

Being Betwixt and Between Strangeness: An Autoethnographic
Exploration of Transition

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**Being Betwixt and Between Strangeness: An Autoethnographic
Exploration of ~~Transition~~**

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Abstract

In general terms, ~~transition~~ is considered to be linear movement across periods of change. This thesis aims to question and challenge such conceptualisations, offering a reconsideration of what ~~transition~~ means and how it might be experienced. The research explores a Senior Lecturer's personal experiences of moving to a new place of work, entangled with the experiences of undergraduate students as they move to university. Competing perspectives of ~~transition~~ as passage through an onwards and upwards trajectory to blurred and disjointed happenings are pursued in order to make gestures towards new representations of ~~transition~~ as a complex notion, which can disorientate and make the familiar strange.

Using a postmodern analytic autoethnographic methodology, the research works with data from a research journal, focus groups and interviews, to engage and grapple with the concepts of identity, self and other. It is a grappling, which has the capacity to unsettle conventional, totalising interpretations of what might seem to be the 'reality' of ~~transition~~. The methodology is put to work in pursuit of alternative and fractured stories of ~~transition~~, through the entwining of multiple and mutual selves.

Psychoanalysis provides the theoretical framework, working, in particular, with Kristeva's notions of subjectivity and rejection of other, alongside Lacan's mirror stage and graph of desire in an attempt to further understand ~~transition~~ and the impact it has on identity. This includes reference to a personal reconceptualisation of the abject as 'worksickness' and how this is manifested as a proactive endeavour to make the strange familiar.

The data analysis is structured around 'illusions' rather than themes that allow for the interrogation of shadowy 'figures' emerging from the data: 'tour and detour', 'betwixt and between' and 'pollution'. Through the use of a number of mirror metaphors, the analysis shatters the data into fragments to create multiple diversions that maintain the entanglement of identities, rather than an essentialist rendering of a 'self/other' dichotomy.

This study represents transition as an incomplete and paradoxical experience, which can both threaten and create barriers to, as well as strengthening aspects of identity, offering ways to reconfigure new and competing representations of self. It concludes that if transition is never achieved, since we are always in movement, then the strategies that are often used to 'smooth' transition require reconsideration.

1 Introductory Thoughts: Disturbing 'aboveground' ways of thinking

"What has happened to me?" he thought. It was no dream (Kafka, 1915:1).

With Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis in mind, momentarily I turn to look at my own reflection in the bathroom mirror.

With a cursory glance I feel reassured that it will reflect a familiar self back to me. I do not question, I see myself as opposed to the other. There are boundaries between me and not me, what is inside and what is outside. It is the coherent, uncomplicated 'aboveground' me (Carter, 1995). Looking again, at a different time, in a different place, my body's reflection in the mirror does not seem to so easily define who I am (becoming). The 'belowground' image I now see, reflects (an)other, I am both bounded to my(self) and borderless with the other. There is (my)self with (an)other, but there is also strangeness; a strangeness like that which Gregor Samsa felt, "What has happened to me?". This paradox of self with other violates who I know myself to be, who I knew myself to be. When I look again, into the 'blackness of the mirror's border, the seeming void' (Hendricks, 1997:79), there is something else. A something, which stirs within me,

a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing (Kristeva, 1982:2).

In this reflection, I suddenly see and feel (my)self being dragged through the boundaries of the mirror and into the 'blackness' of the void, breaking my body into fragments as my transitioning takes me beyond the 'aboveground' safety and clearly demarcated boundaries of my(self), so that I become disparate, disorientated, "something" and somewhere else; 'belowground'.

Moving between Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' and reflections on my own experiences of change, these texts provide a way into thinking about transition. In Kafka's novel, Gregor Samsa awakens from sleep to find that he has transformed into a giant insect. He remains this way throughout the story, which focusses on his own and his family's

attempts to understand and deal with a sudden and unexpected transition, the change in his identity. Beginning with a striking transformation, the story goes on to provide an interesting framework for how a (dis)connected family wrestles with change, reflecting on the ways the process of transformation influences each of them, which leads to their own transitioning.

Other more anticipated and commonplace transitions, such as a child starting nursery, or moving from nursery to school, and later from school to college; a child becoming a teenager and then an adult; moving house; starting work; changing jobs; significant birthdays; bereavements and breakdown of relationships, can all require the individual to 'deal' with the experience, whilst those around them also become mutually entangled within it. Transitions, however ordinary, are often not experienced in isolation and most, from the first transition a baby encounters, from inside her mother's body, to the outside world, involve a separation from being connected to one thing, in some way, to becoming connected to another, whether that be physical, emotional, cognitive, social and/or cultural (dis)connection.

