

The image features a central dark blue hexagonal logo with the text 'LEEDS COLLEGE OF ART 1846' in white. The background is a faded photograph of two people sitting at a table in a studio, looking at a wall covered in sketches and drawings. The scene is overlaid with large, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of green, yellow, and blue. The logo is positioned in the upper middle section of the image.

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‘Out of the Mouths of Babes’: Mature students and horizontal discourse in the art and design studio

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researcher's Story



- I was a working class girl with a grammar school education
- I was the first person in my family to go to university and then to work in education
- I have worked in adult education, community arts, Prison education, Access education, teacher training and Art and Design Higher Education
- Students have occasionally told me that education has changed them, they see the world in a different way.

I have constructed my own story around education and transformation

Am I too ready to believe education can transform lives

Do I have an 'investment' in believing that education transforms lives?



The Project

What experiences do post-Access students have as undergraduates in art and design Higher Education?

How are they positioned as 'other' by horizontal discourse within the art and design studio?

Methodology

Longitudinal study from 2011 to 2014

All participants have previously achieved an *Access to HE Diploma* course in art and design.



9 students opted to take part, 3 men and 6 women

1 dropped out, 5 continued to study at the art school 3 when to a local HEI.

Participants are given other names to protect identities

Stories were collected at various points during their degrees through narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004)

Connecting every day stories to inclusive and exclusive education

- ‘linking micro processes (language, transmission, and pedagogy) to macroforms—to how cultural and educational codes, the content and processes of education are related to social class and power relations’ (Bernstein paraphrased by Sadovnik, 2001, p692).

Bernstein, Ricoeur and narrative

- ‘Both are concerned with the social circumstances that constrain individuals in the production of narratives ...Both are linked by the agreement that to be denied the experience of social life through narratives is to be rendered powerless not only at a formal level but in the act of interpretation itself,’ (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p. 254).

- Bernstein was concerned with the fluidity of the biographical as it intersects with the fluidity of the social. This is also echoed in Ricoeur's (1994) work *Oneself as another*.
- *The individual to be an individual must be part of a social relation* (Dickinson and Erben, 1995, p. 259).
- Within the work of Ricoeur and Bernstein there is a connection with the universal and the particular.
- Erben (1998, p.14) said that socio-historical reality can be captured through a complex and singular account about one person's experience.

Horizontal and Vertical discourse

- horizontal discourse - context-bound, segmented, informal language
- vertical discourse - hierarchically organised, recontextualising and abstract language (Bernstein 1999, pp.158-159).

