expertise is remains unresolved, and researchers from different domains have focused on both the cognitive capacity to perform non-routine tasks within a domain of knowledge (Billett, 2001b) and the actual practice of skills as a separate activity, which may be valued differently and influenced by the cultural factors in the workplace.

Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) believed that stage models missed out one important factor which is the understanding of, and in, practice, which they believed formed the basis of professional skills development. This is supported by other studies that highlight embodied understanding of practice as the foundation for professional skills development, but which also express that professionals with different levels of experience engage in and understand practice in differing ways (see for example Sandberg, 2000; Billett, 2001a; Dall’Alba, 2006; Sandberg & Pinnington, 2009). This research demonstrates that development is not a one-way progression but a dynamic process. Individuals transitioning into higher education bring in different levels of skill and knowledge from one career but have to then learn the understanding of how that skill and knowledge can be utilised and developed in a new environment. Here group support, formal and informal learning opportunities and evaluation are deemed important, but the desire and openness of the individual to learn is also key (Dall’Alba and Sandberg, 2006).

### 3.4.2 Performing Arts Transitions to Education

There is little research on those transitioning from a performing arts background into higher education. Myers (2017) offers a short review of the problems of transitions, how to support new staff and the value and importance of maintaining external networks with a focus on creative

practitioners as they transition into their new roles as academics. Thornton (2013), who explored the transition of identities from visual artists to teachers, asserted that the traditional transition of identities took place within professional parameters, such as defined through undertaking a PgCert in discipline-based teaching. This led to his development of three identity concepts: artist, teacher and, at the centre, 'Artist Teachers'. But he also argued that these concepts should be considered a single conceptual identity due to the discrete skills and knowledge brought from both disciplines (art and education). He identified a number of shared factors amongst the participants including support gained from artists and the art establishment and support from other teachers and the education establishment (Thornton, 2013: 85). These factors drew on both the working life as an artist and the working life as a teacher and focused on how the artist teacher concept is a bridge between the two professions, bringing together practices and networks. This has a clear fit with the social identity approach as many individuals maintain a dual role when entering higher education and the bridging of diverse roles can be challenging for some individuals as the status of their in-groups and the salience of their social identification will shift in the career transition process. Creative disciplines are seen as an 'emergent discipline' within higher education and as such there still remains a tension within the education environment between the practice and the need for academics to become research-active (Miers, 2002; McArthur-Rouse, 2008). Clark et al. posited that universities needed to help novice academics develop 'a breadth of vision that will allow them to embrace new and innovative ways of teaching and learning' (2002: 129) which highlights the importance of the social group into which new academics enter, both in terms of developing practice but also in developing their identity as an academic.

The transition from practitioner to academic can be seen as culturally challenging (Myers, 2017). Gates and Green (2013) and Wilson, Wood, Solomonides, Dixon, & Goos (2014) suggest that, particularly where practitioners have not experienced any type of academic role, it is not unusual for them to feel a sense of otherness when they begin an academic role. Wilson et al. (2014) highlight that new academics coming from industry can

also be surprised at the workload and pace of the role and need to find coping mechanisms to meet the demands placed on them. It is important therefore for managers to understand their experience in order to provide the most relevant processes of induction and mentoring which help support new academics into their role (Gates and Green, 2013; Myers, 2017), particularly those coming from very different working practices and sectors.

### 3.5 Conclusion

This brief consideration of the different sectors of creative industries and higher education has identified that, whilst working practices in the sectors appear very different, there are a number of similarities for people working in them. The sense of employment insecurity, a need for self-branding and the need to be entrepreneurial in approach, in particular, are key similarities in the contemporary context of both sectors. Indeed Gill provided a useful analysis of similarities between the two sectors in particular relation to 'the passionate attachment both have to their work, the endemic precariousness of increasing numbers of lives in both fields, extreme time pressure and long hours, and persistent structural inequalities' (2014:24).

In relation to this study, social identity theory and social categorisation theory are considered core as participants shifting careers from performing arts to higher education will have transitioned from one in-group to another and therefore will have been through a repeat process of social categorisation, identification and comparison in a new sector. These theories provide understanding of how social categorization and representation are embedded in a complex context, comprising wider cultural practices and material settings, which bears relevance to transitions in career.

This research focuses on academic and performing arts identities as social identities influenced by the interactions individuals have with others. It is clear that social identity in the workplace cannot be usefully divorced from the plurality of social identities which make up the self and that social identities evolve throughout different experiences. This constant evolution of social identities allows people to orient themselves and interpret their experiences in

groups in meaningful ways. It is also important to recognise that individuals have multiple social identities that can be at varying stages of construction and management, and at any time one or more of these may be more salient, so affecting their experience in the current environment. The changing nature of the creative industries and modern higher education provide a situation of flux within which these social identities are constructed and managed.

The research objectives and questions highlighted in Chapter 1 will be explored through the use of an appropriate research methodology which is outlined in the next chapter.

# Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

*'I live in terror of not being misunderstood'.*

*Oscar Wilde (2014)*

## 4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline how the research aim and objectives presented in the introduction were realised through the fieldwork, analysis and subsequent findings and discussion. This chapter is organised into five sections, each of which explores the decisions involved. Firstly, different philosophical positions will be explored and an outline given of the philosophical position on which the research is based. The chosen research methods and data analysis approach will be discussed and the credibility of the research will be explored. The choices available to the researcher and the decisions made are presented to aid the assessment of the study's findings (Cresswell, 1998). The research approach is a way to outline the plans and find appropriate methods which allow the phenomena being researched to be explained and understood. This exploration of the research process is also an important part of the researcher's reflexivity in assessing the approach taken and how this is likely to have influenced the findings.

## 4.2 Philosophical considerations

When designing and conducting their studies, researchers are influenced by a specific paradigm or set of assumptions that guide their inquiries (Cresswell, 1998:74). In order that the reader can contextualise the research findings, it is important that such assumptions are made explicit. Increasingly, researchers in the social sciences are paying greater attention to epistemological and ontological positions available and their impact upon the design of research and analysis of findings. Gray defined the difference between the two as, 'ontology embodies understanding what is, epistemology tries to understand what it means to know' (Gray 2004: 16). Ontology is concerned with the nature and characteristics of objects being examined, including the various entities that exist in the world, and whether this reality exists objectively or subjectively

relative to humans (Chua 1986; Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991). Blaikie suggested that ontological claims are 'claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality (...) what we believe constitutes social reality' (2000:8). Epistemology concerns the question of what is (or could be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline and Grix (2004) proposed that there is a focus on the knowledge-gathering process and a concern with 'developing new models or theories that are better than competing models or theories' (2004:63). A researcher's ontological and epistemological position will define the philosophical approach taken to the research.

Broadly, there are three dominant epistemological approaches to research used in social sciences: positivism, realism and constructivism (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). Within each of these there are a number of different approaches, but the underlying approach to each will be briefly discussed in this chapter.

For many researchers, social science research is about the measurement of human behaviour, exploring how instruments can be used to observe and quantify human behaviour (Drost, 2011), supporting a positivist approach to determine reality (Smallbone & Quinton, 2004). By collecting data on these events, researchers can then develop deductive approaches and so use their research to prove or disprove their hypotheses. This positivist ontology takes an external and objective view of reality and attempts to compare reality with those events which can be observed and recorded as having taken place (Flick, 2014). As Grix explains, 'many positivists assume there is no dichotomy between what we see ('appearance') and how things really are ('reality') and that the world is real and neither mediated by our senses nor socially constructed' (2004:81). So the underlying ontological assumption is that certain situations do happen and that through collecting data, a deductive approach can be used to prove the facts that exist and so identify reality in an objective way. There are limitations to social identity research of these more positivist approaches, which is why this approach was ruled out. Firstly they start with a supposition that particular professional groups/identities exist, so are not open to the potential for different groupings/identities. They are also reliant on observing or evaluating specific situation-based behaviour (Smith,

2015) and as such are reductionist as they do not give a broad picture of individuals' social identity/identities. This approach also assumes that, from an epistemological position, feelings, beliefs, and different meanings cannot be measured and therefore are not considered (Crotty, 1998). For research into changing social identity in career transition, this was considered a limitation and a key factor in ruling out a positivist approach.

Realism is another position used when undertaking research within the social sciences, which assumes that reality exists independently of the researcher, but this external reality consists of objects and structures and mechanisms through which they interact. Realists acknowledge there are differences between the real world and their view of it, and try to construct different versions of this reality to explore relative to time and place (Riege, 2003; Sobh, R., & Perry, C. 2006). For realists, data are understood as 'evidence for real phenomena and processes (including mental phenomena and processes) that are not available for direct observation' (Maxwell, 2012:103). However, realism is not a single approach and has two sub approaches often referred to as direct realism and critical realism. Direct realism posits that our experiences of the world through our senses are an accurate portrayal (Saunders and Lewis, 2012) and as such the world is relatively unchanging. This goes beyond the positivist approach by attempting to explain what is experienced in terms of the underlying structures that shape observable events. This requires a multi-level approach which explores the interaction of structure and agency, which can be found in critical realism and straddles both the positivist and interpretivist philosophical approaches. The critical realist lens is only just starting to be used for exploring social identity and, as this research aims to explore how people view and construct their social identity, it was felt that a realist approach would not reflect how people viewed their own experiences and social identity. In this research, it is hoped to identify potential patterns in people's experience of transition and the impact on social identity, and not provide definitive reasons for people's experiences and social identity development.

At the other end of the philosophical spectrum is constructivism which tries to understand how humans create the world and what it is to be human. It seeks to try and understand experience through the viewpoint of the person experiencing it (York & Russell, 2008) and 'prioritises people's subjective interpretations and understandings of social phenomena and their own actions' (Matthews and Ross, 2010:28). This approach, in opposition to positivism and realism, suggests that there is no single reality or single way of defining an event or the world around us, so research in this paradigm often focuses on establishing an understanding of what is taking place which is socially agreed (Jankowicz, 2005:116).

As with the other paradigms, there is no single approach within constructivism. Given the focus of the research on changing social identity in career transition to higher education, the philosophical position of this research is social constructionism, which sits within the constructivist paradigm and is concerned with the world as constructed, experienced and interpreted by individuals through interactions with other people and with broader social structures (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2012). The origins of the social constructionist approach lie in Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967) and stem from the belief that people seek to find understanding in the world around them, the world they live in, and that every experience they have helps them to construct their understanding and beliefs about the world or 'subjective meanings' about the world around them (Cresswell, 2014:8). As such the world is socially constructed, and every individual will have their own meanings or constructions of the world around them. These meanings are subjective, constructed through both individuals' interactions with others, but also through social and historical norms in the society within which individuals operate. As Berger and Luckmann stated '(k)nowledge about society is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality' (2010:84).

There is a strong history of social identity research being undertaken from a social constructionist perspective as the social constructionist approach aligns



closely with the SIA approach allowing the researcher to draw out participants' beliefs and views through discourse around their experiences. This can be approached by asking broad, open-ended questions about individuals' experiences, particularly from a social perspective. There is a recognition that these remembered experiences cannot be quantified so the researcher is seeking out patterns of experience and focusing on understanding those patterns and seeking out possible explanations. Social constructionism also recognises that participants' backgrounds will shape their individual meanings and interpretations of the world so, in this approach, the researcher should seek to understand and acknowledge the social and historical norms into which participants were born to seek to understand the backgrounds. In a social constructionist approach, the role of the researcher is to interpret the meanings and experiences of participants and find themes, whilst recognising that interpretation can be shaped by the researcher's own experiences and social constructs. The potential challenges of this will be addressed in the following account of the research methods.

### 4.3 Research approach and methods

The following sections provide a comprehensive account of how the research approach was designed and carried out to provide understanding of how the findings were generated. Furthermore, the following sections allow the reader to draw conclusions on how the chosen approach may have influenced the research findings.

#### 4.3.1 Selection of qualitative approach

As noted above, the social constructionist approach fits with a qualitative methodology as it allows the researcher to draw out participants' meanings, beliefs and views. Qualitative research is about viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the people being studied (Tracy, 2013). This means researchers are often more concerned with understanding what informs actions, in order to explore the potential for changing them and for understanding the societal issues that arise in different cultural contexts (Tracy, 2013). Qualitative researchers might be viewed as 'bricoleurs', piecing 'together a set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex

situation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:4), highlighting that qualitative researchers take a variety of data and from it construct meaningful and useful research syntheses. Sayer (2010) believes that interpretative and qualitative research is required in order to discover actors' reasoning in specific circumstances. It allows for participants to voice their thoughts, impressions and perceptions as well as identify events and structures that have affected them, which is appropriate as social identity is subject to social and relational influences within and beyond the individual's current occupation and workplace (Arthur, 2008).

#### 4.3.2 Data Collection Method

A number of different data collection methods were considered to ensure that the chosen method would be capable of eliciting the rich data demanded by the topic, including focus groups, surveys and interviews. Each data collection method was critically evaluated to ensure it would generate the data that was required to deliver the aims and objectives of the research.

Focus groups, when a number of people are brought together to explore the research topic in a group discussion, can be valuable for a number of reasons. They can produce insights that have been shown to result from group interaction. Carey (1994) identified this as the 'group effect', whereby participants demonstrate less inhibition when in a group with similar people. They are a method which can produce a large range of responses in a relatively short time, but there are also disadvantages with the use of focus groups. Whilst focus groups might have elicited some in-depth data, they were rejected as a suitable method for this research due to concerns that the social interaction within the groups might mean that participants confirmed and altered their opinions to fit in with their peers or with the opinions of stronger members of the group (Gibbs, 1997). Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson (2001) supported this assertion believing that atypical behaviour can be under-reported in these situations and that other methods such as individual interviews might be an appropriate alternative. The researcher's own subjectivities and actions can also affect the group process (Tracy, 2013), and in this instance, when the researcher had gone through the same transition from performing arts to higher education, it was felt that this might lead to bias.

Surveys or questionnaires were also considered to try and gather data from a larger range of participants. Questionnaires are relatively easy to administer and can be repeated in a range of contexts to allow for comparisons (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson 2012). However, whilst there are administrative advantages in being able to reach a large sample quickly, self-completion questionnaires do not allow the researcher to probe deeper into responses and gather the rich qualitative data required for the aims and objectives of the research as they often rely on breadth of responses rather than depth and the researcher is unable to check the truthfulness of the responses (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). Therefore, in relation to this research it was felt that questionnaires would not offer the necessary detail to be able to explore in-depth.

For purposes of time constraints, other qualitative ethnographic approaches, such as being embedded in an organisation or participant observation, were not considered practical. Therefore, interviews were considered to be the most appropriate form of data collection as appropriate to the qualitative research design and also to gather the best rich contextual data required for questions of identity. So the main research method utilised was dyadic face-to-face in-depth interviews which focused on individuals' life narratives and experiences in the workplace, following the themes identified from the literature. Interviews allow respondents to elucidate lived experiences and were chosen as a suitable method as they can be both focused but allow for examination of broader issues and they are a good tool for examining topics with different levels of meanings (King & Horrocks, 2010). The lower degree of structure and the preponderance of open questions makes them particularly useful from a qualitative research perspective (Kvale: 1996). Interviews represent a common form of social research though there are many different approaches.

If we want to understand the phenomenon truly, completely, with everything in proportion, and as a unity, we must understand it as part of the individual's self, and that comes across in direct communication and interaction in the interview. (Witz, Goodwin, Hart and Thomas 2001:204).

In order to ensure the interviews maintained focus on the aims and objectives of the research, and the questions arising from the literature review, an interview guide was drawn up (see Appendix 1). This was useful in the original interviews as a guide, but was not used as a prescriptive set of questions. This meant that the process of data collection through the interviews and the act of simultaneous analysis would enable emergent concepts to be identified and explored in later interviews, making it an iterative and non-linear process (Lichtman, 2012). This flexibility in the interviewing process is also an essential element when considering narrative or life history approaches (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Seidman 2006).

Prior to undertaking the interviews, participants received an information sheet, detailing the aims of the study and giving them an idea of what to expect in their one-to-one interview. A total of 12 interviews were undertaken with participants including an initial pilot interview. This pilot allowed the researcher to evaluate the original interview guide and interview approach and its ability to elicit a depth and range of data. The recording and transcript of the pilot interview also allowed the researcher to be reflexive about their techniques in asking questions, in understanding the impact of the researcher's approach to the data gathered and evaluating the impact of the researcher on data, assumptions and values (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, and Dillon, 2003). Participants were able to choose where the interview took place to ensure they felt comfortable. Most chose a neutral room on their campus, but two chose to be interviewed in a café off campus and one chose to be interviewed in a bar.

All the interviews were audio recorded, fully transcribed and analysed to allow emerging concepts to be identified for exploration with later respondents. Review of the interview transcripts allowed for reflexivity on data and key questions were identified to ensure sufficient depth of data and its ability to represent the social processes inherent in the transitions between careers. As such, the researcher remained adaptable throughout the process, including new data and observations within the interviews as the process developed.

An additional two interviews were also undertaken with an Executive Dean of a Creative Arts Faculty and a Deputy Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) which allowed access to details about structures and conditions from a management perspective as well as responses to some of the issues raised. These interviews were undertaken during an Executive Leadership programme and not recorded, though the researcher took notes throughout.

#### 4.3.3 Narrative Interviews

Whilst the researcher had a guide for the interviews to ensure they covered any topics perceived to be of importance from the literature, the interviews also took a narrative structure. Narrative in research can take many different forms depending on the context, but its use is still contested as there are no fixed meanings, definitions or practices (Bold, 2012). Oral narratives need to be remembered as a personal account of something that happened and not an exact record, as every person will experience an event differently depending on their circumstances and how they make sense of the event in relation to their own experiences (Bold, 2012:18). In this approach, narrative was considered an appropriate tool for the interviews but was not utilised as an analytical approach. Studies utilising life stories and interviews are often analysed through thematic analysis. This approach fits well with a social constructionist approach as it allows participants to relate their own experiences and social constructs of the environments in which they have grown up or worked. By using a narrative approach to the interview, the researcher can also elicit information about the social and historical norms in the society within which individuals operated at different points in their lives, and how aspects of diversity have impacted their social identities.

Whilst this is a small study and there are limits to generalisation, it is important to recognise that issues of diversity are important to social identity. This is commonly termed 'intersectionality', a term which developed from a study by Crenshaw (1989) who identified that looking at discrimination cases purely from one perspective rather than exploring their overlapping identities meant that key issues were not being understood. Her basic premise was the idea that people experience discrimination differently dependent on their

overlapping identities. So gender discrimination would be experienced differently by black women or by working-class women, and reviewing cases on a single axis was exclusionary. Crenshaw (1991:1296) went on to emphasise that 'intersectionality might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics'. Since then, there has been a significant increase in research into intersectionality, some of which raises concern about how the term has been appropriated and used, but which views intersections as interactions of power, particularly disadvantage and privilege, which can result in complex inequalities (see Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013; Collins, 2015; Hancock, 2016). But it is an important concept to consider in relation to social identity, as social identities are constructed out of the social groupings and discourse available to individuals (Burr, 2015). So issues of intersectionality and diversity are important for how individuals see their fit in a group, or whether groups appear accessible to them. Therefore, recognising the importance of intersectionality to the data analysis, the narrative interview approach was needed to understand and question any background issues of diversity potentially impacting on participants' social identities.