With a particular focus on transitioning into a higher education institution, this thesis is concerned with how transitions occur, are experienced and can be understood in different ways by different individuals. If encountering transition through a simple, uncomplicated 'aboveground' way of thinking (Carter, 1995) constrained by the confines of logic and 'reality', then the process might be perceived as linear. An 'aboveground' notion of transition is deemed straightforward, an anticipated passage from one stage to another through time; from the past to the present in preparation for the next transition in the future. Such linear trajectories are associated with changes, transformations or adjustments, where metaphors of 'journey' or 'pathway' are frequently used to explain and understand how a person becomes transitioned (for example, Cantor et al., 1987; Gale and Parker, 2014). Transition, if perceived in this way, might also be suggestive of a deterministic, conventional orientation to the arrival at an 'I' that is stable, which culminates ultimately with becoming irreversibly 'transitioned'.

Transition can also be understood as a process of change through the life course (for example, Bynner, 2008; Hviid and Zittoun, 2008; Maunder et al., 2012), which is not

demarcated with separate and distinct transitions to be achieved, but an evolving process of navigation through and amongst socio-cultural structures and systems, such as schools and universities, which may either empower or disempower the individual as part of the process of transition. Transition understood in this way might involve an individual negotiating a series of ongoing physical, emotional and psychological changes across and through time, which could create shifts in identity as the transition evolves. Although not entirely perpetuating a linear journey, since these changes may necessitate difficult and challenging navigation, there remains the idea that transition is still a state to be arrived at.

Colley (2007), Ecclestone et al. (2010), Quinn (2010) and Fenwick (2013) offer a postmodern, more complex way of understanding transition. In order to challenge and find alternative readings of the linear and socio-cultural views of transition, I aim to contribute to such postmodern intellectual projects by using 'above' and 'belowground' entanglements. In doing this, I extend Carter's (1995) 'aboveground' analogy and juxtapose it with what I refer to as a 'belowground' way of thinking; a way of thinking, which both allows and encourages us to question and engage with disorienting and disturbing encounters, so that we may think, feel and experience them in different ways. When perceiving transition in this way, it comes to be represented as something that is much more elusive, since through the whole of the life course, we are seen as being in transition, where shifts in our identities are fluid and so we always remain entangled within the constant flux of our transitioning. In more postmodern 'belowground' perspectives, we are not seen as ultimately being able or needing to transition and so it is an ongoing, at times disorienting, notion. It is important however, to not simply acknowledge that some transitions may be more reflective of a 'belowground' experience, but to also consider the implications for those who experience different encounters with transition.

The incongruity produced when an 'aboveground' meta-narrative of transition as a linear construct is juxtaposed with the intricacies and peculiarities of an alternative 'belowground' encounter with transition as incoherent and unstable, opens up interesting ways for these ideas to work together. This thesis makes use of 'belowground' thinking as a disruption to what is 'known' and 'understood' in order to

grapple with traditional and more contemporary notions of transition and come to new ways of thinking about the process.

In seeking conceptualisations that unsettle more traditional views of transition, I do not intend to dismiss or reject other conceptualisations, but to build an augmented understanding and in doing so, I consider Granger's (2011:34) view that through 'theoretical or contemplative interpolation' we can never fully know ourselves or others. In attempting to reconceptualise transition therefore, I do so tentatively, working with whatever is between 'implication and possibility' (Ibid).

1.1 Transitioning into Higher Education: the policy and practice context

In whichever way it is perceived or explained transition can be viewed as a common phenomenon and in particular, in an educative capacity, a phenomenon experienced by all learners, including those who seek access to an increasingly diverse higher education system. Within recent years, since the 1970's, the generation of young people attending university are the first to do so having experienced a period of radical and political reform. Such reform has come about as a result of the diversification of higher education, driven both by a need for a knowledge based economy and government intervention to widen opportunities and access for school leavers to university study (Trow, 1973). The political reform, in relation to transition, continues through national bodies, such as the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which refers to the need for national, institutional and departmental policy and strategy to 'support and enhance' student transition (HEA, 2015a). Such current policy is linked, in particular, to the widening participation agenda. For example, schemes, such as Aimhigher, which has since come to an end in its original format and has been replaced by a slimmed down version (HEA, 2015b), promotes access to higher education in order to improve social mobility. Other support for transition comes through policies that are aligned to key issues that relate to retention and persistence, success and engagement, funding and employability (Crabtree, et al., 2007; Kift et al., 2010). Recently, the Government's proposed Higher Education and Research Bill (Parliament. House of Commons, 2016), although attracting opposition to some elements of the reform, such as the Teaching Excellence Framework and a proposed rise in tuition fees, suggests a commitment to a

student experience that meets student expectations and supports achievement regardless of background. Although support for transition is not explicit in the reform, it will need to form part of the provision under such a student-centric agenda.