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

Open plan studio as a site of horizontal discourse



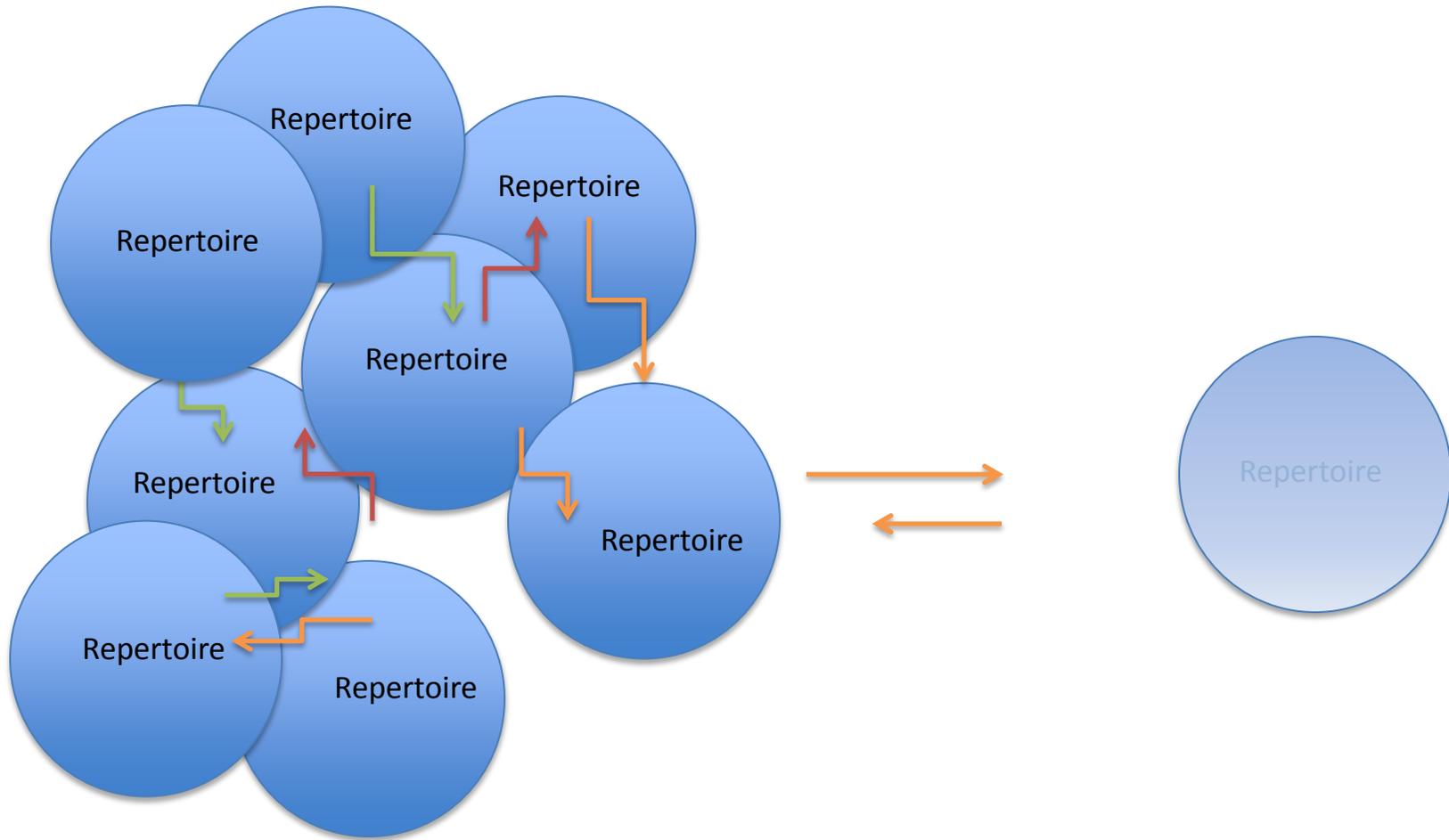
Bernstein, 1999

TABLE II

	Vertical discourse	Horizontal discourse
Practice	Official/institutional	Local
Distributive principle	Recontextualisation	Segmentation
Social relation	Individual	Communalised
Acquisition	Graded performance	Competence

Repertoire and reservoir

- Individuals develop their own repertoire of strategies for success from the reservoir of the group through day-to-day discourse
- *Clearly the more members are isolated or excluded from each other, the weaker the social base for the development of either repertoire or reservoir. (Bernstein 1999 p.60)*



Reservoir of studio based horizontal knowledge

Horizontal discourse and 'othering'

- *Othering* language and curriculum used in institutions constructs a person or a group of people as being outside the realm of hegemonic normalcy by suggesting a *them/us* binary opposition (Gorski, 2009, p313).

Art and Design students

- Vince – mid 50s, white, working class, full-time student
- Eliza – early 50s, Black, professional, part-time student

Post-Access undergraduates are constructed as different

- Students who have come from a 'non-traditional' Access route (Hudson, 2009); may look visibly different due to age, race, gender, disability; may act differently due to social class, religious backgrounds or previous experiences; are usually in the minority within an art and design programme; are at risk of being 'othered' by art and design pedagogic discourses and practices.

Vince's Story BA (Hons) Interdisciplinary Art and Design



- Vince is in his early 50s and has always wanted to go to art school
- He left school early to please his parents so he could get into a trade in refrigeration which has been his career throughout his working life.
- He started going to evening classes in jewellery making, then he did an Access course in Art and design. He started his degree in Interdisciplinary art and design.
- He is slowly improving on his course and is quick to make external links with other practitioners
- Vince is constantly self-critical and is not confident in writing essays being referred on his first context module

- Vince is really developing his studio practice
- He is talked about regretting not coming to art school earlier and worries how he will pay his student loan back
- Vince tells the researcher that a younger student has told him to Vince is also thinking about the future and has plans for setting up projects with schools.