Given this, it was felt that a narrative structure to interviews, where people were asked to talk about their life and work experiences, was an appropriate method for studying social identity in career transitions as a career is 'a sequence of work experiences over time and career stories may be used to make sense of career experiences and inform the professional self-concept' (Arthur, 2008). The narrative form therefore asks respondents to give their account of experiences in their life which have informed how they now view their social identity. The researcher did consider whether to utilise other methods as well as interviews, for example asking people to write a piece of narrative reflection or to draw their identity, but they were aware that the interviewees were under strong time pressures and being asked to undertake additional work outside of the interview time might have deterred people from participating. So the research was focused purely on the narrative interviews.

In this research, interviewees were asked to talk about growing up, how they became interested in the art form within which they made their career, key

influences and whether they studied the art form at a higher level (e.g. university). They were then asked to talk about their first professional work experiences and to identify key moments in their professional career. Following this, they were asked to speak about their rationale for moving into higher education, their experiences in the transition process and again some key moments in their academic career. This allowed the researcher to get a sense of the narrative of their career development and motivations.

The combination of freeform narrative combined with some more structured questions to ensure all topics were covered allowed for both organic growth of topics in the interview but also some structuring to ensure that in-depth analysis of the interview in relation to the literature could be undertaken (Kvale, 1996). Where questions were asked, they were open ended questions which focused on experiences, responses and motives, so as not to just elicit information about what happened but also about why and what impact events had on individuals' sense of social identity.

#### 4.3.4 Purposive selection

In order to ensure rich data collection from the interviews, a purposeful research sample was selected on the basis of a pre-defined characteristic, that a participant must have pursued a professional career within the creative arts prior to working in higher education. An early search clearly identified a large number of staff who were employed on fractional or casual contracts within institutions and who continued work outside of higher education, clearly maintaining a dual identity. Whilst this raised many questions for the researcher it was felt that, for the purposes of this research project, participants should be sought who were in full-time positions within higher education institutions and had clearly made a full career transition. This led to a detailed search for participants who had evidently made a move from a career in performing arts to an academic career. This search highlighted that the researcher had made an initial assumption that most lecturers working on practice-based performing arts courses in modern universities (post 1992) would have experienced a professional career prior to engaging with education, as the focus on employability is a key aspect of many courses. It became evident that this was not the case. Courses which identified as

‘conservatoire’ tended to have a higher percentage of staff with a professional background. As many of these courses sit outside of university structures, the researcher was concerned that this could skew the experiences of the transition into higher education, as independent institutions are focused on a more intensive teaching approach than courses within universities. So the decision was made to seek a purposive sample from staff working within larger universities across the UK.

Participants were found through two methods:

- Email contact was made with Heads of Schools, outlining the inclusion criteria and asking them to forward the details on to appropriate candidates within their teams.
- Direct email contact was made with possible participants following review of staff profiles on the websites of universities with strong academic provision in the performing arts.

This approach aimed to gain a representative sample from educators within higher education, both pre-1991 and post-1992 institutions, and also from a range of participants of different gender, age and ethnicity. In the search for possible participants it was noted that there was a higher percentage of those with a drama background than from music or dance (which can be mapped back to student numbers in these disciplines).

These methods initially garnered sixteen positive responses though, in the process of setting up interviews, four possible participants were unable to take part due to timing, illness or concerns over workload. In the end, twelve in-depth interviews were undertaken with staff at post-1992 universities. These interviews ranged in length from 85 minutes to 120 minutes. As noted, a further two interviews were also undertaken with senior managers, an Executive Dean of a Creative Arts Faculty and a Deputy Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching). These interviews provided a management context and detail about structures but also allowed the emergent data to be tested. The following table indicates the subject of each participant and their time in higher education.



Table 3: Participant Data

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Time in permanent role in HE (years)</b>
Jennifer	Drama	11
Harry	Music	8
George	Drama	2
Irving	Drama	8
Dennis	Drama	3
Jane	Dance	3
Susan	Drama	12
Thomas	Drama/Art	2
Andrew	Drama	10
Peter	Music/Sound	17
Ian	Drama	8
Annabel	Dance / Drama	20
David	Executive Dean	30
Lucy	DVC Learning and Teaching	35

#### 4.4 Data analysis and presentation

Twelve interviews were undertaken with participants which were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. A further two interviews were undertaken with senior managers. For the purposes of this study, each participant was assigned a name rather than a number.

To ensure rigour and credibility in the data collection, the interview schedule was piloted and tested against the literature. Interviews were then conducted consistently using the schedule to keep the interviewer on track, but also allowing freedom for interviewees to give their personal narrative, and for new themes to emerge. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Clean verbatim transcription was utilised where possible, which captured all that was said in the interview to ensure that the content and meaning of participants' narratives were recorded. In chapters 5 and 6, where quotations are used, ellipses are used to show that quotations have been edited and words omitted. Where this has been undertaken, it is for conciseness and to highlight the relevance of the quote. Names of people, companies and places have been removed and shown with (xxx) to ensure participants cannot be identified.

For the purposes of this study an iterative approach to data analysis was taken, which was a reflexive process which allowed the researcher to revisit the data connecting 'them to emerging insights, and progressively refines his/her focus and understandings (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009:77). This process requires researchers to move between the theory and the data and then back to the theory, and through this process try to make sense of what is happening and develop new understanding of what is taking place and why (Suddaby, 2006).

The interviews were reviewed and analysed to identify themes and motifs as suggested by Mello, 2002. Thematic analysis focuses on the researcher seeking and identifying themes (or not) (Bold, 2012) and relating this back to the literature studied. It also allows the researcher to consider the contexts for people's experiences. The initial questions identified through the literature review were used for a first pass for coding and then the data was searched for any new emerging themes and to identify specific themes (Ajjawi & Higgs,

2007). The data was analysed by a single researcher who coded all transcripts. These themes offer a link back to the literature on social identity. However, it was also important for the researcher to look at the data as a whole. The breaking down of data into themes can fragment the richness of the interview data so it is important to link it back together again to discover patterns and make sense of the information. So each narrative must be considered as a whole, whilst each cross-cutting theme has also to be analysed. Together this analysis provides a rich picture of the data.

#### 4.5 Credibility

In terms of credibility, the degree to which qualitative findings are considered reliable, the research approach was iterative and involved a repeated process of reviewing the data collected which allowed thematic patterns to emerge. A clear process for undertaking the research and analysing the findings was also developed to eliminate any perceived variations. The data was continually considered against available theory and the interviews and analysis were also undertaken by a single researcher which eliminated possible variations in theming and analysis. It must also be noted that this research is an exploratory study and is not looking for its findings to be generalisable.

#### 4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring that the research is ethically appropriate is a key part of the researcher's role. Key areas for consideration in ethics include seeking informed consent, respecting confidentiality and ensuring anonymity of the research respondents, avoiding harm to participants and ensuring participants take part voluntarily. It is also important ethically to make sure that the research is independent and impartial (ESRC, 2012).

Ethical approval for the study was gained from Edinburgh Napier University and informed consent was sought from all participants. Information sheets were provided which explained what the research was about, how the data was being gathered and stored and why the research was being undertaken (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006) and interviewees were asked to sign a consent form which is stored with the data. In writing up the findings, careful consideration has been given as to how participants' opinions and responses in the report

are expressed to ensure that no one is identifiable. It was made clear to participants that participation was voluntary (Blaxter et al, 2010). This was important as the researcher was possibly known to some participants and held a role in a university that might have been considered more powerful by some participants. So interview participants were also made aware that, even after signing the consent form, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. They were also advised that they could request that the data they have given be removed from the study. Participants were offered the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview and to add any additional thoughts they may have had post interview. This opportunity was offered for ethical reasons, and it is noted that this may be considered unusual given the research approach. It was recognised by the researcher that each interview transcription stood as a single piece of data collected on the day and participants were not able to change this. Any additional information received post interview would stand as a separate piece of data, but this option was not taken up by any participants.

#### 4.7 Summary and conclusions

This chapter outlines a research methodology that was designed to ensure that the study fully considered the overall aims of the thesis. The aim of the methodology is to draw a coherent approach, and the narrative interview approach was identified as allowing for a broad exploration of the participants' experiences which would offer insights into how they viewed themselves. The analysis of the data involved an iterative process of thematic interpretation to ensure the aims and objectives of the study were met. The following chapter offers an oversight of the findings of the research.

# Chapter 5 – Findings

*'Self-identity is inextricably bound up with the identity of the surroundings'.*

*Lars Svendsen (2004)*

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the narratives of participants and their views about their own social identities as displayed through their interviews. To be able to gain understanding of social identity in career change, it was important to understand participants' performing arts social identity before exploring their social identity through their experiences of transition and their current role in higher education. Events observed and described by participants which potentially have an impact on their social identity were discussed from a chronological perspective.

It is recognised by the researcher that interviews are retrospective accounts that may try to explain or justify behaviours (Charmaz and Bryant, 2011). Interview data is both textual and situated (Silverman, 2014) and as such should not be seen as an explanation. However, research shows that memories of events are real to participants and have to be accepted as the participants' socially constructed view of the events (Burr, 2015). Therefore, by presenting the interview data, the researcher is presenting the narratives that people remember or wish to present. It is also recognised that the researcher has been selective in choosing the most concise and poignant quotes from the interviews to illuminate the findings. The researcher was aware of that such selectivity might mean that some voices come through more strongly than others, so has tried to ensure all voices come through where possible.

Information about participants' family background and education is presented to highlight any potential issues of intersectionality. The findings then move forward to participants' views of their social identity in their performing arts career and their higher education career, through highlighting their fit in social groups and their perceptions of accessibility to other social groups. Examples

of social mobility, social competition and social creativity are identified from participants' narratives.

## 5.2 Family Background, Education and Early Influences

Using narrative prompts, participants were asked to talk about their family life and experiences growing up, their school experiences, how they got involved in their creative subject and influences on their choice of a creative career.

### 5.2.1 Family and Upbringing

Participants had a varied family and cultural background. Jennifer, Harry and Thomas were born outside of the United Kingdom, and their cultural backgrounds appear to have played a part in how their social identities and approaches to creativity have developed. Harry moved to the UK as a young boy but still maintains his original nationality, stating:

*'I could have got a British passport, but I feel wedded to the idea that that's where I was born (. . .) That is part of my identity as well.'*

Thomas came to the UK in his early twenties, but speaks of his early years as being like an army of education, enduring a harsh educational regimentation, which he believes means that his

*'pain scale is much broader. It's like I can survive in a harsher environment, I think, as a result of that.'*

Jennifer didn't move to the UK until her late twenties to escape a difficult political regime, one where her political views meant she was under constant surveillance.

Their cultural backgrounds appear to have had a strong impact on their social identity as well as their values and ethics in work. Harry highlights that, in his creative work, he tries to find ways to voice his sense of dual nationality, whilst Thomas and Jennifer both highlighted aspects of their work ethic influenced by their childhood experiences.

Family influence has also been observed in some participants' choice of career. For example, Annabel comes from a middle-class family with both parents working in the arts and demonstrates a sense of inherited creativity.

Peter's father was a sound engineer and it was his influence which encouraged Peter to ultimately become one too. As Peter said,

*'I was probably about ten before I realised that equipment (. . .) wasn't just a bare piece of equipment that you were told not to stick your fingers in because it would kill you, kind of thing like that.'*

And Jane's mother was a teacher and, from a young age, she viewed teaching as part of her career as a dance artist and it was her mother who advised her to defer her planned studies in order to complete her dance teacher's qualifications.

Interestingly, Harry, George and Thomas all spoke about how their career choices went against their parents' wishes. Harry believed his mother wanted him to study classical music, but through the influence of a music tutor he fell in love with the freedom of jazz and when he turned 16 said,

*'I think I'm old enough to choose what I'll be playing now'*

so switched his classes from classical to jazz. Thomas spoke about how his father wanted his children to be

*'lawyers and prosecutors, which none of us have become (. . .) we chose the more non-related jobs specifically for that reason I think'.*

Andrew's upbringing was dominated by caring for his ill mother whilst his father was away on business. This naturally impacted heavily on his schooling:

*'Yes. I was very self-sufficient. I grew up really quickly, I never went to school (. . .) Yes, so we grew up really fast. There were a lot of good things about that. But I do feel like I missed out on my teenage years'.*

So there were apparent family influences which impacted on their choice of a performing arts career.

### 5.2.2 Class and Politics

The majority of participants described themselves as middle-class, for example Susan highlighting a comfortable rural upper middle-class upbringing as

*'My father wanted us to have a rural Swallows and Amazon type childhood.'*

This contrasts with white-collar family backgrounds identified by Ian, Irving and Andrew, but it is George and Dennis who highlight the impact of societal class structures as they speak of the importance of a working-class background to their social identities and their work experiences. Dennis speaks of his local community as one with a

*'lot of real kind of cultural roots; I mean deeply left-wing. My dad's family were communists so I kind of grew up in a semi-communist background really'.*

He notes that this is a real impact on social identity in the arts, believing that for actors,

*'that term 'resting', resting is for rich people. If you're working-class or middle-class you're unemployed and it's as simple as that'.*

He also recognised that his class was potentially limiting, saying about an early opportunity that the

*'people that were also with me, they were Oxbridge people and I kind of knew I had very little chance really if I was truthful'.*

George is also open about his working-class background but at the same times believes he does not fit with his family:

*'I guess it's just something in me that I've never (. . .) I don't know. I suppose I'm quite different. I'm quite different from all my cousins and that. They do other things. I'm very, very different'.*

He spoke about how he was encouraged



*'to go into the working-class normal job thing'*

and that he did not consider a career as an actor because

*'coming from my kind of background, it's not something you think about as a career, and neither is university, to be quite honest.'*

And for George, that sense of otherness or a lack of fit in his social identity has followed him throughout his career, from being the only working-class student at drama school to working within a department staffed with what he views as middle-class lecturers. As he says,

*'that's what I've struggled against all my career, the institutionalisation of the middle-class.'*

He also appears to struggle with the demands placed on him by management and says,

*'operating in a very middle-class environment when you don't have the middle-class tools at your disposal makes for a rocky road sometimes, hence my difficulties.'*

Both George and Dennis have taken different approaches to how they utilised their working-class identity in their careers, with George highlighting it in order to get work as an actor, though later finding it working against him, and in contrast Dennis playing it down. However, George found it to have a continued salience in his identification as an actor and sees this as a constant point of otherness in his social identities.

Within some participants, a sense of politics can be observed as a defining strand of their social identities. For example, Jennifer grew up in a politically controlled country where people who expressed opinions that went against the central tenet were put under government surveillance. The impact was that she became an avowed Marxist and expressed her political views through her theatre work. On moving to the UK and entering higher education, she used her political views to, in her terms, 'radicalise' approaches to performance. She has also based her PhD on Marxist philosophies and uses this in her

approach to pedagogy. Her ongoing social identities and approach to work have been fed by these political ideologies.

### 5.2.3 Education

There were limited narratives about the impact of school on participants' career choices, however several participants spoke of struggles at school. For some, doing arts activities became an escape or distraction from their difficulties with studying. Ian spoke about how he failed at traditional school subjects, and it was only doing extra-curricular activities in the drama society that he felt he found his place. Others, such as George and Irving, highlighted they had no access to arts subjects at school, so their experiences came from other social groups external to school. Jane too spoke of how her early experiences at her local dance school were important to her identity, as

*'those teachers who were very thorough and rigorous but also allowed us to really understand the value of community practice and the importance of everyone having the right to dance ( . . . ) they were really influential for me actually, for my identity growing up.'*

Participants were asked about experiences at university or drama school and how they felt this prepared them for a professional career. Only one of the participants had not studied their subject in some form at a college or university. Eight of the participants undertook undergraduate degrees or performing arts diplomas as mature students. Annabel, Jane, Jennifer and Susan all expressed memories of being the mature student who had life experience under their belt and how it made them feel separate from the other students. They all believed this meant their engagement with the programme was different in that they felt they had a distinctive desire to learn. For Jennifer, going back to do a BA, highlighted the importance to her of life-long learning and she feels it has impacted on her social identity as an academic:

*'as long as you play with the dialectic of student and teacher, and you put yourself in that situation, you never get a superiority complex because we are always learning.'*

For Jane too, her sense of otherness was a highlight during her dance degree:

*'I was only three years older than the people who had just left school so I didn't really feel like a mature student, but I remember arriving and thinking, but I've had three years of teaching experience alongside doing this BTEC and this wealth of performance (. . .) so I already felt like, oh I've started to understand the diversity of the ecology in dance more so than some of my peers, who were 18 and had just finished their A Levels at school and didn't have that experience.'*

Annabel spoke about the impact of her dance training on her as a professional saying,

*'I had danced ever since I was young, but what my training offered was the opportunity to explore creativity, to move away just from the technical focus but to understand how the body expresses itself and emotions. It gave me the confidence to focus my creative work around the body, emotions and sense.'*

Irving spoke of his experiences on a newly established drama course saying,

*'it was kind of an older cohort (. . .) so everybody was quite entrepreneurial in terms of spirit (. . .) and we were allowed to do any projects we wanted.'*

This, he believes, gave him confidence in dealing with the precarious nature of the work market and he has consistently approached his work with an entrepreneurial view, getting on and making his own work when he didn't have a job and trying new forms of work, for example, moving into commercial training, when his other work dried up. He believes that this entrepreneurial approach was a key part of his social identity as an actor and director.

Andrew made a deliberate move to study acting after previously working as a professional actor. He spoke of a critical incident when he realised that he did not possess the technical skills to work on large stages and the impact on his

confidence and belief in himself. So he returned to drama school to develop these skills. He explained,

*'it was scary, leaving and going back into training. But I'm really glad I did it. Because it just kind of validates you, you know. It just validates what you're doing. One of the first things actors ask whenever you're on a meet and greet is, 'Oh, and where did you train?''*

Most participants highlighted a positive experience in their studies, except for George who appeared as an outlier. He said that,

*'There's a real disjunction you know, a real class of things. I did not fit into drama school at all. Drama school is all very much about breaking you down into nothing and then building you up into very similar actors. Coming from where I came from and my background, I was probably subconsciously incredibly resistant to being broken down, because I would never have survived school with the bullying and the violence that went on and the poverty.'*

Here, George highlighted his lack of fit due to his social class and spoke of how much he hated his experience. But he still demonstrated a level of self-esteem that indicated a strong salience in his social identity as an actor, stating,

*'I was never considered good at drama school, but I always knew I was quite good. I was quite independent. I knew I was different from everybody else.'*

So generally the school experience was not viewed by participants to be key to developing their social identity as a performing arts professional but their experience at university or drama school was considered more influential, whether as a positive or negative experience.

### 5.3 Social Identity in the Performing Arts

In order to explore how participants viewed themselves in the performing arts, narrative prompts used included asking participants to talk about specific

moments in their career which they felt impacted on their social identity. Participants were also asked about what it meant to them to work as a creative in the performing arts and whether they saw this as a career or vocation.

### 5.3.1 Participants' own views of their performing arts social identity

All participants undertook a portfolio career which is common in the performing arts, working freelance and balancing a range of roles which might include their arts roles alongside short-term teaching, community work, administration and non-arts work. But it is the freelance performing arts role which can be seen as the basis of their social identity. The majority of participants spoke about their performing arts career as a vocation. As Ian said,

*'it was what kept my heart beating (. . .) I just felt alive whenever I got the chance to perform. It sounds stupid probably but acting was the only way I found my voice.'*

Jane also sees her role as a dance artist as a vocation as did Andrew about being an actor,

*'A vocation (. . .) because as I said earlier, you don't get better and better parts as you get older, with getting more experience. It is a calling.'*

And for those who did mix teaching and performing arts, it was the arts identity that was seen as the primary social identity. Harry viewed it that he was,

*'a musician, teaching in my 30s, or 20s and 30s, actually. I saw myself as a practical musician, and it was vocationally-based teaching.'*

And Peter similarly felt that,

*'for a long time I was very much, 'I'm a sound engineer and I teach a bit'. And that was very important for a lot of years, was that I wasn't a teacher and I wasn't a lecturer. I'm a practitioner'.*

The majority of participants spoke of their performing arts career as a vocation but there was also a strong focus on role identification, such as being an actor,

rather than needing to be creative. Social identity appeared to be based on being a musician, an actor, a director or a dance artist rather than a creative individual, though an underlying sense of creativity came through with some participants speaking about specific career decisions. For example, Irving spoke of himself as an actor and director even though he also undertook teaching and corporate work, and Ian and George very clearly saw themselves as actors, reinforcing the primary social identity.