Complimenting this political reform, has been a great deal of research in and around educational transitions and in particular, in relation to the first year experience of higher education (Johnston, 2010). Much of this relates to student expectations and alignment with institutional practices and how, if there is a failure of fit between the two, then support for transition focusses on retention, as opposed to the individual's needs and their choices. The research tends to view transition as a universal, group experience, where there is less of a focus on an individual's experience of transition. Recent findings (for example, Warin and Dempster, 2007; Zittoun, 2008; Hussey and Smith, 2010; Leese, 2010) highlight the challenges and barriers to transition, stressing the value of understanding the process of transition at an individual level and the importance of recognising how personal histories are used by individuals to navigate university life. However, within this research there remains a lack of emphasis on how we might actually support the individual in transition.

1.2 Project aims and research questions

This thesis problematises and challenges some of the more commonly held notions of transition as a linear movement across time and compliments other work that reconfigures the process as complex, difficult to define and make sense of. In this endeavour, there are two interconnected flows of enquiry running through the study: the first comes out of my own experiences as I made, what I first believed to be, a linear transition, a move from one higher education institution to another; the second is located around my concern to understand better, the transitional experiences of undergraduates as they move from school or college to university.

Bridging these flows of enquiry, are the four key aims of the study: the first is to interrogate the processes and problematics of transition in order to think differently about how it is experienced, understood and supported in educational contexts. This has become an increasingly important focus for me because I was thrown into such

disarray by the complexity of my own experience as I moved into a new job, together with the failings of the meta-narratives I found to dominate the literature and research around transition. I had expected some challenges, including the need to physically re-orientate, but I had not anticipated the sense of complete disorientation, which seemed to interfere with each aspect of (my)self. In addition to this, I had increasingly noticed that some of the undergraduates, who had recently started university, were also experiencing transition in different ways. I began to question the nature of transition and whether the support strategies that had been put in place, particularly in relation to induction, were meeting the needs for those individuals whose transitioning did not seem to fit a one size fits all approach.

The second aim is to examine the literature that underpins popular beliefs, assumptions and practices about transition so that it can be recontextualised in relation to new conceptualisations. As intimated above, currently there is a plethora of literature around higher education transition, much of it responds to the notion as something that can ultimately be achieved, even if there are aspects of non-linearity within the transition. I am keen to develop a more expansive conceptualisation of transition that is able to draw in related theoretical ideas around identity, strangeness and being betwixt and between. This is in order to contribute, in a different way, to the growing number of studies that focus on a sense of being lost within transition, how transition is more aligned to life in flux and experienced from the position of being neither here or there, disorientated and unable to move.

Thirdly, this study aims to develop an analytic autoethnographic approach to research that enables multiple experiences of transition to be analysed in order to rethink how we support transition. In order to interrogate the complexities of transition in relation to the literature and theoretical positions I am taking, it is important to develop a methodological framework that can be both sensitive to, whilst interrogating the entangled and disorienting sensations that can accompany some transitional experiences.

Finally, the study aims to use psychoanalytic concepts to challenge traditional notions of self in transition in order to create more critical perspectives and practices in

education. I regard this as an important undertaking because if the self is not deemed stable, then it is important to find ways to acknowledge the multiplicity and complexity of selves in transition.

The following research questions help to frame and orient the study:

1. How will reflections on my own transition, together with undergraduate students' experiences, inform a reconceptualisation of transition?
2. How will the reconceptualisation of transition influence my work supporting future undergraduates' transitions to university?
3. How will reflecting on their own transition provide opportunities for Childhood Studies students to think differently about supporting the transitions of the children they may go onto work with?
4. How might transition come to be considered when traditional notions are disrupted?

This study enables me to rethink transition for my own professional purposes to support the increasingly diverse range of future students in their move to a higher education context, whilst also opening a space for students' own rethinking of transition as they go on to work with children and their families.

I pause here to acknowledge the place of the students who have participated in this autoethnographic study. I teach on an undergraduate BA (Honours) degree programme in Childhood Studies. The majority of students are female (95%), many live at home and commute on a daily basis (56%). At 29%, the number of students from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average (18%) (Equality Challenge Unit, 2011, cited in Stevenson, 2012). The percentage of students classed as mature (21 years and older) is 19%, which is lower than the national average of 30% (National Union of Students, 2012). Many students choose this course as they articulate a strong commitment to wanting to work with children. A significant percentage plan to go on and train to be teachers but more recently, more are expressing a desire to work beyond the confines of a school and out in the wider local community, in health and social services or for children's charities.