[Would Vince have wanted to go to Art College after school]

There's two ways of looking at it really - maybe I would have... maybe I've got to a point where I get more out of it now than I would have when I was younger I don't know, it's one of those, would I, could I, should I? It's a bit silly talking like that now in fact. I had this conversation with one of the younger guys and he said - Andrew it was - and really - out of the mouths of babes - he says:

"Well you keep going on about how you wish you'd done that years ago. You're doing it now and really that's it, you know, time starts now."

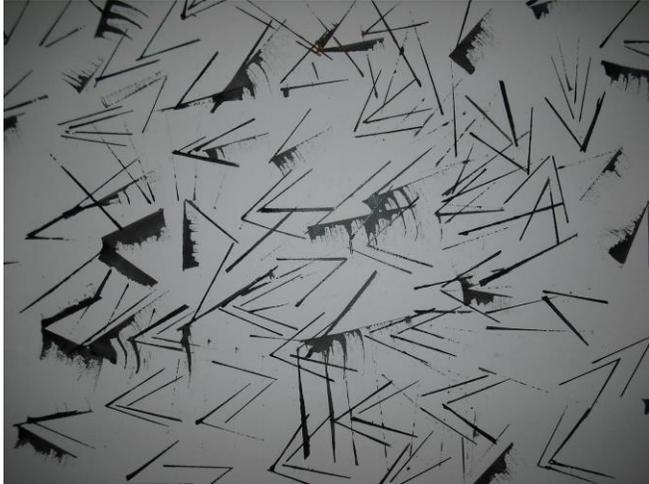
So I've got that in my head now - that's it - I'm not going to talk about all that 'wish I'd done it years ago' yeah. (Vince, 2012)

I kind of compare myself to those who have just left school so they're used to writing loads of stuff, the essays and that kind of thing.

I'm better organised than I was. I wished I'd done more writing stuff on my Access and I hated essays then.

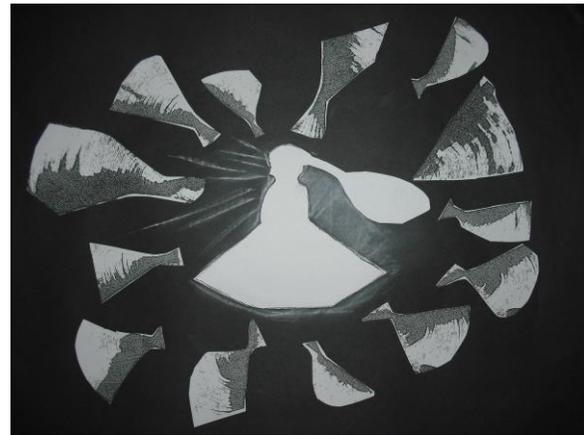
What I can say - sometimes when I get reading about things I actually enjoy it, you know, but I hate this anxiety of deadlines, I'm slow at that kind of thing.

Eliza's story – BA (hons) Textiles (part-time)



- Eliza has already has a degree and works in a professional job.
- She is in her early 50s and needs to work and study part-time.
- She has excellent dress-making skills but seems to be frustrated as she doesn't feel she is achieving on her degree.

- She plans would like to use her textiles skills to change her career path in the future.
- Eliza's job is very demanding and balancing work and study is not always easy.
- Throughout the meetings with me Eliza has reported feeling uncertain what is expected from her on her degree.



Doing the assignments was a bit of a nightmare because I wasn't sure what I was doing - I was given work the same as full-time so it was very confusing and I'd say, "well how much?" "We don't expect you to do as much work." but "What work do I need to do?" So it was a bit frustrating. (Eliza 2011)

I just felt, well I don't know what I'm doing. I'm having to fit in but nobody's actually explaining anything properly or finding out stuff I should know. Found out about and using their moodle, for instance. They say to book on there but they don't put anything on it. I don't know where anything is in order to put anything in and there's been a few times when - me being me – I have to have a conversation with various tutors “what's going on, don't know anything about this?” (Eliza, 2012)

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

What can we learn from the stories?

- Horizontal discourse allows students to develop a repertoire of strategies for success from the studio reservoir of horizontal knowledge.
- Part-time students find it more difficult to develop a repertoire, also their own contribution can not conversely enrich the reservoir .
- Horizontal discourse between students positions mature students as different.
- Mature students can be complicit in perpetuating the discourse of being different .
- Self-critical and lack of confidence.
- Not always improvement over time



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