Networks were shown to have an impact on participants' social identity in a number of ways. Changing location and therefore shifting from local networks was a defining move for several participants including George, Irving, Dennis and Andrew. George moved out of London when he secured an ongoing role in a television programme and for him,

*'I really needed the money. It was really nice to have steady income (. . .) when I moved back to (XXX)(. . .) it was just buggered, your whole career'.*

Dennis told of taking an offer for a job elsewhere as he felt his career would not progress where he was, and Andrew spoke about moving for his career saying,

*'All my work was taking me to Scotland, or to Manchester or Oxford, or anywhere but London (. . .) actually I worked in London very little.'*

In contrast, Jane highlighted that she chose not to move,

*'because I felt that there was more work there. I felt that I'd made these connections (. . .) and I felt quite clear that if I went back to (xxx) I could probably self-motivate and make stuff, but I would be drawing on the networks that were like three years old for me, rather than drawing on the things that I saw myself doing now.'*

So there was an underlying understanding of the importance of social networks both in relation to work but also to who they were as a creative practitioner.

### 5.3.2 Potential impacts on Performing Arts Social Identity

All participants highlighted some key moments in their performing arts careers as part of their narratives which they appeared to use to validate their social identity in the arts.

Dennis joined a national company which cemented for him that he was a director and, whilst the experience did not live up to expectations, it provided a stepping-stone to new opportunities. Ian spoke of getting his first mainstream repertory role as the point he felt he could say he was an actor,

*'it was like (. . .) all that time at drama school I had this young idealistic view that I could be great, and then very soon after leaving I got that role (. . .) I thought this was it, I had made it.'*

In contrast, Peter and Jane both felt that working with specific people were the impacts that helped embed their social identities. For Jane, it was finding two collaborators who allowed her to explore work she was interested in, whilst for Peter, working with a specific individual who had chart success meant,

*'We ended up working with him and through him (. . .) You can kind of trace that link of him, we worked with this person, and it's that thing that you do a good job, you become recommended (. . .) and you realise that people across the sector suddenly respect what you do.'*

These experiences highlight the importance of social interaction in the development of their arts social identity whether through large organisations or with individuals. However, through the narratives there were some moments which shaped participants' careers and social identities that were potentially not as positive.

George spoke of how he chose to take on a specific theatre role rather than take a lead role in a major television programme:

*'I started reading it and it just blew me away. I'm not the kind of actor who speaks in these hyperbolic terms, but honestly, it was unlike anything I'd ever seen before and I absolutely loved it. It was just a*

*part of me that absolutely got it, instinctually, intellectually, psychologically, emotionally.'*

He knew that potentially this role would give less publicity and career opportunities, but his desire to undertake the role was stronger than his desire to be successful on television due to the opportunity to extend his creativity. Harry also speaks about when he performed work in London and there was,

*'a (xxx) review written about me, which was very glowing, I have to say. What was difficult, I mean, it was the crest of a wave, if you like, and it was where I wanted to be, but, at the same time, I'd committed to moving to America. It put the brakes on my UK career, actually, in hindsight, well not in hindsight, I knew at the time. What I should have done was maximise on that and started touring the project. I think things could have come from that, maybe. They certainly looked like they would have.'*

Like George, he made a conscious decision which meant that his performing career did not develop to the level it might have done. For both, they made a decision to stay in their current in-group rather than join a potentially higher status out-group, as a television star or a well-known musician. For George, it was presented as the opportunity to strengthen his own personal creative identity whilst for Harry, it was to try and stabilise his personal life.

There is a strand in the narratives about participants choosing to avoid commercially-focused mainstream work and instead work in creative areas which provided more intellectual or creative stimulation or greater validation of their own social identity. For example, Annabel was offered opportunities to dance for a range of companies, but she felt constrained by the creative approaches of other choreographers, so she started to produce her own work and collaborate with dancers who wanted to extend their creative reach:

*'We were all seeking something new I think. It was a time when, if you went overseas there was incredible work that touched on new possibilities, but here in the UK we felt constrained and I especially*



*wanted to be able to creatively break down some of these traditions.'*

Thomas also reflected on how he explored different opportunities when he stopped seeking work only in high-end theatre and opera. Working on new art forms meant,

*'those underground movements, like performance art and new music have small budgets, but they have great ideas. It was an amazing opportunity for me to exercise my intellectual capacities within the limited resources. It was a completely different context.'*

As with Annabel, he found that this new environment enabled him to engage with different artists and try new ideas thereby extending his creative exploration. For both, their sense of a creative social identity became the driving force behind career decisions. In a different way, Irving and Susan also found their careers most interesting when working away from mainstream theatre. Susan particularly highlighted her experience with a working-class co-operative touring company as being key to her future career choices:

*'It was interesting because we all shared in the decision making about why we were going to do a show, who was going to write it, where we were going to do it, how we were doing it, and what we wanted to say to an audience. It just didn't all happen between the director and the writer. It happened between all of us.'*

She found this experience offered her greater control in her work and the same is true with Irving who moved away from drama into corporate work:

*'the corporate side of things was great, because (. . .) I was facilitating stuff. They trusted me to facilitate stuff, and I was doing it.'*

So participants demonstrated conscious decision-making in their career choices which impacted on their social identity.

### 5.3.3 Performing Arts Social Identity and Self-Esteem

Participants' self-esteem, as shown through concepts of success and failure in their performing arts careers, has been identified as a potential theme and one which impacts on their social identity. Harry noted it is difficult to measure success in a music career:

*'I think what's difficult in a self-employed or autodidactic-based career, and it goes back to me saying that I never felt ready, is that it's very difficult to measure yourself. You are your own worst critic and you can't really trust the press. You can't trust the audience either because they're not necessarily that clued up. You can't trust other musicians because they're in competition with you, so to get a real measure of where you're at is difficult.'*

Irving measured his success by the fact he,

*'never applied for any full-time, proper job. I'd always got my work through word of mouth from the last gig I'd done and recommendations. That's how I got every single thing.'*

Whilst this highlights the importance of social networking, it also demonstrates a sense of pride in Irving that his work was good enough to be recommended to others, a self-affirmation of his social identity as an actor. Success was hard to justify financially which meant some participants found their social identity challenged. As Dennis highlighted,

*'I was hardly ever out of work, but I think the most I ever made in my life was about £21,000, £22,000 a year which if you put that on kind of another scale that kind of represents a lot of other people working. It's a pretty paltry wage.'*

Annabel was the participant who appeared to feel most creatively successful in her career. She spoke of allowing her creative passion to drive her career and that she had headed up companies which were successful, which demonstrated a self-confidence in her artistic approach and a self-belief that she could achieve. This confidence was matched by Jennifer and Thomas and the key factor that links these together is a sense of having control over

creating their own work. Both Annabel and Jennifer had set up their own companies and ran them as Artistic Directors whilst Thomas found control when he moved from working in theatre to seeing himself as an artist and moving out of the traditional structures of theatre companies. This varies from other participants, for example those who work as actors, where they are undertaking work that is creatively driven by a company or a director.

For the majority of participants, they felt that their performing arts careers had been relatively successful, given the precarious nature of the industry, but two participants, George and Ian, identified a deep feeling of failure at not being able to sustain a career in the arts. As George said, when he gave up acting to return to study at university, he did it,

*'to prove to everybody else as well that I could do it and not feel like a failure. Because I felt like a failure giving up acting. I felt like a failure, and I guess that's why it's still hard because I feel like a failure. I feel like I've failed at something I loved.'*

Ian also highlighted a feeling of failure. In his case it was measured against the success of those in his cohort at drama school saying,

*'It was a good year, and I thought I was as good as any of them, but I failed to make it like many of them did. And, to be honest, it haunted me as I got older.'*

However, he did also speak about a reunion at which those actors he viewed as successful were saying that they were jealous of him in his current academic role, so reversing his perception of the prototypical group member. But he still spoke of giving up lecturing if he was offered the perfect screen role, indicating personal tensions in the salience of his social identities.

George's analogy of giving up acting was that,

*'You compartmentalise it. You cut it off. It's an amputation, and you cut it off. It's like an infected wound. You cut it off, and you're left with a scar. That's how it is.'*

This indicates a much more abrupt severing of his ties with his previous 'in-group' and hints at an internal social identity struggle that still continues.

#### 5.4 Participants' Academic Social Identity

The study continued the exploration of participants' narratives by addressing their current academic social identity. It was important to try and understand how they perceived themselves in order to be able to explore the impacts of career transition. This will be explored further in the next section which focuses on decisions for participants to move into higher education, their identity and their place in their team and department.

##### 5.4.1 Drivers for seeking transition to higher education

For all participants, teaching in some form was part of a portfolio career for several years. However, there appear to be a range of decisions to seek work more permanently in higher education which are important to explore in terms of their expectations of being an academic. In this chapter, the participants' narratives are added to by the responses of the senior leaders.

##### 5.4.2 Personal Reasons and Stability

Participants were asked about their reasons for considering the transition from performing arts to higher education. These personal reasons for making the transition to permanent roles in academia were identified from the narratives and three possible patterns were detected – desire for stability, work drying up and career development.

A large group of participants made the move because they sought financial stability in order to raise a family, or because personal circumstances meant that they had moved location and needed work. For example, Irving moving out of London became a key moment in the decision to seek permanent work in higher education:

*'So we made the move (. . .) and it was fine for that first year (. . .)  
Then, as happens with these things, the political landscape at (xxx)  
changed, and suddenly, I didn't have any work.'*

Peter too found that a geographic relocation meant that he reviewed his career options, whilst for Ian, it was the need for financial stability. Whilst he was

getting small acting roles, the work was not enough to sustain a family. As he said,

*‘really it was my last chance to try and do something that was still related to acting. When I went for the interview here, I was genuinely at the point of giving everything up and getting a job in an office. You can’t try and bring up a family as a jobbing actor.’*

This sense of stability was also important for Dennis, Irving and Annabel who wanted to start or had young families. However, Denis also noted that he was fed up with professional theatre as,

*‘you get two or three slots wrong and directing becomes a slog. So much agenda, power games, personality traits, and I was getting pretty kind of tired of it really, to the point where the group was almost becoming somewhere else.’*

There was an apparent importance in making a voluntary decision to shift careers in terms of how participants viewed themselves as Irving noted,

*‘I was always fearful of being one of those people that felt they couldn’t do it professionally and was slightly angry with students for the rest of their teaching career (. . .) I kept saying if I ever do it, I want to do it with my eyes wide open, and it’s a choice that I want to do’.*

Three participants spoke of their work drying up, but only two participants, Ian and George, saw this as a sense of ‘failure’ and used it as a catalyst for change. George highlighted how his choice to take a role in a television series not based in London ended his acting career, as work dried up after he left the series. He says,

*‘it’s kind of strange, because I was never part of the local scene. And then being out of the London scene, such as it is, for quite a bit of time that suffers as well.’*

The impact of work drying up was strong as both had a very clear social identity as an actor. When they felt as though they had failed in their vocation,

they experienced personal self-doubt about their abilities. For George this led him to return to study in the hope of finding a new career, though at that stage he did not aspire to an academic career. For Ian, it led him to re-evaluate his career path. In response to Irving's insights above on needing to make a positive choice for a career change, it is noticeable that George does express a real frustration with students saying,

*'some are just lazy fuckers, that's why they've got bad exam results. They're unfocused (. . .) So you're dealing with that as well, which is the thing that drives me crazy'.*

This sense of frustration can be linked to his own perceived failure as an actor, a career he worked very hard to get into. Ian does not have the same negative view but is more balanced in how he views himself saying,

*'I did okay but it wasn't enough. I saw others off making multi-million dollar movies but I just wasn't making the break into that world. So I had to be realistic.'*

David, Executive Dean, added his thoughts to this believing, from his experience employing creative arts staff, that many of them joined as they wanted to be part of a 'community', which was different from working in the transitory creative industries, and where people feel they are always on show and having to network. This was supported by Andrew who spoke of disillusionment with the 'capriciousness' of the industry and how he got fed up,

*'seeing all my friends doing the same thing, meeting them in the (xxx) bar, whenever they're speaking to you, but actually they're not speaking to you because they're looking around to see who else is in the (xxx) bar, just in case they give them a job. You know, things like that. I didn't want to be that kind of actor. I didn't want to do that. So I thought I'll do something parallel. Something that I'm interested in but something that is not completely a million miles from acting.'*

One common theme was the desire to take on a career which allowed them to retain part of their performing arts social identity. It also provided a sense

of a consistent journey in their career as they could utilise their existing skills and experiences in a new environment.

#### 5.4.3 Critical Events

Three participants identified critical events which pushed them to change career. Andrew, who was balancing a portfolio career, was literally put on the spot by his agent who made him decide during a telephone call where he wanted to take his career. There was recognition by someone else that Andrew was struggling to find an appropriate balance and needed to commit himself to one career choice. When he responded that he was a teacher, he felt,

*'this huge weight off my shoulders, that I didn't need to justify myself as just an actor anymore'.*

For Jane, it was undertaking an MA that led her to seek permanent work:

*'I wouldn't have been even interviewed had I not had it, so I definitely went into it knowing that it was partly a means to an end because I felt like I wanted to lecture at that point and also recognising that I did want to write up a bit. I knew that I would need to research as a lecturer and that I felt so under skilled.'*

In contrast, Harry was asked to deliver a new music degree at a higher education institution. Whilst he accepted, he clearly was unsure why he had been asked:

*'I hadn't even been through a university door. I mean, I knew a little bit about what went on in universities, but only really from a practical perspective. I had no idea of the day-to-day running of the thing.'*

He took the job for, as he terms it, 'status':

*'Something like a university asking you to come and do something: you go (. . .) okay well it must be at least at that level then.'*

For both of them, these experiences were self-validating a developing academic social identity and building a positive view of their abilities which

supported their entry into higher education, whilst highlighting that they understood their own limitations.

#### 5.4.4 Career Trajectories

Annabel, Jennifer and Thomas saw their transition as an extension of a natural career trajectory. Jennifer had taught in further education before returning to the arts and Thomas had taught part-time at a variety of institutions. The opportunity for a full-time post in higher education made Jennifer realise she missed working in an educational setting. For Thomas, it was the impact of people in his networks telling him to apply for a job and the fact that he had already commenced a PhD that contributed to his decision. They all viewed academic work as an extension of their creative exploratory approach and understood how, when they entered academia, they could continue to develop this within the framework of an academic role.

This section has highlighted the different personal reasons of participants to transition into academia. The most common theme was seeking some sense of stability which they felt that academia would provide. But the safety of moving to a role where they could utilise their existing knowledge was also key to participants' choices.

### 5.5 Social Identity as an Academic

This section considers how participants currently view themselves within higher education and the influences on their social identity.

#### 5.5.1 Participants' View of their own Identity

The participants' views of themselves in their academic roles varied, based on past experiences, reasons for moving into academia and reasons for being appointed.

Jennifer and Annabel view their practice and their academic role holistically combined, using the term 'pracademic'. Thomas' view is similar, but calling himself a teaching artist, saying,

*'I can write research papers and make presentations, but then that's always only to defend my craft (. . .) so in a sense, teaching has become my main job, but then the rationale behind it is art.'*



In contrast, George sees himself as a 'pure academic' having left behind his acting career and focuses on a social identity as a researcher. Peter, Jane and Harry talk of themselves as academics but with a less holistic identity. In Harry's case he says he,

*'feels like a musician when I am playing and I feel like an academic when I'm academicking, but the nice thing is there is crossover.'*

And Peter says,

*'I don't think at this point I'm your typical academic, because for me it's still about practice, but I understand I'm a practising academic. And I wouldn't say at this point you know (. . .) I do describe myself as an academic.'*

The turning point for both was achieving their PhDs. As Peter says,

*'And that is the point that I became an academic because at that point I understood what the difference was and I understood how what I'd done contributed to research and how I'd demonstrated that, yes? And how I was able to make that case, how I was able to show that what other people had done was extended by my work because I was forced at that point to make explicit what the questions were, and to show how what I'd done made that unique contribution to knowledge. So that point was that transition there.'*

Jane in comparison says,

*'Yes I definitely feel a huge shift in my identity since being here, which is that I am now a lecturer, whereas before I would have said I work as a lecturer but I'm also a performer and a community artist and it's hard to describe what I do. My parents are thrilled because they can tell people what I do now; it's real easy them. They feel like they get it now.'*

This links her academic social identity and role to a sense of status within her other social groupings, which was the only time a participant specifically mentioned this.

But several participants do not think of themselves as academics; and this questions how they define that social group and their own social identity. Irving defined his social identity as role-based saying,

*'I don't think I am an academic right now. Because for me when you say academia it means research. It means that side of things. I'm Programme Leader of the acting course at (xxx) University.'*

Susan also said,

*'No, I'm not an academic. You've got to remember that I went to Oxford and was taught History by very serious historians. In my mind, that was an academic (. . .) if I'm feeling particularly cynical, I'm a learning administrator, I think. Yes, what we do? We manage people's learning. We dispense education as a product, a product manager.'*

For Dennis, his social identity is,

*'fundamentally (. . .) a theatre director and acting tutor and that's what I do.'*

And for Andrew he considers himself,

*'as an artist and an actor and a director and an educator'.*

This is also similar for Ian who sees himself as an acting tutor. There is a clear distinction in the minds of several participants between two elements they view as important to being an academic. First there is the teaching and associated administration and then there is research. For these six participants, the idea of the fully-rounded academic, undertaking academic research, is something they believe they have not yet engaged with. But they see the institutional demands on them starting to challenge their existing social identities which appears to be creating tension and adding to pressures on them in their roles.

The process of achieving qualifications such as a PgCert in Learning and Teaching, and subsequently gaining Fellowship of the HEA, appears to strengthen their social identities but gaining a PhD or doing research is still

seen as a barrier to accessing the perceived out-group of being 'academic'. There are examples of social mobility in the narratives, such as Harry and Peter, where gaining a PhD has changed their social identity, as Peter outlined,

*'Well I didn't see that coming I'm actually an academic. But a practising one and someone proud of the fact that he still works with industry and to a degree in an industry. But I can no longer say I'm a practising sound engineer because most of my time is spent as a researcher'.*

Participants discussed how they also presented representations of themselves, particularly through pretending to know what they were doing in meetings or amongst colleagues, when they felt they were in situations where they did not feel safe to express their lack of knowledge. For example, Susan recognised her role as a teacher, but she strengthened her approach through seeing it as performing, and approached everything,

*'in the same way as I would working on a theatre show'.*

So participants highlighted a potential range of social identities within higher education which will be explored in the next chapter.

### 5.5.2 Social Identity and Values and Beliefs

The narrative interviews did not explicitly prompt the participants about their personal values and beliefs, though there were a number of insights thrown up relating to their social identity.