The four undergraduate students who participated in this research are all identified by at least one 'non-traditional' characteristic of a university undergraduate: mature; from a minority ethnic group; first to attend university in the family or from a working class background. I use the term 'non-traditional' carefully though and I question its use since it is based on a post war definition (Munro, 2011) and although the other participants in this study would fit into the remit of widening participation, so too would the majority of other undergraduates on the course. The participants attend a university that is 'committed to assisting entry to higher education to applicants from low income families' (University Agreement, 2015-2016). The most recent data available shows that the university has a relatively high proportion of students from under-represented, 'non-traditional' groups with 48% of students eligible to full state support and 62% living in families with incomes below the upper income threshold for maintenance grants (ibid.).

1.3 Transition as disorientation: being somewhere else

Ahmed (2006) explains that disorientation involves our bodies failing to fit into spaces that results in us feeling 'somewhere else' or makes us believe that 'what is "here" becomes strange' (160). As we attempt to navigate this 'somewhere' space 'the ground into which we sink our feet is not neutral: it gives ground to some more than others' (Ahmed, 2006:160). As transition can be perceived as (dis)orientation through such worlds as those Ahmed refers to, this study gives consideration to the diverse, differentiated and individual worlds of those that walk through it.

The idea of disorientation is extended in this study with the use of mirrors as a metaphor for reflection that I put to work throughout. In the teaching session outlined below, I was struck by the students' and my own reflections as we reminisced about our seemingly complex and disorienting sense of transitioning. In addition, Lacan's (1966) mirror stage became an important aspect of the theoretical framework as I started to understand and reflect on the implications of unstable and illusionary versions of self in transition.

Carrying these ideas of instability through into the analysis, I make use of Lewis Carroll's 'Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There', to suggest that seemingly linear notions of transition may also appear to confuse and disorientate. The story of Alice is reflective of a journey from childhood to adulthood, which uses a game of Chess and various interactions with nonsensical characters to demonstrate the inevitability of growing up. Although this journey seemingly reflects the author's deterministic view of the world, which in turn is reflective of linear movement through transition, Alice's imagined, straightforward passage through the mirror exposes her to layers of challenge, 'blackness' and epistemological uncertainty, which are more suggestive of an alternative, 'belowground' experience of transition. Like Gregor Samsa, Alice is required to engage with the strangeness in order to navigate it.

I turn to texts such as those by Carroll and Kafka in order to dis- and re-orientate myself within the idea of transition. These texts, along with the substantive and theoretical literature and the data, acknowledge a stronger sense of other and multiple selves in transition and open up opportunities for the use of metaphors that enable me to position my(self) in relation to those 'others'. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose that metaphors allow for connections and relationships to be made between one kind of thing in terms of another and Atkinson (1995:24) develops this idea, writing that metaphors 'enable a new way of seeing, and add a new dimension to a term we might not otherwise think of in that light'. My use of the looking glass as a metaphor, and Alice's encounters as she moves through it, are significant in terms of helping me to engage with my own experiences of transition and those of other participants along with the psychoanalytic and substantive literature in ways I might not otherwise have been open to. At times, the looking glass acts as a stabilising frame, along with Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, with/in which I am able to consider all the multilayered and entangled texts. However at other times, the figures used in those texts work more intensely on, and with the theory and the empirical data, forcing transition as an 'object [to be] pulled out of shape by its framings...' (Rifkin, 2003:122). My developing notion of transition as non-linear and unexpected is further distorted by the looking glass, allowing me to articulate new representations, such as the illusionary and paradoxical nature of transition. Rifkin takes this idea further, 'equally, those framings [are] pulled out of

shape by the object' (2003:122). Rackin (1987) suggests that Alice's encounters through the looking glass, for example, are represented by Carroll as a deterministic and developmental process of becoming an autonomous I. Through her linear and journey-oriented trajectory, I am able to critique this view of a journey through, and look beyond to more unstable and unsettling experiences of the main character Alice. Through my developing reconceptualisation of transition, I pull the expected and familiar reflection in the looking glass 'out of shape' and inflect it with the complexity of multiple reflections and refractions of multiple selves in transition.

In addition to this metaphorical looking glass, the empirical materials encounter distortions in a house of mirrors, which reflect, refract and re-view them in deliberately obscure and disorienting ways. In the concluding section of the thesis, I look through a rear view mirror to add a further layer of complexity to the idea of reflection. These mirror metaphors are used to help me to think differently about concepts, theories and methodologies in order to disrupt some of the more linear representations of transition.