Jennifer spoke about how she felt some practices in education were unethical. She spoke of lecturing staff who did not engage with what she perceived as a full academic role as,

*'like failed artists. You come there and you don't want to invest in the pedagogy of making them a rounded artist (. . .) How is this ethical?'*

She also discussed a specific situation where she was asked to establish a new course which she felt did not offer real employability opportunities for students and how, in this instance, she stood by her values:

*'It's exploitation, because there's no work. So, I don't know why people do it. It's low-level (. . .) so, I resigned without another job. I was in a struggle because I was so much pressured to start it and I just said no.'*

Similarly, Thomas found himself frustrated with perceived limitations of teaching within a programme that, in his opinion, failed to deliver a fully-rounded education:

*'I think that's quite dangerous particularly when we can't guarantee their job prospects and say everybody will be in jobs (. . .) I'm thinking it's a very unstable industry. That's why people argue about the multitasking skills. But then we are just producing more and more (. . .) that doesn't actually guarantee any exit point or any expansion of it.'*

Susan too picked up on the theme of developing programmes which do not add value to students' education saying,

*'I'm bored with (xxx) as you picked up because I don't really think that anything I tell them has any impact on them that's useful to them so why bother?'*

George also felt that the numbers of students being taught and the overall quality of their programme was damaging:

*'There's an ethical dimension here that comes into play again (. . .) your kind of conscience. It's like you half train these kids and then send them out to be slaughtered. That's what it feels like.'*

So, participants evidenced concerns about institutional decisions and processes which they felt went against their core values in their social identities.

### 5.5.3 Participants' Place within the Academic Team and Department

A proportion of the participants work within arts-focused universities or within a specific arts school, so there was a limited response to feeling that their subjects were devalued. However, Jennifer, speaking about her earlier experience at an FE College said,

*'Every time they had an academic module the communication lecturers would teach them not us which I thought was very weird. So I said 'Why can't I teach?' (. . .) they let me teach it. I was the only one in the department who would teach any of the academic stuff. The others were directing or teaching dance or movement or whatever which I found very weird.'*

This highlighted how performing arts staff were not considered academic by other social groups in the institution and she noted this same divide within her current institution:

*'What's also really interesting is because we merge with social sciences they think we're Mickey Mouse but they don't think I'm Mickey Mouse because they're quite scared of me. It's because I deal with this hardcore Marxist stuff which I tell you I slaved over.'*

So her reflections point to a devaluing of arts subjects by some groups in the institution, being seen as a 'practical' subject without academic basis, which impacts on the perceived status of those teaching, and might be viewed as examples of social competition. Even within arts-focused departments there were challenges as to how some courses were viewed. Harry noted that there was a friction in the department when he started which has taken years to dissolve. But the majority of participants, especially those within the arts-based universities, felt that they had joined supportive teams which reinforced their social identity. However, there were comments noted about differentiation, particularly that perceived between those seen to be just teaching practice as opposed to those doing research-based teaching.

Annabel speaks about how colleagues came into academia through a more traditional PhD route and how their approach to practice is different from hers:

*'They tend to come at a piece of work from theory whereas I come at it from an idea, from the creative perspective. Nothing wrong with that but they don't understand my approach.'*

However, whilst she saw different practices amongst staff, Annabel also saw her social identity closely linked to her institution as she had been there for 20 years, and felt that,

*'it is a key part of who I am now, as a practitioner, as an academic'.*

Other participants felt closely involved in their programme or subject team which helped form their social identity, but three appeared to be at odds with either their subject team or the institution. Thomas noted the difference between those in his department who had a pure academic background and those who came through a practice route:

*'I see lots of lecturers who have no experience in the actual field; they've just read some BA, MA, PhD, and they're entering into it (. . .) it is very tough when they need to rely on secondary sources all the time when we're talking about it as a very insightful and passive dimension of the creative process.'*

Thomas also noted that,

*'because my background mixes performing arts and visual arts and the rest of the team purely come from a practical theatre background, when I came for this job they just thought, 'Oh my gosh, some research guy came in (. . .) they are rejecting because someone who has some academic career is coming in the job'.'*

So he has voiced a challenging environment where his social identity sits between those from a practice background and those from an academic background, with a foot in each camp but not part of either. Jennifer was more dismissive of the staff team she joined, saying,

*'There were a lot of practitioners but they weren't practitioners like me. They were really practitioners who devalued any kind of academia. There were a lot of musicians who were posturing 'I'm a*

*rock star,' and all that. 'I'm the guru.' It was just horrible. I was just thinking I'm very uncomfortable with this.'*

George was also dismissive about others in his team and institution:

*'Because I can produce good research. There are other actors who can teach actors absolutely, but they cannot produce research and that's what universities are wanting as you know. They would be very hard pushed to find any other job in higher education (. . .) I'm the first of them that's come in with a PhD.'*

All three appear to find their social identity challenged in their current work environment and are seeking ways to align themselves to social groups where they feel they fit. David, Executive Dean, spoke about the challenges of getting new staff to work as part of a broader programme team and even more so as part of a department. He felt that they often engaged with the most local team who might give advice on learning and teaching, but they had a gap in their knowledge about the wider role and the key issues in the university and externally. Therefore, new staff were not being given a clear opportunity to learn about non-context-specific issues and the wider functioning of an institution. He believed this led to 'echo chambers' in terms of how new staff engaged in their role.

This study attempted to highlight how participants viewed their academic social identity. The study found that participants chose academia as a career for stability but also because the role was linked to their existing social identity. However, a range of social identifications in academia were expressed by participants and these will be investigated further in the next section which explores the transition process.

**5.6. Influence of the Transition Process on Participants' Social Identity**  
This section explores the potential influences of the career transition process on participants, including formal and informal socialisation processes and perceived demands placed on them by their institution.

### 5.6.1 Socialisation and Induction

Participants were asked to outline their initial socialisation processes, including formal induction and mentoring. The processes of socialisation, and specifically induction processes, were highlighted as being poor in most institutions and most participants expressed a strong view that they taught themselves how to go about their role. As Susan said,

*'I just decided that if I was going to be a full-time teacher I was actually going to learn to be a good one. So I have taught myself. I now understand about how to build a course, how to validate one, how to do modularity, blah-di-blah-di-blah. It's not my cup of tea, but I wasn't going to be beaten by it. Now, I can do it.'*

Harry also stated that,

*'It was absolutely awful because I didn't know what I was doing, nor was I given any kind of training into what I was supposed to be doing. So I taught myself and I made it a point to talk to people and say What is it you do? How are you doing it? and Why are you doing it that way? so slowly I got versed in the ways of quality and pedagogy.'*

This stresses the importance of the entrepreneurial identity which many participants demonstrated in the performing arts, and which participants relied on to find their way around academic structures and processes. It was only Jane who felt that her,

*'university does the general staff inductions and they also do the academic staff inductions which were very useful. I remember them being really useful actually, much more useful than other ones I'd been to at other institutions because of the nature of us being a very small university.'*

She also spoke about being,

*'given a coffee buddy who for me would be another academic who you can supposedly go for coffee with and ask questions of. They're*



*not in your course team so they are somebody you can ask open questions of and not feel silly asking things. My coffee buddy due to personal reasons wasn't really available to me.'*

So she noted reasonable induction processes and the potential support available but highlighted that in reality she did not get that support. Other participants highlighted the fact that they had no induction to the institution or the processes. George said that he experienced,

*'No induction. No induction. Zero induction (. . .) my mentor knows even less about it than I do. It's weird because I feel that I'm one of the senior members of the team though I've just started. I feel this is a bit ridiculous to be honest. I would have liked a lot of training. I would have liked some mentoring, some nurturing and some fucking understanding from where I'm coming from.'*

Here the feeling that he had more knowledge than people employed for a long time was a real impact on his social identity and how he viewed himself in relation to his immediate team, as he perceived he had a higher status.

The sense of wanting support was important to several participants as, even though they had previous teaching experience, they had 'never had to get involved in the politics and stuff' so needed to develop greater understanding of the culture and processes in the institution. Lack of induction also lead to a sense of insecurity and imposter syndrome<sup>1</sup> in some participants. For some this passed quickly, for example by focusing on their specific subject knowledge, as Andrew noted,

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<sup>1</sup> Impostor syndrome is a psychological idea about people who feel that they have only succeeded due to luck, and not because of talent or qualification, believe that they will one day someone will highlight their inadequacies. It was first identified in 1978 by psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes. They initially theorized that only women were affected by impostor syndrome, but this theory has now been extended more broadly.

*'I felt like a charlatan maybe for about the first week and after that I thought no, I do know (. . .) I know an awful lot about this acting.'*

Participants identified that they were required to use their entrepreneurial spirit to find out how things worked. They would seek out 'friendly' academics who could advise them on processes to follow or how to deal with situations. Those they would seek out were perceived to be good at the aspect of the role they were struggling with, demonstrating prototypicality in the role. As Irving said,

*'incredibly encouraging people and really good people to call (. . .) and I still do to this day and go, (xxx), what's going on? I don't know what's going on. Do you know what's going on? And feeling that ability to be open about that.'*

That informal support was perceived to be vital for participants to find their way around institutional structures and processes. But there was also a reluctance to openly admit that they didn't know something. A number of participants spoke about assumptions that were made about their knowledge when they joined the institution. For example, Jane highlighted,

*'There is an awful lot of assumptions I think not just here but everywhere in terms of lecturing that you have an understanding of the teaching practice and how to work with young people and what behaviour is encouraged in terms of active discussion and debate and challenging views and then what actually becomes a behavioural issue. It's such a slippery area. I think that has been quite hard to learn along the way.'*

And Andrew also said that,

*'people assume that because you've got that (. . .) the range of professional experience (. . .) then you also know how to do structures and how to do organisation and how to do strategy and how to do (. . .) how to chair a meeting for example.'*

This was reiterated by Irving who spoke about the experience of his first exam board where everyone appeared to assume he knew the process, and

highlights social group expectations of knowledge and behaviours of group members. It is noted that several participants highlighted how they now took the role of socialisation of new staff members very seriously. Jane said that,

*'since being here I am two other members of staff's coffee buddy and I have made a real point of making sure that I see them because I remember that feeling of my coffee buddy wasn't really around (. . .) I have been trying to be that support for other people.'*

And Dennis, Andrew and Harry all spoke about making the extra effort to ensure new or visiting staff understood their role, knew what processes to follow and generally felt supported. So the lack of supportive process for their transition has heightened their feeling of responsibility for new staff coming in, which in turn emphasises group prototypicality.

Participants' views were backed up by those of senior managers. Lucy spoke about how formal inductions offered little added value and that local department inductions were generally poor. David too highlighted how induction processes were very ad-hoc and that, in all his experiences, there had never been anything approaching a process. This led to difficulties as, in his view, if new colleagues are not supported in the first six months, it's too late as 'they have put the blinkers on then'. Both Lucy and David also noted that poor support and induction, plus piling on workload, sends a tacit message to new staff that 'we don't really value you'. David highlighted that a significant effort goes into the recruitment process but then new staff are left to sink or swim, with no after-care unless something goes wrong. The message about valuing staff is an important one in relation to social identity categorisation and how participants feel they fit the institutional social groups.

#### 5.6.2 Perceived Pressures placed on Participants by Institution

There was a clear sense in the narratives of feeling under pressure to work to targets, complete significant amounts of administration and, for some, complete qualifications and embark on a research journey. These demands appear to place pressure on academic social identity, particularly for those transitioning from industry and trying to fit a new social group. As Susan expressed it,

*'We dispense education as a product – a product manager. I don't mean that very cynically in that I try and make a product but it is a product and we are taught to think of it as that.'*

All the participants were identified to have had portfolio careers which included some form of teaching prior to joining higher education. For many, because of the precarity of the arts, casual teaching contracts and opportunities to develop projects with students were strong contributors to their financial income. However, self-definition and working practice are not always concurrent, so participants still viewed themselves through their core performing arts social identity, i.e., actor, musician, director.

These teaching experiences allowed them to dip a toe into higher education, which worked as a long-term induction to teaching and identification of which social categories appeared accessible to them. However, it was clear that they had not always understood what was fully involved in a permanent academic role which led to some issues in self-categorisation and accessing new social groups in higher education.

#### 5.6.3 FHEA/ PGCert Learning and Teaching

There were differing views on the value of a PgCert in Learning and Teaching and becoming a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). From a senior management perspective, it was considered valuable to enable staff to understand the broader education environment. David noted that arts staff often needed to understand they were no longer working in a competitive situation and that just because a student project wouldn't win a professional pitch, it doesn't mean that it is not a good educational project. But Lucy did wonder whether too many PgCerts had become focused on the mechanics of teaching rather than the philosophies of it, and so questioned the value of them.

Some participants felt that the experience of undertaking a PgCert affected their teaching ability. For example Dennis, who had previously taught in drama schools, said,

*'there is a kind of arrogance with people who have been in the industry saying why do I need to do this? I mean it also made me aware that there is something absolutely kind of pertinent and right that there is a kind of a science of teaching and it is a craft and a skill.'*

But, whilst understanding the value, it is still seen as something additional to the role and a real time pressure. Jennifer said,

*'So I have to get my senior fellowship, so the minute I submitted a thesis I said, okay, what do I have to do now? So I looked at the app. Oh god 6,000 words. So I'm doing that now and part of that is you have to get your colleague to observe you teach. So here is me fresh out of all this PhD saga. I defended the thesis on Thursday and my colleague was observing me on Monday.'*

This was a common observation amongst participants. Irving also said the PgCert was 'a pain', but that he valued how it helped him understand some of the teaching theory behind his practice. Andrew stated,

*'I put it off and off because it's such an awful lot of work. But I wanted to do it because I wanted to (. . .) because I know nothing about teaching but I thought I did. And actually it was great to do that because it validated a whole load of things that I do anyway, instinctively. I don't know. Yes and I thought yes, I do that and I do that and I understand that teaching style and (. . .) and it just gave me a whole load of validation for my style of teaching.'*

This sense of validation comes through many of the narratives and highlights a role for these types of qualifications in supporting the self-categorisation in academic social groups. There were a couple of participants who really struggled with the thought of doing a PgCert though. Susan has put off doing one as she recognises she is at the end of her career, but she still recognises the pressure to complete one if she wants to remain in higher education as it limits her job opportunities. Annabel has also not undertaken a PgCert but does have Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. As she said,

*'when I started you didn't have to do this and I'm not sure after all these years what value it would add.'*

But it was George who felt most negatively about doing a PgCert, saying it was,

*'Dull, boring. It's a box-ticking exercise. A lot of it is technological and it's really fucking doing my head in, the technology aspect of it.'*

Overall there was agreement from senior managers and staff about the perceived value of doing a PgCert, though concerns were raised about the additional workload and the content of some programmes. Nearly all found it a useful experience which reinforced their place in academic social groupings. It offered a process which enabled them to put academic language and theories to what they already did in practice, validating their practice, strengthening their social identity and reinforcing knowledge and behaviours in academic social groups. It was only George who found it to be a difficult process and who was unable to engage. In the trajectory of George's career transition, he has made a break from his social identity as an actor to a social identity as an academic researcher. The compartmentalisation of this has meant that, whilst he teaches, he views his social identity very much as an academic researcher, so the value to him of a teaching qualification is only the monetary value of a salary increase when he completes it.

#### 5.6.4 PhD and Research

The demands on staff to undertake research or do a PhD is more challenging in terms of participants developing their academic social identities. Participants' early experiences of being 'thrown in' meant that they found teaching and related administration to be the basis of their initial role and based their social identity around this. Some participants spoke about the pressure to do a PhD or recognised that it was one route towards seeing themselves as part of the higher status group of 'academics'. Of the participants, five had completed or were undertaking a PhD whilst another two talked about the future possibility of doing one. For Jennifer,

*'it kind of brought together all my impulses as an artist and all my impulses as an academic. For me it's not just a matter of, I have to because by 2020 we all need a PhD.'*

But for others, a PhD is seen as the next 'necessary evil'. For Irving, he feels that it's,

*'just about jumping in the pool and start swimming. I'll get through it somehow.'*

David highlighted how institutions need to improve support for new staff to understand what research is, particularly practice as research, as it is now an important mechanism for all staff in their careers.

As shown earlier, the achievement of gaining a PhD has impacted on participants and increased their identification with an academic social identity, so there is a perceived value in terms of social mobility and self-esteem to undertake one. Participants who did not yet have a PhD were split between whether to do the qualification or instead to 'dive into' doing some form of research. As David, Executive Dean, noted, research will be an important mechanism in their careers, though senior managers need to reflect on the reasons they initially appointed these staff and consider whether professional practice rather than practice as research is a better fit which would ensure staff feel valued. And Lucy, DVC, noted that getting the skills mix right and not pushing staff down routes that don't fit their experience is important if institutions want to gain the best from a range of staff.

The split between teaching and research appeared to be an important influence on fit and accessibility for participants' social identity in academia. Some participants saw an uneven divide between those who were doing research or practice, including themselves, and those who weren't. George in particular stated,

*'It makes me very resentful. It makes me very resentful especially because they're on a lot more money than me and they get paid 108 hours a year for research that they don't produce. I'm actually producing and I do more than that. I've not been able to do my*

*FHEA because I've been doing all this research, doing a PhD, and they're on more money than me.'*

He demonstrated a real belief that his research was not valued by his team which made him feel excluded even though he felt he was the one member of the team meeting institutional demands. Thomas was also dismissive of other members of his team who did not engage with research stating,

*'the security from getting the high salary to start with and also the research time guaranteed it gives you that opportunity. So I think it's actually nonsense when other lecturers are saying they can't practice. That's our duty. We should lead the industry not simulate the industry within our programme.'*

Some participants though see a different problem in that they were employed because of their professional experience and so were struggling to get their foot on the research ladder. Irving felt that he is not yet ready to engage formally with what he sees as 'academic research'. He said,

*'It's finding stuff that I really want to do then it doesn't feel like work. So the trick part is just going how do I convert that into something that's academic in terms of payback?'*

This highlights a need for organisations to ensure academics understand the broader value of undertaking research. Jane supported this, and Andrew confirmed the increasing pressure,

*'yes, there is a big push because that's where a lot of the money is, that's where a lot of the ratings lie, in your research output.'*

So all participants understood the need for doing research, but those with a practice focus were struggling to find their niche and in some cases were scared that they 'might be found out', again highlighting that their social identity lay with academics who displayed similar practice-based and teaching skills and that 'academics' who did research were seen as a higher status social group in their institutions.



Many of the participants highlighted increasing pressure by their institution to ensure they had Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, undertake a PhD or deliver research outputs. Alongside this, participants outlined other key challenges they found in their role which they felt impacted on their process of social categorisation. These will be explored in the next section.

## 5.7 Key Challenges

This section outlines some of the key challenges that participants felt they met in their academic work which potentially influence their social identities.

### 5.7.1 Student Engagement

One challenging issue identified by several participants was a divergence between participants' sense of professionalism as a creative arts professional and the perceived lack of engagement of some students with their studies. Jane expressed many participants' concerns when she highlighted the challenges of student engagement as an attack on the values of her social identity as a dancer:

*'But the other side of it is we do feel that they prioritise their individuality over just coming to class and being in a dance class sometimes. It is making decisions about how we instil that ethos, drive and desire in our students to not be about their only individual projects and their individual outcomes, but to feel like they want to attend another third year's open workshop because they're interested. We're struggling to get them to be curious and I know that's not just our issue.'*

George also highlighted how his social identity as a professional actor was under threat from what he saw as a lack of passion and engagement:

*'The passion that I still have for it and the way I want to instil my students with this and the way I get pissed off at them when they don't have that passion and are really lazy, I'm like, you're never going to make it.'*

David spoke of the different reactions from new creative arts staff about student engagement. He said most were surprised by students, some positively by how inventive students are, but many negatively by how lethargic they find students to be. Harry also spoke about how he found it difficult being in a world of perceived mistrust:

*'The fact that students have become less and less trusting of our ability, acumen and position I find very difficult actually. On the one hand it feels sometimes as though there's a lack of trust from above, from management (. . .) that everything is being slightly micromanaged and that they want to see evidence of everything.'*

Many participants felt that student engagement with their work was below that which they would expect and several saw this as an attack on their own social identity which, at a time when they felt under threat from institutional demands, meant that they were struggling on several fronts to find the sense of stability they had sought in making the career transition.

#### 5.7.2 Institutional Leadership and Feeling Valued

From a senior management perspective, Lucy and David both recognised the difficulties for staff in what they saw as a period of extreme change. They questioned how institutions support staff to understand the external environment and the challenges facing higher education so as to avoid the 'us and them' mentality of staff and management. They also spoke about how they had seen the initial enthusiasm of staff be quickly followed by disillusionment when they found their experiences to be different from expectations, and the impact this had on how they viewed themselves.

This was supported by participants' narratives. For example, Thomas spoke of the challenges of,

*'the institutional objectives. There are so many meetings and so many forums about internationalisation, research and enterprise and education forums, which are so superficial to a point that they're just expecting people to contribute. They always penalise when we haven't made any progress on the previous year.'*

In some cases it was about feeling valued and having their work recognised. As Jane felt,

*'I am currently being paid as a lecturer. I think I worked from day one as a senior and it's something that has been flagged many times not just to my line manager but above is that actually I was on the wrong grade and still am because I have a huge say in what we do. I think that experience means that I've had to make decisions that other lecturers wouldn't have the voice for anyway.'*

And for Susan, course and curriculum changes over the years have meant that she now teaches very little of what she was employed to teach. Harry also noted the constant change in his institution and the impact this was having on the staff team:

*'It's become a little bit more (. . .) I wouldn't say cut-throat, but more protective. People don't share like they used to.'*

The biggest challenge for George was time. He had had to go part-time in order to complete his PhD as, in his view,

*'Post-'92 universities they smash you with teaching hours. It's not like at (xxx) where I was where staff would be on 10 teaching hours. I had 20 teaching hours a week. So incredibly stressful getting no sleep, getting virtually no work done. Well, getting work done but at great cost. It didn't feel good.'*

Workload was also flagged by Annabel who said,

*'But the other side of it is we have all of the commitment to research, the commitment to our students. We are a very small course, but we are a tiny team with students that need a lot. They need a lot of pastoral support and that has nearly killed me this year.'*

Andrew raised the challenges of professional services not understanding lecturers' work and work patterns:

*'These people don't know what I do. They don't how the programme works. And I say these people, I mean you know people who just seem to think, well let's have a review or let's have a ( . . . ) you know those things that you have to do every year earlier. That kind of thing. And they're huge pieces of work. But it's always that balance. It's always that knife edge of efficiencies you know, cuts, do it better, do it less, do it better, keep up your excellence, keep up your NSS results, you know.'*

All of these challenges affect the self-categorisation process as participants struggle to find their place in a social group whilst balancing a range of institutional and student demands and believing that other staff do not understand their role. For those coming from a creative and entrepreneurial environment, they demonstrate a need to utilise these skills to find ways around institutional demands and challenges. For example, some participants spoke about how, coming from a creative background, they felt constrained by modules and learning outcomes. Annabel felt that, on creative arts programmes, the students were on a learning journey that took them in different directions. She believed that having a set of learning outcomes was constraining students on their creative journey as they needed to be in a liminal space. Susan also noted that,

*'when I write the learning outcomes I'm really careful about what I say so that I can always bend them, twist them or make them mean what I want them to mean in the circumstances.'*

So participants were finding challenges in fitting creative processes into educational systems. As Andrew highlighted,

*'challenges come mostly from just working in a structure that, you know, not working in a theatre ( . . . ) working in education has got its own structures and some of them don't match up with the structure of theatre ( . . . ) it's colder and more academic and you've got to find the balance.'*

This view of structural challenges was supported by David who highlighted the difficulties of integrating creative staff into university environments and structures which are very different from those they are used to.

## 5.8 Balancing Careers

The participants in the study had all experienced portfolio careers in the performing arts but, in the move to academia, there have been three overarching approaches to balancing careers.

Firstly, four participants have simply recognised that it is impossible to continue to work externally in the creative industries whilst maintaining a full-time academic role and so have stopped. However, even where they have stopped, they still acknowledge that they maintain their networks as this can add benefit to students' experiences. They still strongly identify with their performing arts social identity but have stopped actively participating.

The second approach has been to find a holistic view to combining practice with an academic role. Three participants have found that they have managed to maintain and develop their professional profile whilst using their professional work for research and teaching purposes. Of these three, two have set up their own companies and one works as a visual artist, which allows them some control of their work. This approach might be harder, for example, for an actor, who does not have control of what work they undertake, so it might not be viable for some performing arts academics. Close to this but approaching it from a different perspective is Peter who now looks on his professional work as 'consultancy', but whilst he gets added value from doing this he does not have the same holistic approach to combining his teaching, research and practice.

The final approach has been to try and slowly establish a balance which allows them to keep doing some professional work, but which is separate from their role as an academic. This can be seen through Jane, Ian, Irving and Harry who are trying to find time to undertake professional work around their academic role. However, none of them so far have found an integrative approach to this, but all still maintain a social identity strongly based in the performing arts.

This highlights that a large percentage of participants still try and maintain a small professional profile alongside their academic work. For some this is clearly embedded into their academic work. For example, Jennifer's PhD was practice-based and as part of it she established a theatre collective who perform publicly. This has led to an increase in her professional work which she combines with her research so she is taking a holistic approach to both professional profile and academic career:

*'So, the thing is, because of the PhD the publications were starting, but I've had no time to think about that. What has happened is because of the PhD the practice has been out there'.*

The same is true with Annabel who runs a professional company but whose work for that company counts as her practice as research. David, Executive Dean, wondered about the inherent difficulties in managing the tensions between work inside the university and that outside and he asked,

*'how do you manage the space in between?'*

He believed that many institutions give lip service to how they support creative practice as in reality there are few systems in place to allow staff to maintain the professional profile for which they were employed. And it was clear that not all participants feel that they have found the balance in their lives between academia and professional practice.

Jane mentioned that she wants to find a better balance,

*'so I am trying at the minute to find ways that I can restart and reignite my improvisation practice particularly here and write around it as practice as research, so I fulfil my research aims but I am also still practicing, because I need to find that. I recognise that that has to come from me with support here and I feel supported here to do that.'*

And Harry, whilst noting the importance of professional activity to maintaining his currency as an academic, said,

*'It's really tough. Well there's tough and tough. I mean a lot of people have it a lot worse. For example at the moment I'm working on 37 different things simultaneously and there aren't actually enough hours in the day to do them. Trying to achieve balance is pretty difficult.'*

Other participants keep more of a portfolio profile. Irving noted that he still has an agent and will take the odd acting or directing job, whilst Ian has moved his career more into seeking new creative outlets including playwriting and directing. A few participants had given up any thought of maintaining a professional career, including George, Andrew and Susan. For Susan it was that the time required to do a professional role was not available within her academic career which was a similar situation for Andrew. For George, as previously noted, it was a conscious decision to remove himself from performing arts work. In all cases, however, the salience of the performing arts identity appeared to remain high.

## 5.9 Conclusion

There were a range of potential patterns identified in the participants' narratives with regards to social categorisation in career transition. Of particular interest was the potential range of social identities noted within academia and how the self-categorisation process was impacted through the participants' transitions from the performing arts. New insights focused on the reasons for choosing a career transition, their social identity categorisation process and the impact of class and failure on social identity. These findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

# Chapter 6 - Discussion

*‘..there ain’t no journey what don’t change you some’*

*David Mitchell (2004)*

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of the content of the interviews with reference to the existing literature, designed to explore potential patterns of experience and reveal meaning. The research set out to explore social identity in the career transition from performing arts to higher education. These transition processes can be problematic as new staff not only have to establish themselves in a new organisation with different practices, but also have to navigate into a new social group. Support for transition and the development of new staff in their academic role is often lacking (Myers, 2017) and there may also be a mismatch of expectations between new staff and senior managers which can lead to further frustrations (Shreeve, 2011). This study aimed to show that this problem is particularly highlighted when academics are transitioning from a performing arts background as the working environment and practices of performing arts are different to those of a university. Lack of familiarity with how things are done, or frustration with different processes can negatively impact on the transition process and mean that it takes new staff a long time to acclimatise and develop their social identity. From a management perspective, this means that new staff may take a while to perform in their roles which potentially reduces the effectiveness of their contribution. Also if staff find the transition difficult it may be harder to retain them, so managers need to understand experiences of transition in order to be able to support new staff.

This discussion chapter aims to demonstrate how the research findings might address the perceived problem through the identification of patterns of experience as presented in the previous chapter. It will illuminate the meanings of the findings in discussion with the literature review and will show how the findings help our understanding of the social identity approach.



The social identity approach provides the capacity to understand why academics identify with one group as opposed to another, the processes of stereotyping and their reasons for doing so, and demonstrates how the social identity approach can provide insight as to what performing arts academics experience through the career transition process. Using SIT can help to explain the categorisation processes participants' go through, which social groups they see themselves as members of and how membership of those groups influences their behaviour. In order to do this, the chapter explores participants' performing arts social identity first and its underlying importance to their career transition and academic social identity. Many dual professionals maintain elements of their original social identity when they transition into higher education, and indeed many continue to undertake work in that career area, so understanding of their social identity in this context is important. The discussion chapter will highlight the importance of the duality and interplay between participants' performing arts social identity and academic social identity.

The chapter moves on to address issues surrounding their current self-categorisation and social identity in higher education and the possible elements which have contributed to this. By exploring social identity through their experiences, it may be possible to identify potential patterns of participants' beliefs in how they fit academic social groups or how accessible groups appear, as well as perceived perceptions of prototypical academics, which will help managers better understand the elements of transition that are important.

Through this discussion, participants' perceived salience of group memberships in higher education and how this fits with participants' self-esteem will also be explored. Identified attempts at social mobility, social competition and examples of social creativity will also be explored throughout the chapter. The chapter will go on to examine external organisational and social group factors which might affect the career transition and have an impact on participants' processes of self-categorisation.

## 6.2 Performing Arts Social Identity

As the research aims to explore social identities in the career transition from performing arts careers to academic roles in higher education, participants' performing arts social identities were examined to understand whether these had an impact on their experiences of transition to an academic post and on their current academic social identity. Participants' narratives highlighted the importance of individuals' personal and cultural backgrounds in the process of self-categorisation and social identity development which emphasises the need to understand people from a viewpoint of intersectionality. As an aim of the thesis is to better understand the impact of transition, knowing the different elements shaping social identity and how they variously affect self-categorisation is useful.

### 6.2.1 Primary Performing Arts Social Identities

The majority of participants spoke of their performing arts career as a vocation but there was a strong focus on role identification, such as being an actor, rather than needing to be creative. It may be that participants saw creativity as implicit in their social identity, but this varies from others in creative industries, especially those in visual arts, where creativity appears at the core of identity (Taylor and Littleton, 2016). From the narratives, participants' social identity was deduced as based on being a musician, an actor, a director or a dance artist rather than a creative individual, though an underlying sense of creativity came through with some participants when speaking about specific career decisions. As examples of role identification, Irving spoke of himself as an actor and director, and Ian and George as actors, reinforcing the primary social identity. These social identities appeared to be strengthened by the educational experience which formed deep-rooted ideas and some stereotyping about performing arts social identities, particularly noticeable in those participants who had studied acting at drama school. In participants' narratives, family influences appeared to have some significance for participants' career choices, both through inherited creativity and familial support, but also through shifting power and making decisions against family wishes. Harry, George and Thomas all spoke about how their career choices went against their parents' wishes, which was noted as an opportunity to

assert their own social identity outside the family context. This challenge to family might be seen as a potential influence in the strength of their performing arts social identity.

This strong role identification confirms the view that individuals in the creative industries maintain a strong craft identity. Participants' self-definition and working practices were often not concurrent and demonstrated an over-identification of their self with their work (Smith and McKinlay, 2009) which potentially presents implications for their career transition.

6.2.2 Perceptions of Success and Failure on Self-esteem and Social Identity  
Perceptions of self-worth were identified as being important for participants' social identity and potentially an important element in participants' transition to academia. SIT posits that an individual's self-esteem becomes intertwined with their group membership and that individuals reinforce their personal sense of identity and self-esteem through identity with a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). This is supported by the fact that participants highlighted strong positive experiences, such as getting a particular role or working for a particular company, as important moments in their social identity development. The nature of the freelance career meant that participants discovered their sense of worth through being offered work which demonstrated to them that they had creative ability and added value to their social identity.

However, the experiences of Ian and George when they were unable to get work impacted negatively on their self-esteem and social identity as actors. The impact of feeling as though they had 'failed' was enhanced because of the salience of their social identity. Yet, whilst the feeling of 'failure' impacted on their sense of value and self-worth, it did not appear to reduce the salience of their social identity as an actor. This was seen very strongly in George who was perceived to have a sense of bereavement at giving up his role as an actor. Even though he had made a clear break from acting, he still spoke of himself as an actor in the present tense. This supports Ashforth (2001) who argued that salience is also determined by the subjective importance of the social identity. So a social identity that is very important to an individual's

sense of self, may have a strong subjective salience which overcomes situational salience (driven by external contexts). Here the salience of their social identity as an actor overcame the situation which is that both found it difficult to get work as an actor.

Ian appeared to accentuate his view of the difference between himself and his immediate social group of drama school colleagues, seeing their group prototypicality (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003), as one defined by perceived 'success'. However, were he to have compared himself to a broader social group of actors, he might have established that he was relatively successful in comparison to many in the profession. This prototypicality is a subjective representation of the defining attributes of a social category (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) and by seeing himself as failing in comparison to his peers, Ian found himself struggling within his chosen in-group, which caused him to review his career options. Because of the nature of the creative industries, with participants managing freelance careers, their self-perceptions of their creative identity are dynamic (Hagstrom, 2005) and constantly changing in relation to the feedback they receive for every role or job, but they are also changing in relation to the perceived success of others in their immediate social network.

#### 6.2.3 Fit in Social Groups

Otherness and lack of fit in social groups came through in several contexts and it is important to consider how individuals believe they fit a social group prototype.

Issues of diversity and intersectionality were identified by George and Dennis who highlighted the importance of a working-class background to their social identities. Whilst Dennis saw the challenges inherent in a working-class identity in the performing arts and found ways to work round them, it was George whose background shaped in him a sense of otherness throughout his drama education and his career. He observed that he used this as an advantage during a period when there was a strong focus on working-class drama in theatre and television. However, George sees his background as one which has limited power and which brings disadvantages in his choices

of career (see Cho et al. 2013; Collins, 2015). George has found his working-class social identity to have a continued salience which has impacted on his social identity as an actor and also on his transition experience and current academic social identity by placing him in opposition to both his team and organisation. In his narrative he presented examples of how he would fight against perceived demands made of him both by senior managers and also by members of his immediate team. He also highlighted consistently that there was no *'fucking understanding from where I'm coming from'*.

George particularly highlighted his feeling of otherness throughout his life based on his working-class social identity and feeling a lack of fit in his social groups. His narrative displays a strong sense of anger at what he sees as the 'institutionalisation of the middle-class' in both performing arts and academia. He speaks of being subconsciously resistant to what he sees as a middle-class ideology, which relates back to Hinkle and Brown's (1990) autonomous dimension where comparisons are made to an abstract group standard and not directly to other groups. There is a sense in George's narrative that whilst he maintains a working-class social identity, he also feels different from those in his family context, so no social identity appears to be a perfect fit for him. This highlights the importance of considering issues of intersectionality and diversity, but it should be noted that George is an outlier from the data collected. For example, Dennis who also labelled himself as working-class and Jennifer and Thomas who are from different ethnic backgrounds did not express similar concerns about lack of fit based on their diversity in performing arts or academic social groups. Therefore, further research is needed around the issue of class.

In her narrative, the political context within which Jennifer grew up was also a defining strand as her multiple social identities have been fed by her political ideologies. But for most participants, their education experience at university or drama school had a strong effect in helping them establish who they were in the context of their creative work. It provided an environment within which they found confidence in their ability and their social identity as a professional creative. For eight participants, this experience took place as a mature

student and their narratives demonstrate potential impacts on their social identities, particularly in relation to being entrepreneurial. Several of those who studied as mature students, including Annabel, Jane, Jennifer and Susan, expressed a lack of comparative fit with their student social group due to having previous life experiences which made them feel different. This made them approach their experience in a different entrepreneurial way, which fed into their later performing arts social identity. They highlighted a tendency to have undertaken additional work alongside their studies and also to have begun presenting their own work during this period which can be seen as an entrepreneurial experience. This entrepreneurial work could be viewed as an example of social creativity in that, as students, they were attempting to change the dimensions on which they are valued and so enhance their self-worth. Because they were students, the professional social group to which they aspired was seen as potentially impermeable (Douglas, McGarty, Bliuc, & Lala, 2005), but by producing their own work they were setting themselves apart from fellow students. Tajfel and Turner (1986) saw social creativity as mainly a group strategy, but the narratives demonstrate examples of individual strategies.

Lack of fit was also described by those who chose to move out of what they viewed as a commercial arts environment into one in which they felt more at home. Here they found social groups to be more accessible and they increased the salience of their social identity within a more experimental and non-traditional environment. For all these participants, it was through the individuals taking specific action to expand their work into new areas, that they categorised themselves with a new social group and reinforced their performing arts social identity. The decision to move away from mainstream work confirms McKinlay and Smith's (2009) highlighting of the tensions which can exist between workers who self-identify as 'creatives' and how pressures for them to produce commercial work can be a challenge to self-identity. Gotsi et al., (2010) believed this might lead to a struggle or resistance, but for the participants it instead led to conscious decisions to remove themselves from any potential tensions by working in less commercial artistic environments. This could be viewed as examples of social mobility in that participants

realigned their status from a social group with which they had low identification into one which they valued as higher status (Tajfel, 1978; van Knippenberg, 2003). However, their new social group was not one engaged with mainstream cultural activities, so whilst the experimental creativity gave the group a higher status in the minds of the participants, these groups could be viewed by others to be lower status as they are not part of mainstream cultural consumption.

Those that crossed into other industry sectors, such as Irving moving into corporate work, also saw their otherness – as a creative professional - being valued because it brought a new skill into a business environment. This provided validation for their self-esteem in their creative social identity and added a sense of value. This data from the narratives appears to have some similarities with the discourse that portrays creative people as unique and different (Montuori & Purser, 1995; Hagstrom, 2005; Glaveanu, 2010) but as this is not the core focus of the study, further research would be needed to confirm this.

#### 6.2.4 Nature of Performing Arts Work

The nature of employment in the performing arts was noted as playing a role in participants' performing arts social identity. Participants all understood the vulnerability of a performing arts career before they entered into it, but felt that they would be able to succeed within this field. They understood the need to establish networks and for many these offered added social capital because of their place in their network (Serrat, 2017).