In keeping with the use of mirror as metaphor, whilst setting the scene for an autoethnographic account of a recent personal and somewhat disorienting transition in relation to who I thought I was, and who I was/am becoming, I return here to my own reflections in the bathroom mirror at the outset of this Introduction. My transition to a new place of work was unsettling and I reflected on it as an unstable and challenging period of adjustment, not sudden or extreme, like Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis, or magical and nonsensical like Alice's adventure through the looking glass, simply mundane and commonplace, but unexpected just the same. At the outset, what I encountered, in terms of my assimilation into a new team, was not what I anticipated. My perception at the time was that some of my colleagues saw me as 'radically separate', a newcomer to the role of Senior Lecturer and as a novice in the discipline; 'Not me' and yet I saw myself as an experienced and knowledgeable professional; 'not nothing', who had a contribution to make. This resulted in a sense of physical, emotional and cognitive disorientation that led to a feeling 'of "something" that I do not recognise as a thing' (Kristeva, 1982:2). As the extract from Kristeva's text intimated, trying to grapple with a coherent self is troublesome when we find ourselves transitioning in a world in which our usual practices, thoughts and behaviours are questioned and are

inexplicable; where our 'belowground' worlds are always in constant flux. Moving through this disorientation of self, led to a feeling of being excluded to 'somewhere else' (Ahmed, 2006:160) and resulted in me beginning to document my reflections on my own transitioning. I recall that the uneasiness did not subside as time went on and the traditional notion of transition denoted by a start, middle and end point, by a stable and consistent self, was unravelling. This experience seemed different to other personal transitions that were more linear, bounded by time, with a clearer end point where I felt settled and so I began to question the certainty of what I had previously come to understand about this process and to consider just what transition might or might not be.

Mid-way through my first term teaching undergraduate Bachelor of Arts Childhood Studies students (October to December 2013), I taught a session on 'Supporting Transitions' as part of a personal and academic development seminar. In the session, the students were asked to reflect on how they had felt at the start of induction week (some 5 weeks previously) and how they felt now. It was as a direct result of this session that I realised that while many of the students were grappling with their transitioning, so was I. The transition to a new place of work and to university life was not always going smoothly and the change was not necessarily being embraced. A number of the students seemed to be finding the transition from previous study to university level study difficult and I observed what I would describe as a gulf between student and tutor expectation. These entangled experiences - my own alongside some of the students - led me to a focus on transition for this study.

1.4 Entangling data: transition as productive contradiction

To evoke something of the interconnected individual and collective process of transition, there is a deliberate flowing movement throughout this thesis between data collated as part of my own experience of transition, set amongst the data focusing on the transitions of four undergraduate students. As I aim to reconceptualise transition as something beyond a linear representation, whilst also emphasising the process as both

individual and collective with the boundaries between self and other always under erasure, the data, which is drawn from multiple sources is used in diverse and accumulative ways throughout. The participant data was collected from a series of focus groups that took place with myself and the participants in May and November 2014, one to one dyadic interviews between myself and each participant in June/July 2015 and from a journal that I kept from October 2013 to January 2015. All participant data is italicised throughout to distinguish it from the other text. Data, as individual fragmented stories, are found at the beginning of, and interspersed throughout all sections, always niggling away at, interruptive to, and menacing the narrative. It may seem unusual to include data prior to the methodology and data analysis, however, the inclusion of data fragments in this way is deliberate and intended to provoke some of the emerging discussions, giving the reader a sense of the direction of the flow of the study. A little like the process of transition itself might be, this study is not a linear journey with a clear beginning, middle and end, but a series of toing and froing, moving forwards and backwards over time. With this in mind, fragments of data are used in particular ways throughout to interrupt any sense of linearity, interjecting and influencing my thinking, theoretically, methodologically and as I work with the substantive issues related to transition.

Further to this, the data is identifiable as individual voices through the use of pseudonyms, however, the particular data source and time frame of data collection are withheld to resist giving a sense of specific duration and linearity. My rationale for this is to avoid seeking single, sanitised stories of transition but to engage with multiple voices, which at times become entangled with, but always distinct from each other to emphasise the continual construction and deconstruction of self in transition. The use of pseudonyms attached to the fragments of data is therefore significant because, although through an analytic autoethnography I use a 'multidirectional analytic gaze into self and other simultaneously' (Hausbeck and Brents, 2003:8), I do not wish to negate the sense of individuality within the fragmented stories of transition, as I argue that we can only offer support for transition if we understand it as an individual phenomenon. In doing this, I recognise my location as implied narrator, occupying a privileged position, and so the use of data as voices, as well as and other than my own,

begins to hint at polyvocality, which is then further pursued through the use of mirrors in the data analysis. These mirrors aim to disperse the privilege through reflecting and refracting the individual experiences of transition.

In my attempts to avoid a privileging of empirical data, I endeavour to proactively engage in a polyvocal way with a much broader and flatter conceptualisation of data throughout this thesis. This broader notion includes not just the important empirical materials gathered from the participants, but also my own data, various sources of literature, theory and metaphorical ideas such as the looking glass and mirrors. I want to honour the participants but I also want to do so along with the other texts that I have encountered. It is not just the data of the participants and my own autoethnographic data that I found to be working on me, but the theory, literature and the metaphors that were becoming entwined in the ongoing entangled process of reconceptualising transition. In a similar way to St Pierre's (2010:180) experience, '...all the activities of the narrative – data collection, analysis, and interpretation – happened simultaneously...everything happened at once'.