Yet moving out of secure social networks meant that some participants became isolated and loosened their contact with their 'in-group' so losing social capital, confirming Wittel's belief that in reality these networks are often thin, shallow relations (2001). The resultant impact on their social identity depended on their perceived self-worth in their new location and whether they were able to establish new social networks within which to rebuild their social capital (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Taylor and Littleton's view of a connected creative as 'able to realise meaningful or ambitious projects by brokering appropriate partnerships' (2016:99) is true for those who are in a position to do their own work. But the reality is that those who are performers

and not creators of their own work have to work for others, though there is still a requirement to be constantly connected. Participants' experiences highlighted the importance of social interaction in their self-categorisation processes, whether through organisations or with individuals, so reinforcing the processes of SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

One pattern that emerged was a strong sense of entrepreneurialism, in that eight of the participants sought opportunities not only to work with others but also to produce their own work. The constant need to network and find opportunities affects how participants viewed themselves with the sense that you are 'only as good as your last job or review'. By producing their own work, several participants appeared to validate their own social identity, not needing to wait for someone else to employ them, which supports Hagstrom's view that creative identities are adaptable and contextual (2005). As noted above, this entrepreneurial work could be viewed as examples of social creativity in that, by producing their own work, they were attempting to change the dimensions on which they are valued. In the context of the creative industries, producing their own work helped enhance their own self-worth, providing greater opportunities than those present in the fragile work environment. Again here the narratives demonstrate examples of individual strategies, but there is an over-arching sense of a group strategy by the broad social group of creative performing arts professionals to enable as many opportunities to work as possible.

#### 6.2.5 Conclusion

In order to be able to understand how career transition influences participants' social identities, it is important to first understand their performing arts social identities. Participants' narratives highlighted different early life contexts within which they grew up and were educated, with different levels of impact on their performing arts social identity. The subject-based educational experience was seen as formative in determining how participants categorised themselves, and those who demonstrated entrepreneurial skills were viewed to be more proactive in developing their own work later in their career. Examples of social creativity and social mobility strategies were observed. Once working in the arts, the nature of employment and the need for strong social networks were



an element in how participants categorised themselves and in how they perceived success or failure. Otherness, or lack of fit, was also a consideration that emerged with examples of this in participants' narratives. George's narrative evidenced this most strongly and highlights issues of intersectionality and diversity. The importance of participants' performing arts social identity as they transition career will be discussed further in the next section.

### 6.3 Academic Social Identity

Participants' current academic social identities were explored in the interviews. As discussed in the literature review, academic identity is changing and the perceived traditional view of an academic focused on a balance of research and teaching, has shifted as academics need to perform in an increasing multiplicity of areas (Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012).

#### 6.3.1 Primary Academic Social Identity

Participants compared themselves to what they perceived to be an ascribed prototypical academic identity, which varied depending on how they saw their social identity. But the majority were comparing themselves to an out of date conceptualisation of *homo academicus* which, as Coates & Goedegebuure's asserted (2012:877) 'is becoming less relevant to current practices and future needs'. Those who maintained a strong professional and teaching identity, such as Irving, David, Ian and Andrew, showed examples of stereotyping in viewing a prototypical academic as someone who demonstrated not only strong teaching skills but also had a good research profile. Here they appear to be comparing themselves on the autonomous dimensions to an abstract group standard and not directly to other groups in their institutions (Hinkle and Brown, 1990). Their prototypical view is considered dated in terms of the literature on contemporary academic roles and identities which highlights the greater range of activities now expected from academics (for example Clarke and Knights, 2015; Nixon, 2015; Henkel, 2016). This potentially raises concerns for senior managers as it demonstrates possible lack of understanding about ways in which participants can extend their academic profile, and therefore contribute to broader university goals.

These participants saw their social identity based on teaching and professional practice which meant they felt unable to describe themselves as academics, but instead used terminology such as 'an acting tutor' or 'a theatre director'. This use of terminology might be considered a social creativity strategy, finding different ways to define their distinctiveness and compare themselves to the perceived higher status group on a different dimension by privileging the arts social identity. Irving also said he called himself a 'programme leader' which again is an example of social creativity, as he uses terminology designed to enhance his self-esteem within his social groups. Derks, Van Larr and Ellemers (2006) asserted that social creativity tactics would not only benefit the well-being of the in-group members by enhancing their self-worth, but could also encourage in-group members to enhance their performance on dimensions in which the out-group has higher status. However, whilst these participants evidenced social creativity tactics, they do not yet appear to have engaged in the activities or dimensions they see as important in the out-group, the 'academics'. So whilst David, Andrew, Ian and Irving all highlighted they understood that research was an important component of being an academic, there was no evidence that they were seeking to start undertaking research as an act of social mobility.

This was different for those who had a stronger 'pracademic' social identity, combining their creative practice and academic work. Here there was a strong focus on making their own creative work and ensuring they were able to tie this back into their academic profile, so ensuring that their creative work was recognised within academic frameworks. This approach shows a recognition of the importance of the audit frameworks to their roles but also shows understanding of the multi-dimensional environments at play in universities.

The perceptions about a prototypical academic raise questions of who dictates what an academic is and whether structures of the sector and institutions continue to reinforce the traditional image of an academic even in times of change. This may be potentially limiting for institutions if staff focus on this binary role and do not evidence entrepreneurialism in engaging with other activities.

### 6.3.2 Social Identity and Fit

Through the research there appeared potential patterns which demonstrate how participants' social identity is linked to their local team or organisation. This team or organisationally associated social identity was seen mostly as a constructive alignment but there were instances where individuals saw their social identity at odds with their immediate team. Whilst no patterns are held to be definitive, four broad patterns emerged:

- Social identity as part of a programme team where participants strongly categorised themselves with their local programme team who were also the key point of interaction in the socialisation process;
- Social identity as part of a department where two participants categorised themselves as part of the wider team, often demonstrated through interactions with supportive colleagues or informal mentoring;
- Social identity as part of an institution was observed in Annabel who had spent most of her academic career in the one institution and who categorised herself with the institution;
- Low identification with an institution or team was observed in George with both his local team and with his institution. He felt separate from his immediate team as he believed he was the only member of the team undertaking research and he felt devalued by what he saw as the demands of the organisation and his line manager, viewing this as an attack on his academic identity. In a similar vein, both Jennifer and Thomas had low identification with their local and departmental teams due to lack of fit and saw their in-group as a wider group of academics and practitioners.

These potential differences are important for senior managers and heads of departments to understand. SIT predicts that more positive attitudes in support of group goals will emerge among those with social identities focused on a particular group, because it facilitates the viability of the group and enhances the individual's acceptance into the group (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007). The sense of a collective identity came through for most participants, particularly in relation to their local programme team. This

may support David's belief, from his experience employing creative arts staff, that many of them wanted to be part of a community in academia due to the work environment in creative industries. Where strong levels of engagement with programme and department teams were observed, a pattern emerged from the narratives that teams played an important role in the socialisation process. However, these team social identities were generally strongly focused on teaching and programme administration and did not encompass broader aspects of academia such as research. So the social group within which participants categorised themselves was seen by them to have a lower status position, but one which was relatively stable, where they found a sense of group solidarity (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995) and a relatively homogenous response to institutional demands.

Annabel was the only participant who found her social identity strongly linked to the institution but she had been there for twenty years, moving there after her first academic role. Her institution has a strong arts focus and, as her work combines two artistic disciplines, she finds a richness in the environment which supports her social identity and provides a relatively stable group with which to categorise herself. But this supports earlier research suggesting that the local department or team is where academics find their place.

The three participants, Jennifer, Thomas and George, who spoke of a lack of fit with their programme or subject team either have or are undertaking a PhD and joining teams with more of a practice-based approach to their work, so they perceive that they are viewed differently by their immediate team. This is at odds with David's view that the immediate team is the one with which new staff members best engage. These three individuals were all employed because of their PhD as, in all their institutions, there was a desire for a greater focus on research. But by being seen to meet the institution's ascribed identity of an academic, their position in their immediate teams was identified to be as an outsider. The teams did not recognise their practice-based experience but reacted against their research profile. This highlights the difficulties institutions face in trying to challenge the status quo amongst staff in some subjects. Here the institution is seen to recognise the value of the participants' experience and research, but the immediate team do not appear to value the institution's

recognition, so raising the question of whose recognition matters as part of the social identity process. For example, George clearly did not value the recognition of his team, nor his institution, but instead saw his value as compared to other academics writing in his research area. In social identity terms, George was a low identifier who demonstrated belief that it is possible to achieve a social identity as a member of a higher status group and as such demonstrated behaviours which allowed him to disidentify from his existing team (Hogg, Terry and White, 1995). However, unlike Jennifer and Thomas who had social identities as part of external groupings, he had not yet found entry to a higher status group.

George's lack of fit also highlighted issues of intersectionality as he expressed how his working-class background made him different in what he viewed as a higher education sector institutionalised by the middle-class. He expressed anger in his interview at not having the tools to cope, which enhanced his dissatisfaction and low identification in his institution. Jennifer and Thomas highlighted professional issues for their lack of fit but, as noted in the findings, both came from different cultural backgrounds and it may be that their expectation of what it means to be an academic are different from those with whom they work.

The comments made by Jennifer and Thomas putting down the status of their immediate team, for example saying they devalued academia, can be seen as examples of social competition. Here they are striving to make their social identities distinct from their immediate teams (Martiny & Rubin, 2016) and do this through putting down and rating their immediate teams negatively. For example, Thomas also made negative comments about those who had come through a traditional research route into academia and had no practice experience. So his social identity clearly lay in being both a practitioner and an academic, what he views as a higher status social group. This social competition can create tension in the immediate teams and managers need to find a way to manage these tensions to ensure teams meet their goals. In George, the negative comments about his team can be seen as examples of social mobility, as he is trying to decrease his identification (Jackson et

al.1996) with his social group, his team and institution, all of which he views as low-status groups (Tajfel, 1974, 1978; van Knippenberg & van Ouers, 1984). By doing this he is attempting to align himself with a higher status social group, in his case an external group of academics who research in his area. Therefore, his comments devalue his team's focus on scholarship and practice so as to begin a move towards joining this high-status group.

Their three narratives also assert more about how they view themselves in comparison to their perceptions of other members of the team. All three returned to education after a period of work and place a different value on education than that of their team members. In speaking of how members of their team devalued education, they highlight their own academic identity as one which places importance on the value of education in society. They feel challenged traditional performing arts courses, and the resulting role of the lecturer, where the focus is on developing practical skills. This is contradictory to other participants whose approach to their teaching is influenced by their own more traditional educational experience and focused on teaching skills and developing employable graduates with a strong social identity. This highlights a genuine question for higher education institutions as to the role of arts-based courses and raises implications for lecturer recruitment processes.

#### 6.4 Possible Influences on Academic Social Identity

The research explored some of the potential influences on how participants' categorised their academic social identity, including reasons for transitioning to higher education, socialisation and organisational structures and processes.

##### 6.4.1 Drivers for Moves to Higher Education

The narratives identified the difficulties of the precarious labour market in performing arts and participants were noted to have had portfolio careers which included some form of teaching, demonstrating the need to engage with other forms of work in order to sustain their arts career. Participants recognised that this was sector practice, though several mentioned how they were constantly working but only just getting by financially, identifying with the

precarity of creative labour (Caves 2000; Benhamou, 2003; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005). The casual teaching contracts or opportunities to develop projects with students were the bread and butter of their career but, as noted by Smith and McKinlay (2009), self-definition and working practice are not always concurrent, so participants still viewed themselves through their core performing arts social identity and not as teachers.

Through their previous work experiences, participants perceived higher education to be an environment which would provide security and stability. This observation came from their experiences of short-term work in universities but, as noted by Clarke and Knights (2015) and Fanghanel (2014), the reality of academic work is far from stable. The decision to leave the arts was voluntary once it no longer felt like a good fit for their personal or work needs (Ibarra, 2004; Bracken, 2007) which highlights the push and pull factors for career transition: the insecurity of performing arts working as a push factor and the pull of higher education seen as a potentially safe environment because the role utilised their skills.

The concept of changing career for positive reasons was raised by Irving who felt that some academics taught acting because they had failed in their careers. This is important as three participants spoke of their performing arts work drying up which highlights the challenges due to the precarity of creative labour (Caves 2000; Benhamou, 2003; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005), but only two participants, Ian and George, saw this as a sense of 'failure' and used it as a catalyst for voluntary career transition. George highlighted the impact on his self-esteem of work drying when he left his role in a television series. This led him to return to study in the hope of finding a new career, though at that stage he did not aspire to an academic career. For Ian, lack of work also led him to re-evaluate his career path. This contrasts with the social identity perspective that identifying with a particular social group allows individuals to achieve positive images of themselves, as both saw their failure in contrast to others within their social group. Here they viewed others in their social groups as successful and compared themselves against this, so they felt unable to validate their own social identities as actors in this context which weakened their sense of belonging. The rationale behind participants' transition into

higher education is important in how they self-categorise through the transition. Narratives highlight conflicts in their performing arts social identities and the importance of self-worth in career choices. Feeling insecure in their previous career could mean that different levels of support are required to find confidence in their new role as an academic.

The early teaching experiences allowed them to test out working in higher education, in Ibarra's view, 'trying out new activities and professional roles on a small scale before making a major commitment to a different path' (2004:18). In many ways this worked as a long-term induction to teaching but because of the nature of the work they were undertaking, it was identified that they had not always understood what was involved in a permanent academic role, which led to some issues in their transition process. The narratives highlighted assumptions made by other staff about their pre-existing knowledge and skills, which meant that organisationally they were viewed as more experienced and having a stronger academic identification. For the participants, this caused them to present representations of themselves, particularly through pretending to know what they were doing when they did not feel confident to express their lack of knowledge. Here they were 'acting out' knowledge without having the necessary confidence and often leading to feelings of inadequacy (Turner, 1994; Marsh and Keating, 2006). By doing this, they were offering temporary solutions which presented a self that bridged the gap between their 'current capacities and self-conceptions and the representations they hold about what attitudes and behaviours are expected in the new role' (Ibarra, 1999: 765). This can be viewed as a form of individual social creativity, where they are improving the perception of who they are within different situations. By doing this, participants are seeking ways to restrict opportunities for them to be compared to lower status groups, in this case not wanting to be seen as a novice. This supports the stages models that suggest professionals with different levels of experience engage in and understand practice in differing ways (Billett, 2001; Dall'Alba, 2006; Sandberg & Pinnington, 2006) and that development is not a one way progression. Here participants are highlighting the need to learn how their knowledge can be utilised and developed in a new environment, but whilst they appear open to learning, as



Dall'Alba and Sandberg (2006) noted was important, they also do not want to appear unknowledgeable. This can create challenges in the transition process and needs to be considered by institutions when planning support and development activities for new staff.

#### 6.4.2 Socialisation as an Academic

Given these challenges, it is important to explore the socialisation activities that take place when a person transitions into a new career. Looking at socialisation as a process by which individuals become fully adjusted into their organisational social identity, it is clear that there is a pattern emerging of lack of formal socialisation which has a potential impact on participants' social identity. Generally, there is a narrative of having to work out what to do themselves and, even with experienced mentors, participants felt that they were given little advice. The lack of formal socialisation highlighted gaps in participants' knowledge and created challenges in moving into new organisational structures and social groups. Ibarra (2004) talks about finding people who can open the doors, finding role models and new peer groups to guide and benchmark individual's progress. This is potentially an important element to be considered within this research, as professionals move from being experienced in one profession to being 'novices' in a new profession.

Some participants found that members of programme teams or departments were helpful when they asked for specific advice. They identified individuals who they felt were both supportive but also displayed the prototypicality of someone they aspired to be (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). However, as participants were picking up significant teaching and administration roles from their point of entry into their organisation, much of the advice they sought was related to this. So they sought out individuals who demonstrated prototypicality in learning and teaching, student experience, and programme-related administration. This is an interesting position as they appeared to believe there was greater value in engaging with those who displayed prototypicality in scholarship than in research, yet this was not reflected in their perceived prototypical view of an academic which may have contributed to a lower identification as an academic.

Trowler and Knight suggested that the socialisation process could not be viewed in terms of the interests of the bigger organisation, but instead in terms of those of 'the individual, the department or other local unit' (1999:181). Comparing this with the current study suggests that there is a gap in how institutions are supporting the socialisation process of new academics both within the institution but also at a local level, which supports Myers (2017). Where local processes or support mechanisms were put in place, such as buddy or mentor systems, these were seen to have failed and, in the case of George, appear to have contributed to his social identity not fitting with his local team and department. Henkel (2005) commented that the building of individual identities that are embedded in defined academic communities is central to academic life. The fact that participants did not have a strong formal socialisation process is anticipated to have impacted on the variation in participants' social identities, as expectation and understandings of the role have not been made clear. This highlights a significant role for local induction processes linked to socialisation which should be an intensive process to develop tacit knowledge about the culture and processes of the local department.

#### 6.4.3. Organisational Elements potentially impacting Social Identity

This section explores some of the organisational elements that have potentially affected participants' career transition and their current academic social identity.

##### 6.4.3.1 *Demands at odds with Values*

Several participants highlighted concerns with how their organisations operated, particularly in regard to the numbers of students being taught as compared to employment opportunities and quality of the student experience. Leavitt et al. (2012) observed that individuals' identities had a strong effect on their moral decision-making and behaviour, but only one participant, Jennifer, spoke about actually making a moral decision to leave a job because of her concerns. In these narratives, instances where participants' morally disagree with organisational actions but fail to act have left a sense of frustration and weariness with the academic sector. Yet the participants did not feel that they could leave their jobs as they viewed the issues as sector wide and not just

within their own institution. There seemed to be an acceptance that, whilst they did not agree with certain institutional policies, this was an acceptable difference that did not impact on their social identity or their choice of career. This might be seen as an indication that, whilst academia is seen as an increasingly unstable career, for these participants it is providing the stability they sought when they changed career. However, Jennifer and Thomas both highlighted that they were unsure as to whether they would remain in academic roles in the future.

#### *6.4.3.2 Perceptions of Arts Subjects*

The tensions between subjects was noted by two participants, Jennifer and Thomas, supporting research suggesting a perceived divide between academics and practitioners, with individuals from industry possibly feeling a lack of 'legitimacy' within academic social groups (e.g. Austin & Bartunek, 2012; Dashper & Fletcher, 2019) Both participants articulated the view that the performing arts subjects were thought of as 'Mickey Mouse' subjects, but they themselves felt that individually they were not seen in this way because they could discuss theory and research methodologies. Their reflections point to a devaluing of arts subjects within some institutions, being seen as a lower status social group: a 'practical' subject without academic basis. There is a sense of weariness that they felt they had to work to gain the respect of this wider group of colleagues whilst also feeling distanced from their immediate team. This supports the views of Dashper and Fletcher (2019) who noted additional pressures on developing academic identities for those in newer practice-based subjects. Here institutions need to find ways to overcome the perceived divide between academics and practitioners, or between theory and practice (Austin & Bartunek, 2012) and communicate the value of newer practice-based subjects particularly in bridging industry and academia together (Jackson 2013).

#### *6.4.3.3 Institutional Demands*

There was a clear sense in the narratives of feeling under pressure by their institution to work to targets, complete significant amounts of administration and, for some, complete qualifications and start on a research journey, which had been an impact on transition experiences. This chimes with much of the

literature on changing academic identities within a shifting environment (Clarke & Knights, 2015; Evans & Nixon, 2015; Henkel 2016) and these demands place pressure on social categorisation processes.

The process of achieving qualifications was identified to help strengthen participants' identification with their social group (Dashtipour, 2012). Social validation was achieved through events such as completion of a PgCert., seen almost as a 'badge' in accomplishing one part of the academic role. Whilst the process was seen as additional workload, the majority of participants valued the experience. This supports Dall'Alba and Sandberg's (2006) notion that whilst formal and informal learning opportunities and evaluation are deemed important, the desire and openness of the individual to learn is also key. The move from expert to novice was not seen to be problematic as the PgCert learning experience tended to validate participants' work, allowing them to put academic terminology against their teaching processes and so reinforcing their social identity and developing confidence in their ability.

The demands on staff to start undertaking research or do a PhD was more challenging in terms of participants developing their academic identities. Participants' early experiences of being 'thrown in' meant that they typically based their academic social identity on scholarship. As institutions apply increased demand for academic staff to be also engaged in research, this has meant several participants now find their social identity under perceived threat and struggle to maintain their place within the academy, reinforcing the view that see who they are as a professional through the eyes of others (Roberts et al., 2005). Gaining a PhD or undertaking research is still seen by participants as a barrier to full identification as an academic. There are examples in the narratives where participants have engaged in a social mobility process of gaining a PhD which has enabled them to identify with a higher status group. The narratives demonstrate that a PhD is seen as a clear marker in the transition process to categorisation as an academic and enhancement of self-worth. Because they don't have a PhD or undertake research, a significant proportion of participants appear to be continually assessing their social identity and value against others in their department, comparing themselves to those who have PhDs.

For those who were newer in their roles, this was less of a threat as they demonstrated greater awareness of the academic demands when they started their role. However, for those who have been in role for several years, the concerns over what they see as shifting demands are causing some participants to question their social identity. This challenge was highlighted by the senior managers who identified a mismatch between employing arts practitioners for their specialist skills and industry practice and then appearing to devalue this by trying to make them conform to perceived views of what an academic should be. This mismatch has led to a number of participants feeling as though they belong to a lower status social group which impacted on their self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). However, those participants who identified with a scholarship based social identity did not display a strong desire to engage in social mobility activities and appeared to be high identifiers with their lower status groups. There was some evidence in the narratives of these participants engaging in mild social competition with other academic social groups. Participants were seen to emphasise their strength in their performing arts identity and skills in teaching, highlighting the value this added to students. By doing this they increased the salience of their social identification and group membership (Dashtipour, 2012).

#### *6.4.3.4 Professionalism and Student Engagement*

Several participants spoke of their concerns at what they viewed as poor student engagement. These concerns emanated from a perceived divergence between participants' sense of professionalism and the perceived level of student engagement with their work. This divergence from their own experiences and expectations of students was seen implicitly as an attack on their performing arts social identity. This became an additional challenge when transitioning as they felt they were struggling on several fronts to find the sense of stability they had sought. As teaching was the focus for many of the participants, this perceived lack of student engagement gave rise to tensions, as they wanted students to recognise their sense of professionalism. If students were not engaging, and participants were finding less recognition as a result, it meant that participants were needing to enhance their self-esteem through other sources.

Whilst participants spoke about the engagement of the students, it was detected that the underlying concern was student recruitment policies of institutions. This was the one area where there was a difference between participants in Scotland and those in England due to the differences in higher education funding systems. Participants' concern was noted to be the number of students they were having to take which they believed meant that they were taking students who were less focused on a professional approach and who were less engaged. All participants who raised concerns worked within English modern universities where there is no cap on the numbers of students that can be accepted.

Within the three participants who did not raise concerns about student engagement, there was a stronger sense that their role was to help students explore creativity and not focus on professional skills and standards. A stronger sense of security in their academic social identity meant that they enhanced their self-esteem by working with colleagues outside academia. Instead they raised concerns about the experience that students received, concerned that they were being asked by managers to deliver more for less and that the student experience was suffering. In both cases, whilst students were the immediate focus of their concerns, it was highlighted that underlying structures within their institutions were the root cause of the issues.

#### 6.4.4. Conclusion

Whilst the balance of these shifted and changed throughout each personal transition, the individuals' performing arts identity was seen to be important to the academic identity they constructed. The socialisation processes and the structural demands of institutions were identified to help shape the processes of career transition. The drivers for transition, where based on a desire for stability, were detected to have been important in how participants responded to changing institutional demand which challenged their values and self-identity. The next section explores in more detail the processes of transition and the impact on self-categorisation and social identity.

#### 6.5 Transition Processes and Participants' Self-categorisation

Throughout the transition processes, participants were having to actively seek support when they felt confident to do so and they aligned with others in their

team or department who displayed the prototypicality that they were seeking (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). As participants were continually meeting new challenges in their work, for example having to undertake a programme review for the first time, the ability to have someone who had been through the experience previously to help guide them was seen as invaluable.

Where a privileging of their performing arts identity was identified, participants actively engaged in activities which supported their performing arts identity. Here participants focused on teaching, which utilised their skills and knowledge from their previous career. There was also implicit rejection of institutional demands for them to be engaged with research or undertake a PhD by finding reasons, such as workload and time, that enabled them to prioritise their activities in areas where they felt safe. The strength of their performing arts social identity was explicitly expressed through how they described themselves in their academic role as 'acting tutor' or 'director', which as noted earlier can be viewed as an example of social creativity by highlighting new dimensions to compare themselves to other groups. Here the dimensions focus on their performing arts social identity, drawing on this to reduce deficiencies in their understandings of being an academic. Irving also displays these strategies by calling himself a 'programme leader', which provides a sense of self-worth through role identification. Using role titles enhances their perception amongst other academics as the role is recognised as having some status within institutions.

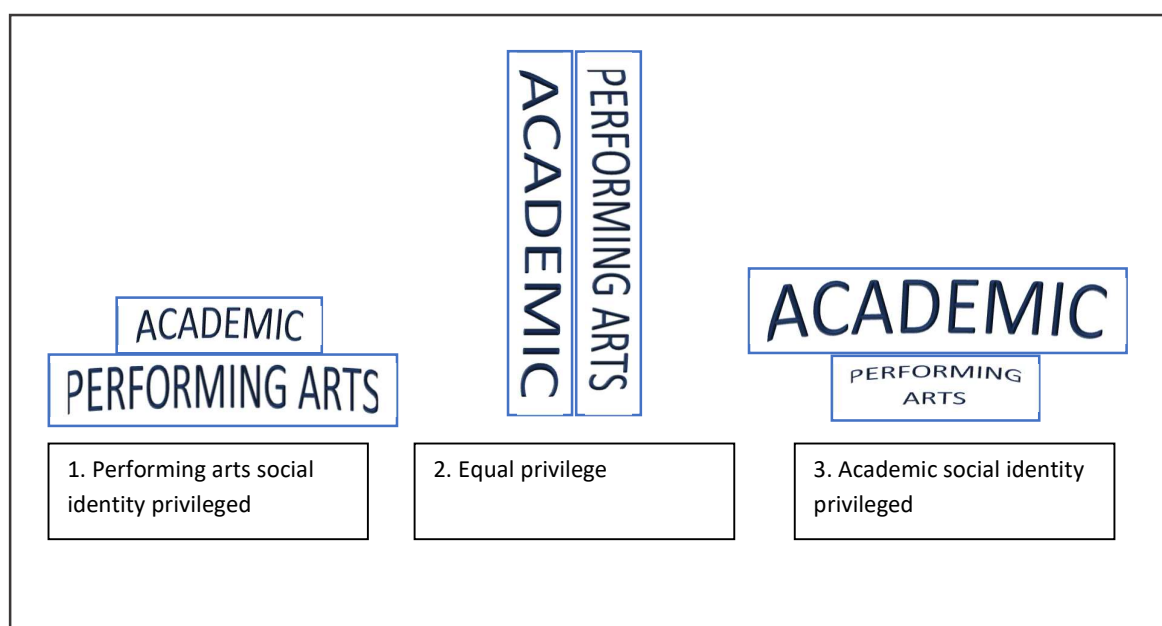
Extension of the performing arts identity into the academic identity was identified in Jennifer, Thomas and Annabel, but also in Harry and Peter who had achieved this through their PhD. The emergence of a focus on extension was also identified by Jane, though she had still to navigate her route through the institutional structures and processes to be able to identify how she would do this. The extension activities were either identified in a holistic interweaving of performing arts and academic activities, or through developing research profiles built upon performing arts identities.

Harry showed some separation of his performing arts social identity from his academic one in that he kept his activities separate, yet his work as an

academic was built upon his music, so some overlap between the social identities was expressed. In contrast, George expressed complete rejection of his original performing arts identity which was noted in his categorisation process through his dismissal of his immediate team, and his devaluing of their practice-based focus. These forms of social competition allowed him to categorise himself with what he perceived to be a higher status group, academics producing traditional research outputs in higher ranked universities, and to put down his team whom he saw in a lower status group. However, in his interview, he still referred to himself in the present tenses as an actor, and spoke of wanting to teach acting in a drama school, which suggests that he still retains his performing arts social identity even though he is trying to block it off.

In all participants there is evidence of multiple social identities (Hogg, Abrams and Brewer 2017, but rather than just managing the complexities of different social identities, participants appear to be building a layered social identity. This layering is observed in the continuing salience of the performing arts social identity upon which participants are now building their academic identity. This layering takes different forms amongst the participants but three broad approaches were observed:

Figure 1: Examples of observed layered multiple social identities





Seven of the participants appeared as high identifiers with their performing arts social identity and saw themselves employed for their specialist knowledge. They had not yet fully embraced the social identity of what they perceived as a fully-rounded academic identity, balancing research and teaching. However, they built their academic social identity on the strength of their performing arts identity. This was seen through how they focused their activities and through the use of language, such as 'acting tutor'.

Three participants appeared to have a holistic view of their social identity, weaving together their performing arts social identity with their social identity as an academic through combining creative and academic work.

Two participants had undertaken a shift in social identity from a performing arts professional to becoming high identifiers with an academic social identity. Yet whilst they separate their academic work from their creative practice, their social identity as an academic is still built upon their professional work as a performing arts creative and therefore upon their performing arts social identity.

Social categories are not mutually exclusive and in transitioning career, individuals may have an increasingly complex level of multiple social identities which interact with each other. However, much of the research suggests that social identities are distinct and do not overlap, which means there can be tensions if individual's multiple social identities do not have similar attributes and values (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Hogg, Abrams and Brewer 2017). It is recognised that the observed patterns of layering of social identities is not rigid but will adapt and change in different contexts. Nonetheless, this layering of multiple social identities should be taken into account by university leaders when planning support and transition activities for dual professionals. Recognition of the salience of the performing arts identity, and the growing similarities between the sectors, in development activities could support new academics to perform more quickly in their role.

It is also noted that all participants, when speaking of their academic social identity, compared themselves to what they saw as an ascribed prototypical

academic identity, which was someone who demonstrated not only strong scholarship but a good research profile.

## 6.6 Identity, Belonging and Resistance

Individuals develop understanding of who they are by categorising themselves with social groups that fit their values and beliefs. The range of self-categorisations in the narratives suggests that there is no single defining view of what it means to be an academic. Several participants, whilst identifying as teaching in higher education, did not yet feel they were an academic and this lower level of categorisation with their profession means there is a higher level of uncertainty and a greater need for self-enhancement (Hogg and Terry, 2000).

Overall there were strongly held opinions on how the sector views research and teaching roles and the impacts on individuals' careers. Most participants were resigned to the fact that, whilst they had been appointed for their professional practice and originally had not had a research requirement, they were now being pushed to explore new avenues into research. David noted though that institutions are not good at supporting new academic staff who come from practice-based backgrounds into understanding how their work might be viewed as research which links back to the poor socialisation processes for new academics. The demands to take on research might, for some, be seen as a personal crisis of identity (Lalonde, 2010), particularly for those who have been in role for several years already. Organisations need to understand that this requires a re-socialisation process for both the organisation and the individuals in order to steer them through the crisis. But the responses of the senior managers show that, whilst they are aware of the issues, they were not establishing processes which help organisations and individuals in these circumstances, and as such, appear complicit in reinforcing the perceived images of a prototypical academic.

The impact of these demands on many participants was that they focused even more on the teaching aspects of the role. Whilst not openly rejecting involvement in research, participants did demonstrate an unspoken act of resistance through their narratives in finding reasons, such as workload and

time, to not engage with research. As many entered academia for security, there is a rarity of showing outward rebellion against institutional demands. But unspoken acts of resistance can be seen as an implicit rather than explicit rejection of the perceived institution's, and sector's, ascribed identity of an academic. These acts might be viewed as social creativity as highlighting areas such as their high teaching workload enables participants to improve their own perception of their group's standing (Wright, 2001; Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2006). By choosing to focus their activities in specific ways, for example scholarship, participants enhance their sense of self-worth but it can have a negative impact for institutions with participants not fully engaging with a range of academic activities in the manner which senior managers expect, leading to tensions.

Lucy agreed that institutions set challenging parameters for new academics, asking them to complete PhDs and PgCerts, alongside an increasingly high teaching load, and she had concerns about how this overloaded new staff who then either became disillusioned or left the sector. David too felt that institutions were trying to mould staff into their own view of 'what an academic is' and not reflecting on why staff coming from industry added value and brought a different perspective. He also spoke about how these demands were linked to probation in many institutions and that failed to send a message about supporting, nurturing and developing staff.

The viewpoints of participants and the Senior Managers raise questions for the higher education sector as to why institutional narratives of excellence and recognition appear to these participants to still be focused on traditional views of strength in research and scholarship. Participants felt that their institutions communicated a message about the importance of research and this created pressure as they believe their institutions are trying to mould their social identity into something that is not their strength. There is a recognition from participants that, should they want to move to another institution, they will have to engage with agendas such as research but, for those not yet engaged, the perceived pressures create tension in their social identity processes.

For social identity purposes, this means participants question what is important to them, questioning whether they value the perceived public transcript as relayed by institutions (aligning to extrinsic motivations) or their own personal hidden transcript (their intrinsic motivations). This questioning has led to number of participants displaying a sense of lack of fit with their perceived prototypical academic identity. Those who are seen as focused on professional practice and scholarship demonstrated that their avowed social identity was based on both their beliefs as to why they were appointed to their role but also their deep-rooted ideas of their own academic ability which are reinforced through their socialisation processes. As noted above, there is clear indication in the narratives that participants' academic social identity is built on their performing arts social identity. For those participants where the performing arts social identity has greater salience, their academic social identity is impacted by a potential sense of lower self-worth in their academic role, due to only engaging in scholarship, so the reliance on the performing arts social identity adds to their perceived self-value. This highlights again the tensions between students valuing previous professional experience in academic staff which is why they were appointed but universities appearing to participants to value a greater sense of conformity to an ascribed academic role.

Throughout the transition process, participants' academic social identity has been identified to be shaped by sector expectations, university expectations and demands, local department socialisation processes and participants' personal strategies to find their place in this mix.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter was designed to provide an exploration of potential patterns of experience affecting participants' social categorisation and social identity construction. These experiences were identified through how participants viewed their own social identity and discussion of the challenges facing them in their academic environments. A number of patterns and themes emerged from the analysis of the narratives.

In terms of social identity, it was clear that there are a range of views as to how they categorise themselves, but that the impact of the local team and the structures of the university appeared to play a part in their transition process. But personal issues have also been shown to impact on social identity categorisation including their cultural background and their reasons for transitioning careers. Validation of their social identity was also important which was received through gaining qualifications or completing development activities. Possible variations in how participants categorised their social identity in academia were discussed, particularly looking at self-categorisation in programme teams, departments and institutions. The process of socialisation was seen as important in the self-categorisation process, but reasons for transitioning, their own experiences of education and their approach to their creative work also appeared to be a factor. Fit was also important with one participant who expressed a lack of fit throughout his life because of his class. It is noted that this was an outlier in the data collected, yet it does raise questions about concepts of social identity in both the performing arts and academia. The two participants who expressed a lack of fit with their teams did so on professional grounds, but it is noted that both were international and from different ethnic backgrounds, which may have had an impact on their expectations in the workplace.

Much of the research into social identity highlights that individuals have multiple identities. However, there is a tendency for this research to represent these multiple social identities as distinct and not overlapping (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Hogg, Abrams and Brewer 2017). A strong theme coming through the narratives was that participants' academic social identities are layered with their performing arts social identity and not distinct. This layering of social identity can impact on how individuals view themselves in different academic groups and how they compare to other social groups. It can also have an impact on student experience and how engaged participants are with broader academic activities. This is an important outcome which opens up discussion about how those who enter academia from other industries are recognised, developed and supported in their institutions.

Examples of social mobility and competition were noted in the narratives though examples of social creativity appeared to be more common. This was seen in the career transition process as ways for participants to enhance their status by finding ways to bridge the gap between their existing knowledge and that expected by colleagues and managers. It was also seen in how participants described themselves, using terminology that made them distinct and in unspoken acts of resistance, focusing on work their own priorities rather than expectation of managers.

Whilst it is recognised that this is a small study, these emergent themes and patterns highlight some key concerns for higher education leaders. This will be discussed further in the next chapter and recommendations for the sector will be made.

# Chapter 7 – Conclusions and Recommendations

*'Limitations live only in our minds. But if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become endless'.*

*Jamie Paolinetti (<http://jamiepaolinetti.com/>)*

In order to uncover evidence of career transitions and how this impacted on participants' academic social identity, this study was designed to utilise narrative interviews to explore social identity construction. The experiences and social identities of individuals were explored from their performing arts careers through the transition to their current roles in higher education.

Previous chapters contained the literature review and discussion of the findings to re-locate and analyse the findings within the literature. In this chapter the research questions are re-examined and the contribution of the work is considered. Observations are made and recommendations for action proposed for employers. The limitations of the study are considered and further research is suggested.

## 7.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

Narrative accounts of life and work experiences can be used to gain insights into the construction of social identities and the interactions which impact on this. This approach was used to allow participants' voices to be heard, as the experiences of individuals transitioning from the performing arts to academia has not yet been widely examined.

To appraise the effectiveness of the study in addressing the research questions, each question is considered in turn.

### 7.1.1 How do social identities of staff, who have transitioned from performing arts careers into higher education change?

The narratives provide examples of participants' current academic social identities which were explored on two levels: firstly in relation to their immediate teams and organisations and secondly in relation to the salience of their different social identities.

Firstly, they were considered in relation to their identification with their institution, department and local programme team. Social identity theory suggests that more positive attitudes in support of group goals will emerge among those with social identities focused on a particular group (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007). Four broad patterns emerged which indicated participants' social identification at the time of the interviews, though it is recognised that this can change in different circumstances:

- High identification as part of a programme team;
- High identification as part of a department;
- High identification as part of an institution;
- Low identification with an institution, department or team due to lack of fit (discussed further in section 7.1.2).

The generally high identification with local parts of their institution suggests that participants should be driven by group goals and contribute to those teams positively.

Secondly, participants' social identities were also explored in relation to their performing arts social identities.

Seven of the participants appeared as high identifiers with their performing arts social identity and saw themselves employed for their specialist knowledge. They built their academic social identity on the strength of their performing arts identity. Social creativity was seen in how participants described themselves, using terminology that made them distinct and in unspoken acts of resistance, focusing on their own priorities rather than expectation of managers.



Three participants appeared to have an integrated view of their social identity, weaving together their performing arts social identity with their social identity as an academic through combining creative and academic work.

Two participants had become high identifiers with an academic social identity. However, whilst they separated their academic work from their creative practice, their social identity as an academic is still built upon their professional work as a performing arts creative and therefore upon their performing arts social identity.

This shows a more layered approach to multiple social identities rather than distinctiveness. This suggests that whilst participants were generally high identifiers in their teams, they also were high identifiers with their performing arts identity. The distinctiveness of their performing arts social identity appeared to be important in participants' self-esteem, which may reinforce the high identification with programme teams and departments but influence a lower identification with their institution or the wider academic community.

Despite the range of social identities as an academic, generally there was a positive orientation towards academia though dissatisfaction was expressed with some institutions. Only two participants mentioned the possibility of leaving academia, so it is important to recognise that this positive orientation might represent participants having found the security they sought in their career transition.