Derrida (1974:162, cited in St Pierre, 2010:177), encourages us to begin 'wherever we are; in a text where we already believe ourselves to be'. The additional use of Alice and Gregor Samsa act as additional selves in transition; the shadowy figures that I come into contact with as I follow the process of the research and who have contributed to my developing reconceptualisations. The readings of these texts among many others had merged and were themselves entangled in the generation of the reconceptualisations.

St Pierre (2010) talks about data that is not so obviously provided from traditional research methods such as observations and interviews. She classifies such data as 'emotional, dream, sensual and response data' (185). What she describes as 'response data' resonates with me in terms of my decision to turn to fictional literature and the voices of Alice and Gregor Samsa in particular, to help with my reconceptualisation of transition. St Pierre's (2010) 'response data' is explained as data gathered from others as part of the research process. She includes, as part of these responses, authors whose texts she reads respond to her questions. She explains,

All these others move me out of the self-evidence of my work and into its absences and give me the gift of different language and practice with which to trouble my commonsense understanding of the world. They help me move toward the unthought' (185).

Through the autoethnographic emphasis of my work, it is my own movement towards Alice and Gregor's voices, as 'response data', that help me to encounter ideas that I have not considered before; such as paradox, illusion and how we might pollute others and be polluted by transitional experiences.

St Pierre and Jackson (2014) acknowledge the value of many sources of data, such as theoretical literature and Brinkmann (2014) extends this to include what he refers to as 'stumble data' (724). Stumble data, such as conversations, books, advertising, objects, everyday episodes and situations 'are not simply given, as "data," but, at certain times, they may cause us to stumble—and thereby *become* data' (Ibid). At another time, I might have 'stumbled' upon many other sources and voices, but Carroll's looking glass and Kafka's Gregor Samsa were those that ignited me as I pondered the complexities of transition in this thesis. At times, fictional data seemed to resonate more strongly with my reconceptualisation of transition than did my own data, or the data from the participants, perhaps because on some level there was, 'a constitution and emergence of the data and concept that occurred simultaneously' as I was 'thinking with/in the larger theoretical framework' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:ix).

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The Literature Review uses Colley's (2007) four conceptualisations of transition to structure the literature in order to set the scene for the reconsideration of transition. In this reconsideration, I also make reference to some of the literature that considers the role of identity, agency and structure in transition since these concepts are influential in transitional experiences. Colley (2007) presents her conceptualisations as progressive, moving from traditional linear ideas of transition and then moves beyond through socio-cultural and postmodern considerations. Although this may seem to be maintaining a

notion of transition and a metaphor that I wish to avoid, I think that the decision to follow Colley's lead offers a clearer way through the literature in order to begin to problematise and rethink what has come before.

In order to unpack further and develop the references in some of the literature around disorientation, strangeness and a sense of the 'belowground', I turn to the Theoretical Framework, to wrestle with self and other through a psychoanalytic lens. In particular, I use Lacan's (1966) mirror stage and graph of desire, which offer a more fragmented and contradictory interpretation of transition; as the self seeks an autonomous identity that can never be achieved and Kristeva's (1982) concept of abjection, that allows me to develop a more polluted and less familiar perspective. This psychoanalytic lens affords me the opportunity to develop an alternative way of thinking about and representing transition. Through the emphasis on self as fragmented, I open up opportunities to consider transition as something more strange, less stable and non-linear than some of the literature suggests. I make reference to the notion of 'worksickness' as a way to make sense of my own transition outside of the confines of more recognisable representations. I also draw on Van Gennep's (1960) second stage of transition in rites de passage, to focus specifically on Turner's (1964) interpretation of being 'betwixt and between', where the self in transition is neither here nor there. A fragmented and unstable self, whose 'strangeness' can pollute those around them.

Since the aim of the study is to rethink transition and to avoid the meta-narratives that continue to permeate the concept, which are still evident in much of the policy and practice around transition, the Methodology examines the details of the qualitative research framework I use, which is informed by a postmodern orientation. In my pursuit of a more complex and challenging conceptualisation of transition, I realise the need to use a methodology that would enable me to collect a range of entangled data over time. I examine the methodological literature through the writing of an analytic autoethnography, whereby (my)self, as participant and researcher, is positioned alongside other participants. Such a methodology creates a space for both my experiences of transition to a new institution, and those of the students to university, to work together to build a challenging and complex representation of our experiences as we 'sense' transition.

I then contend with the process of presenting and analysing the data. Deliberately playing with expectations to 'reflect' and participants being able to undertake straightforward practices of 'reflection' on the process of transition, I use the metaphors of looking glass and house of mirrors, to fracture these fantasies. I use illusions rather than themes to analyse transition and as illusions are departures from 'reality' (Gregory, 1997), they offer opportunities to consider experiences of transition from different perspectives and for the data to be interpreted in different ways. In addition to the fragments of data from myself and the participants, I include the voices of Gregor Samsa and Alice, who appear as additional contributors to a polyvocal story of transition.

I conclude my study by utilising the metaphor of rear view mirror to reflect back on the process of this research whilst simultaneously looking forward to how it continues to influence my evolving perceptions of transition by bringing together the ideas, theories and new conceptualisations that have been discussed in the previous sections. I offer a representation of transition that contributes to some more contemporary notions that consider it as fluid and fragmented and I make some suggestions for how, with such knowledge of transition, we might reconsider how we support our own and others in transition.

2 Literature Review: (Dis)orienting transition

'I think you are always transitioning through that process' (Minnie)

This part of the thesis examines the literature that represents a movement from 'aboveground', straightforward and progressive ideas of transition to more complex and emerging 'belowground' conceptualisations. I use Colley's (2007) four conceptualisations of transition as an organisational framework, which moves from linear to non-linear notions, to critique a series of research studies and relevant literature that enable me to rethink transition in more complex ways. Within Colley's (2007) conceptualisations, I discuss the influence of identity, agency and structure on transitional experiences, since these concepts are inextricably linked to the way transition to higher education is both viewed and experienced. Ecclestone (2007a) considers them to 'illuminate and challenge different aspects of transitions' (1) in that each one influences different perspectives on how an individual's own sense of self and their capacity to take action influence the experience of transition. This discussion sets the scene for the need to reconsider transition and the support provided against a backdrop of diversity and multiplicity in relation to the student body. I also go on to consider further ideas including strangeness, becoming, unbecoming and affect and how these might relate to and influence experiences of transition.

Transition, as a concept, is under theorised in the literature and this is supported by a number of authors such as Gale and Parker (2014) and Taylor and Harris-Evans (2016). Gale and Parker (2014) state that the concept of transition is largely employed uncritically and that transition as becoming, a more fluid and zig zag notion of transition, is the least prevalent and the least well understood.

Jackson (2003) highlights that studies into transition to higher education have, in the past, focused on factors that affect transition such as social and emotional adjustments, factors that influence university entrance and factors affecting particular groups of students, such as students with disabilities and mature women returners to education. The literature rarely explicitly considers what constitutes transition and where it does, Taylor and Harris-Evans (2016:2) state that many of these conceptualisations of transition are seen as linear, which are time bound and chronological and reflect an

‘institutionalist view of transition, which focuses on developing students’ cultural capital, or ameliorating their perceived cultural deficits’.

More recently, studies have reflected more nuanced and non-linear understandings of transition. For example, the work of Ecclestone et al. (2010) encapsulates a view of transition as becoming and is linked to the conceptual ideas of structure and agency; Quinn’s (2004) study of working class student ‘drop out’ critiques fixed concepts of transition as inflexible and Colley’s (2007) focus on Kurdish women’s movement to Europe reconceptualises transition as occurring through the life course. As Quinn (2010) asserts, issues of class, race and gender can make it more difficult for some to claim confidently that they have transitioned to higher education but, in questioning the value of a view of transition as a linear movement from one fixed point, place or identity to another, Quinn also asserts that ‘the idea that the self is constantly reworked is actually pertinent to everyone. This is a perpetual process for all of us’ (2010:123).

According to the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s ‘Review of Widening Participation’, ‘students from specific target groups are often portrayed as a homogeneous group’ (2006:119). The Review goes on to recommend that as ‘diversity and disadvantage intersect and change...simplistic formulations of target groups and the difficulties faced need to be avoided’ (Ibid). Taylor and Harris-Evans’s (2016:3) recent work into reconceptualising transition as an ‘entangled, nonlinear, iterative and recursive process’ moves away from a focus on the inhibiting structural factors that can be associated with transition. In the same way, in this thesis, I do not set out to dismiss structural barriers such as gender, ethnicity and class, but as Grosz (1994:167) states, ‘things, material or psychological, can no longer be seen in terms of rigid boundaries, clear demarcations; nor, on an opposite track, can they be seen as inherently united, singular or holistic’ (167). Since understandings of transition remain impoverished (Colley, 2007), my starting point is to render a richer reconceptualisation of transition in order to explore a more complex and multidimensional representation. With this in mind, I argue that in order to achieve such a reconceptualisation I should not try to classify myself and my participants because,

...bodies are unstable assemblages that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations...an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven

forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency (Puar, 2007:212).