#### 7.1.2 What are the key influences in developing new social identities in academia?

Several potential influences on the self-categorisation process were observed in the narratives.

The narratives portrayed strong existing beliefs about a prototypical academic being one focused on a binary role of scholarship and research. This appears to be a belief that most participants already had when they entered academia and one that has been reinforced by what they view as a growing pressure to re-orientate their work towards research. There were strong beliefs about why

they were appointed to their academic roles which focused on professional value and distinctiveness. These beliefs enhanced their personal credibility and validated their self-esteem. However, the feeling they expressed of being pressured towards undertaking research, or believing they would be soon, could be viewed not to undermine but to reinforce their social identity, increasing their identification with their performing arts social identity and their focus on scholarship and practice.

The impact of diversity on fit in social groups was demonstrated in the narratives. George's expressed how his working-class background made him different in what he viewed as both a performing arts sector and a higher education sector institutionalised by the middle-class. The anger and emotion at not having the tools to cope in his academic role enhanced his low identification with his institution. Jennifer and Thomas highlighted professional issues for their lack of fit but both came from different cultural backgrounds and it may be that their expectations of what it means to be an academic are different from that of those with whom they work. Further research would be helpful to explore issues of intersectionality in more depth.

A perceived lack of formal socialisation in their academic institutions was highlighted by all the participants which appeared to enhance participants' feelings of being a novice and reinforce their identification with their performing arts social identities. The lack of formal induction or mentoring processes left many participants struggling to know what is expected of them in their role. In this gap, participants have sought out individuals who they believe demonstrate the prototypicality of the academic identity. Interestingly, they tended to seek out academics who are perceived to have a high status in teaching or practice which in turn reinforces their own high identification with teaching/practice and a weaker identification with research. In response, institutions and managers are seen to increase pressures to become research active or to undertake other activities. This type of response often occurs when high identifiers with a particular group feel under threat, and it may be that managers feel they need to reinforce their perceived prototypicality to ensure all academic staff perform to their expectations. However, this appears to create a cycle where participants resist those demands by focusing on

activities which further support their high identification with scholarship and practice. So managers need to find ways to better engage with staff from a practice background and to recognise the different value they can add to their organisations.

For some participants there were concerns that organisational requirements and processes went against their values. This was particularly evident in their responses to the numbers of students being taken on as opposed to the employment opportunities they believed existed for them. This set them at odds with the institution. Some participants' expectations of the levels of student engagement were different from that which they experienced, and this was seen as a challenge to their social identity as a performing arts professional. But it was noted that underlying this were concerns about student recruitment processes.

Validation of their academic social identity can be seen through specific events and examples of achievements, including completion of a PgCert in Teaching and Learning, seen almost as a 'badge' in accomplishing one part of the academic role. For those who had undertaken a PhD, this was seen as an act of social mobility to gaining access to a new academic social group. For others, their integrated approach to their scholarship, research and practice offered the validation of their integrated social identity from both within education and outside it through creative arts professionals' engagement with and recognition of their work.

#### 7.1.3 How does the changing nature of higher education impact on social identity and categorisation?

There was explicit recognition from participants that the changing nature of the higher education sector meant that the academic role was subject to increased insecurity, a greater range of metrics, and a need to engage with a wider range of activities. However, there was also a sense that this external context had not yet impacted on all participants, though they expected it to in the future. For those who identified with a scholarship and practice social identity, the impact of a changing sector was expected to be a requirement to become research active. But those who had a more integrated social identity,

or already engaging with research, saw the impact in the form of increasing demands to meet performative standards in a widening range of activities. Overall this was not seen as a major influence on social identity categorisation in the transition process, but is important to consider in terms of staff disaffection and identification with an institution.

#### 7.1.4 How strong is the fit and salience of both their performing arts and academic social identities, and how does this impact on their new role?

Social identity salience is an important concept in social identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968, Wiley 1991) and for the participants in this study, the performing arts social identity had most salience, acting as an important layer in their academic social identity. This supports McRobbie (2002) who asserted that identifying with a creative role blurs the separation between the personal and the professional.

Seven of the participants appeared as high identifiers with their performing arts social identity and saw themselves employed for their specialist knowledge. They built their academic social identity on the strength of their performing arts identity. This was seen through how they focused their activities and through the use of language, such as 'acting tutor'.

Three participants appeared to have an integrated view of their social identity, weaving together their performing arts social identity with their social identity as an academic through combining creative and academic work.

Two participants had become high identifiers with an academic social identity. However, whilst they separate their academic work from their creative practice, their social identity as an academic is still built upon their professional work as a performing arts creative and their performing arts social identity.

As noted in section 7.1.1, the distinctiveness of their performing arts social identity appeared to be important in participants' self-esteem, which may reinforce the high identification with programme teams and departments but influence a lower identification with their institution or the wider academic community.

#### 7.1.5 Where staff manage multiple social identities, how do they view them and how does this define them?

As noted above, all participants displayed multiple social identities in relation to the performing arts and academia. However, a strong theme coming through the research was that these multiple social identities were layered and not considered discreet social identities. In exploring this, there were three broad patterns which emerged:

In the first of these, the performing arts social identity was privileged, being most salient, with a strong focus by participants on their professionalism. This was used as a scaffold on which to build their academic social identity and provided a strong element of participants' self-esteem.

In the second pattern, the performing arts social identity and the academic social identity were equally salient and fully integrated.

In the third pattern, the academic social identity was given privilege but this was still built upon a less salient performing arts social identity.

#### 7.1.6 How is their career transition, and subsequent social identity, affected by the transition from expert to novice?

The transition from expert to novice is a key aspect of participants retaining a strong focus on their performing arts social identity. Stages models of skills development often progress in a linear process from novice through to expert (for example see Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986). For those transitioning into higher education, as they bring in different levels of skill and knowledge from one career but have to then learn the understanding of how that skill and knowledge can be utilised and developed in a new environment, skills development does not follow a linear model. A majority of participants readily engaged with new skills development, such as engaging with a PgCert in teaching and learning. Whilst there was a negative view of this adding to their workload, there was general recognition that these opportunities were useful..

These qualifications gave the opportunity for participants to engage with and understand their creative and teaching practice from different perspectives supporting, for example, Billett, 2001; Dall'Alba, 2006; Sandberg & Pinnington, 2006. In some participants, the process of undertaking of these qualifications enhanced their self-esteem as it gave professional validity to their existing teaching approaches. This research demonstrates that development is not a one way progression but is a dynamic process.

Breakwell (1986) identified that transition might be seen as a threat to social identity. In their transition processes, participants managed that threat by re-categorising their social identity, aligning themselves to groups which fit their perceived image of an academic and which allowed them to maintain a strong identification with their performing arts social identity (Haslam, 2004).

The threat to social identity through this transition was expressed as coming instead from the structures and processes of the academic organisations in which they work. For example, though they had prior experience of working in higher education, there was underestimation by some participants of what the role of an academic entailed and how the structures of a university worked which impacted on their journey from practice to education. It was identified that this was the arena within which most participants felt the transition from expert to novice most keenly, and this encouraged participants to rely more heavily on their performing arts social identity to negotiate their way through this.

Examples of social mobility and competition were noted in the narratives, but social creativity appeared to be more common to help participants navigate the transition process and also strengthen their self-esteem. This included finding ways to bridge the gap between their existing knowledge and that expected by colleagues and managers such as being entrepreneurial in seeking out information and role models, acting out roles and knowledge, and using language which reinforced their performing arts identity.

## 7.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis makes a claim for findings to add to the existing body of knowledge. The research questions and subsequent study contributes to existing knowledge in the following ways:

### 7.2.1 Contributing to the debate on what it means to be an academic

The changing nature of the HE sector in the UK and elsewhere has led to a growth in the literature on what it means to be an academic. Much of the literature focuses on the changing role and demands of academic staff, including increased demands to meet a range of targets and the need to be more entrepreneurial in approach (Fanghanel 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2015; Nixon, 2015). Gabriel (2010) argued that institutional expectations of being an academic are idealised and researchers have highlighted how academic identities are increasingly fragile and insecure given the intensification of performative demands (Gill, 2014; Knights and Clarke, 2014).

This research, whilst a small study, contributes to academic identity from a social identity perspective, highlighting the role of group interaction to the self-categorisation process. The work also contributes to the specific study of performing arts academics. The fact that the majority compared themselves to an out of date conceptualisation of *homo academicus* which no longer meets employer's expectations or the realities of contemporary academic roles raises questions as to whether institutions continue to reinforce this conceptualisation through their structures and frameworks.

Possible variations in how participants categorised their social identity in academia have been explored, particularly looking at self-categorisation in programme teams, departments and institutions. The process of socialisation was seen as important in the self-categorisation process, but reasons for transitioning, their own experiences of education and their approach to their creative work also appeared to be influences. Fit was also important and there was noted one participant who expressed a lack of fit throughout his life because of his class and raises questions about class and concepts of social identity in academia.

### 7.2.2 Enhancing the body of knowledge on career transitions and the role of dual professionals in the academy

The study has added additional knowledge to the limited body of work on academic transitions and dual professionals (such as Shreeve, 2011; Locke, Whitchurch, Smith and Mazenod, 2016; Dashper & Fletcher, 2019). This study highlights the impact of formal and informal socialisation processes as well as staff development activities and demonstrates a gap in institutional processes which could be improved to support dual professionals' career transition.

The research also highlights that institutions need to re-consider what their expectations are of academic staff given the rise of dual professionals and the strong identification with their industry social identity. This was reinforced by the views of senior managers in this study but it was apparent that they were not pro-active in attempting to address the issue.

### 7.2.3 Contribution to the understanding of multiple social identities

Much of the research into social identity highlights that individuals have multiple identities. However, there is a tendency for this research to represent these multiple social identities as distinct and not overlapping (for example Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Hogg, Abrams and Brewer 2017). A strong theme coming through the narratives was that participants' academic social identities are layered with their performing arts social identity and not distinct. This layering of social identity can impact on how individuals view themselves in different academic groups and how they compare to other social groups. It can also have an impact on student experience and how engaged participants are with broader academic activities. This is an important outcome which opens up discussion about how those who enter academia from other industries are recognised, developed and supported in their institutions.

## 7.3 Observations and Recommendations for Employers

The following observation and recommendations are made for universities which employ staff directly from a performing arts background. There are broad recommendations for the higher education sector as well as recommendations for individual institutions and managers.



For senior university managers it is recommended that:

7.3.1 The perceived divided relationship between research and practice is actively discussed, with explicit acknowledgement of the value added by other forms of scholarly and professional practice activity

Further discussion and debate on the perceived divide between research and practice, and the added value of other scholarly activities, is needed in the sector. It may be that the proposed KEF, designed to provide evidence of university work with the business and broader society (Research England 2019), can be a vehicle to help drive this discussion. Whilst adding another level of audit to the higher education sector, the proposed KEF might help to enhance the discussion about the value and relevance of different activities across the sector. Research England noted that arts institutions ‘may be more likely to undertake nonmonetized KE activities’ (2019:39) and the KEF pilot study included areas which might be more attractive to academics in the performing arts such as working with the public and third sector, and community engagement. It is accepted that the proposed KEF does not currently extend to Scotland, though Scottish HEIs may choose to take part, but the majority of HEIs across the UK are covered by this proposal, so it would potentially be a way to actively highlight the issue.

At an institutional level it is recommended that senior managers and line managers:

7.3.2 Develop understanding of the strength of performing arts social identity and find ways to support its distinctiveness in academic roles by recognising and communicating the value and importance of professional practice

Building on the need for sector debates, the continued high salience and distinctiveness of the performing arts identity needs to be recognised by employers and supported to enhance the value offered to the institution. From participants’ experiences, supported by the views of senior managers, there is currently a perceived gap between the rhetoric of institutions wanting to employ academics with professional practice because of the value they add to the student experience and the reality of the academic’s experience when

they commence the role. Given the layered social identities explored in participants, institutions need to review how they support academic staff in developing a distinctive academic/practice social identity. Where institutions have an academic framework, a route for 'professional practice' is recommended which allows institutions to build on the strengths of their staff and helps staff feel valued in the academic context.

### 7.3.3 Similarities between creative industries and academia are recognised, acknowledged and contextualised to support social identity development in dual professionals

The similarities between creative industries and academia include employment insecurity, a need for self-branding and the need to be entrepreneurial in approach. It is important to acknowledge Gill's assertion that 'the passionate attachment both have to their work' (2014:24) is also a similarity. Participants displayed an attachment to their work but also demonstrated a high level of professionalism. The strength of the performing arts social identity highlights their view of their work as a vocation not a job. Many bring this commitment and professionalism with them into their new academic role. The narratives demonstrated that this commitment and professionalism was sometimes felt to be under attack. A contextualisation of the similarities of the two professional contexts might assist performing arts academics to more quickly self-categorise within their institution.

### 7.3.4 Through enhanced induction and ongoing professional development activities, assist performing arts academics to explore ways to bring together their disciplinary knowledge with their knowledge of scholarship and reduce unspoken acts of resistance.

On a practical level, lack of induction has been a constraint on the process of social identity transition for the participants. As Trowler and Knight (1999) suggested, the socialisation process has to be viewed in terms of 'the individual, the department or other local unit' (ibid:181). Existing local socialisation processes and systems have been seen to enable staff to focus activities solely on areas in which they feel confident, such as teaching and administration, thereby self-perpetuating concerns for managers over staff not

being engaged in research. There is a significant role for local induction processes linked to socialisation and this should be an intensive process to develop tacit knowledge about the culture and processes of the local department and institution. It is recommended that institutions review their processes and embed a new enhanced induction which,

a) provides timely supportive advice on processes and structures to reduce the need for acts of social creativity and acting out of knowledge;

b) supports social identity development through mentoring and support to develop understanding of how dual professionals' academic practice can influence and develop professional practice internally and externally through engaging with a broad range of activities. Mentoring by academic staff who themselves have previously transitioned from performing arts to academia could be valuable in the transition process to help ensure new staff are supported to perform.

It is also recommended that institutions review how to focus their requirements of new academics in order to ensure effective time is allocated for transition processes. The prioritising of activities which have been evidenced to validate academic social identity such as a PgCert are recommended, though institutions also need to review whether the qualification they offer is fit for purpose and how it can be used to support the broader academic development of the individual. Where staff are being asked to develop new activities, such as in research, more effective support mechanisms are required to engage staff and enable this ongoing transition and reduce the perceived challenge.

#### 7.4 Study Limitations

The main limitation of the study was that it was conducted on a relatively small group who had a range of backgrounds in the performing arts. Twelve interviews were conducted, all drawn from UK modern universities. This had the advantage that participants experienced similar challenges in their transition and current role but this could also be viewed as a disadvantage as narratives were relatively homogeneous. However, a number of the

participants were based within universities which had a strong arts focus which allowed some difference in their experiences. Also, all the participants were in permanent academic roles which may mean that their voices are not representative of all dual professionals and may not highlight the insecurity of academia that might be felt by other academic staff in less secure roles.

Another limitation was that participants had a significant range of time in posts in higher education. This made it difficult to more accurately track specific events in their careers and transition process which made the most impact on them.

The focus of the research was on career transition into academia and the construction of social identities in this new environment. The research did not focus on the possible impact the transition could have on participants' performing arts social identity. Further research would be needed to understand the multi-directionality of social identity in career transitions.

The length of time spent on each of the life narratives was limited as there was recognition of the time pressures on the participants in their academic roles. So the interviews varied in time between 85 minutes to 120 minutes.

## 7.5 Further Research

A number of areas of further research have been identified.

### 7.5.1 Extension of current research

The focus of the current research could be extended to a wider sample and explored more fully from the position of specific performing arts disciplines which would allow greater in-depth analysis of performing arts social identities, and the impact of sectoral and organisational practices on social identity relevant to each discipline.

### 7.5.2 Performing Arts Social identity

A lack of research has been identified into performing arts social identities, specifically in relation to drama and dance. This could open up a new avenue of research which would add to the knowledge base.

### 7.5.3 Transitions into academia

The research could be extended to explore more fully transitions into academia from different professions to seek areas of commonality and difference. Outcomes of this could support transition processes and strengthen academic social identity across the sector.

## 7.6 Conclusion

The overarching aim of the study was to explore how academic staff construct social identities in the career transition from the performing arts into higher education. The study explored the processes of social identity construction and social categorisation and the subsequent social identities of staff who have transitioned from performing arts careers to academic roles in higher education amongst twelve academic staff.

Through re-visiting the research questions in this final chapter an assessment was made of the contribution of this study to knowledge which centres on three key areas. First it was seen to contribute to the debate on what it means to be an academic from a social identity perspective, highlighting the role of group interaction to the self-categorisation process. The study was also seen to enhance the body of knowledge on career transitions and the role of dual professionals in the academy adding additional evidence to the limited body of work on academic transitions and dual professionals and highlighting the impact of formal and informal socialisation processes as well as staff development activities. Lastly, contribution to the understanding of multiple social identities was also identified with a strong theme coming through the narratives that participants' academic social identities are layered with their performing arts social identity and not distinct.

Observations and recommendations were made for employers which would seek to address the challenges noted above. For the sector, the need for further debate on a perceived divide between research and practice was highlighted. This was followed with recommendations for institutions and managers on understanding and supporting the strength of performing arts social identity, recognising the similarities between the two sectors to support

social identity construction and enhancing induction and ongoing professional development activities to assist performing arts academics to explore ways to bring together their disciplinary knowledge with their knowledge of scholarship and reduce unspoken acts of resistance.

# APPENDIX 1      Narrative prompts

- Can you start by telling me about yourself - where you come from originally?
- What were you like growing up? What was your family life like?
- Please tell me a bit about your education and how you made your early decisions about subjects? How well did you do at school?
- How did you get into .....?
- Were there any particular people who influenced your choice to do ....?
- Did you study ..... at college or university? Why yes / why not?
- If yes, do you feel this prepared you for a professional career? If yes, why? If no, why?
- What were the main factors that made you decide to follow a professional career in .....?
- Can you tell me about your first role in film/TV/theatre/music?
- Key career moments - albums, performances, connection with arts community, recognition etc      Why key? How affect you?
- What did you learn?
- What did being an ....(actor/musician/director etc) mean to you? (values, ethics etc)
- Vocation or career?
- Importance of creativity?
- What were the reasons you moved into education?
- What was your first role in education?
- Can you tell me how you adjusted to your new role?
- Did you receive training/ induction – how did that affect you in your new role?
- Did you have a mentor or coach? If so, how did they support you?
- If not, did you have a peer network? Or professional network
- Do you think you were well suited to the role? What parts of the role did you feel most confident about?
- Did you feel adequately prepared to take on the role of an academic?
- What are the challenges you have faced and how have you adapted to meet them? Example?

- How has your role changed since you started?
- In your current role, what aspects of the role do you find the most satisfying? Why?
- Do you maintain a professional profile? If so, how do you balance the demands of working in a University with continuing a professional profile?
- Are there parts of your current job that you are less satisfied with? Why? Example?
- How do you view yourself in this role?
- Are there any tensions in your current role? Are you comfortable with your organisation's expectations? Examples?
- Do you network within your organisation or externally? Who with?
- Are you a member of any professional organisation? How do you use this membership?
- Looking back, is there anything else you would like to say about what has influenced your directions?
- Do you feel differently about yourself now and your role in the organisation from when you started – and how did that come about (what factors contributed to a change in how you viewed yourself?)
- What does being an academic mean to you?
- If someone asks you what you do, how do you introduce yourself? How do you view yourself - e.g. actor(director/designer etc) / academic / hybrid?
  - Why?
  - How does this impact on you in your work?
- Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to mention?

Thank you for taking part in this research study.



## APPENDIX 2

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