Kristeva (1981) claims that the uniform conceptualisation of 'Woman' diminishes the specificity and individuality of women. This reflects her theory of subject as unstable and her refusal to define female subjecthood. 'I understand by "woman", that which cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies' (Kristeva, 1981:137). I did not overlook the specificity that the participants in my study, including myself, are all women, nor intend to ignore any possible distinctive experiences of women in transition. However, a classification of women in transition alone could have led to an emphasis on a particular view of transition through the possible homogenisation of the participants as women. This could have perpetuated a linear, single view of transition as well as representing the participants as being in deficit and having a lack of agency within the structural constraints of gender, for example.

One of the aims of this particular study is to reconceptualise transition so that I can contribute, in a different way, to the other studies that seek to understand transition from a more complex perspective. My starting point then, does not pin down any of us to a particular identity or identities as,

...we don't know what a body is because a body is always in excess of our knowing it, and provides the ongoing possibilities of thinking or otherwise knowing it. It is always in excess of any representation, and indeed of all representations (Grosz, 2001:27).

2.1 From linear to zigzag notions of transition

Colley (2007) comments that transition is often viewed or conceptualised as a process of change over time but that work in this area has been overemphasised in relation to a focus on the change element of transition, whereas the focus on time tends to have been neglected. She questions the literature that views transition as inevitable in terms of movement from one point to another and which frames individuals as agents of

change as a result of learning lessons from previous experiences. This is the case if the focus on transition is as a linear process, moving from one stage to the next. Colley (2007) asserts that this emphasis separates the flow of time from the social actors who operate within it. Time is therefore often viewed as linear in relation to transition, but using a more critical perspective, time can become much more than a measurement of a process. It can take an active part in the framing of all life events and so it is 'important to see time as more than linear chronology – time can be difference, time can be past, present and future at once' (Worth, 2009:1055). Viewing time through a sociological lens allows us to 'foreground the social actions and interactions that enable and constitute learning' (Colley, 2007:428).

In order to exemplify the usefulness of consideration of time as a concept worthy of exploration, Colley (2007) draws on four conceptualisations of transition that have emerged from the literature and specifically from a thematic seminar series on transitions through the life course (Ecclestone, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, Ecclestone et al, 2010 and Colley 2010). Briefly, the first two conceptualisations relate to linear, onwards and upwards institutional transitions that begin as individualised, progressive steps through the education system and beyond, but which are bound by structures, such as education policy. The third conceptualisation moves from a focus on the life cycle to social and cultural perspectives of the life course where there is more of a focus on 'agency than structure, more on choice rather than constraint' (Colley, 2007:430). The final conceptualisation is 'life-as-transition'; a postmodern view whereby '...we are always lost in transition' (Quinn, 2010:123). Worth's (2009) research into identities in transition across and through time and space explores the need to theorise transition beyond progression through linear stages. She refers to the need for a more multifaceted explanation for the organic and complex process of growing up, including individual motivations, the fluid experiences of time and the possible constraints that may impact on future successes. In Colley's final perspective, there is no final transformation, no end point; we do not transition but we are in a constant flux and in a similar state to Bauman's (2000:15) 'liquid modernity', where all of society, including relationships and identities, are constantly mobile and fluid. Bauman's (2000:120) theorisation on the transition from modernity, which he described as 'solid', to

postmodernity; a more 'liquid' form of social life, is reflected in Colley's first and fourth conceptualisations respectively and charts the development of transition from linearity to fluidity.

2.2 Onwards and upwards through and within time

'I was in open sky, able to see myself where I was heading' (Ayla)

A linear, 'aboveground' view of transition, particularly in the research literature on transitions up to and including the 1970's, was predominant and transitions were associated with stable, predictable and standardised life experiences (Raffe, 2011). These transitions referred to an expected passage from one stage of life to another, for example from youth to adulthood, from school to work and as these passages were similar for all, they were viewed as unilinear. Transitions were bound by and in time, in that anticipated events tended to happen at particular times and were not as exposed to the same degree of variation and individual choice available today. The unilinear view located transition within these life stages as a series of events to be experienced, with movement from one event and associated role or status to another.

The first two of Colley's conceptualisations of transition can be aligned to this view of transition as unilinear since they relate to institutional transitions, which follow the natural life cycle. For this reason, they will be discussed together. The first conceptualisation views transitions as those movements from one stage of schooling to another, from one occupation or career to another. In this conceptualisation, transition is viewed as linear, 'onward and upward' (Colley, 2007:429). This is transition that is dominated by policy and policy-related literature. Education policy focusses on the experience of transition, support for a smooth, linear transition and those transitions with a desired outcome of creating more effective social cohesion. Ecclestone (2007a, 2007b, 2009 and Ecclestone at al., 2010) and Colley (2007, 2010) highlight a number of educational related social policies that aim to manage transition at institutional level where barriers, such as social exclusion, can affect an individual's ability to engage with the experience of a 'smooth' transition. They cite policies, such as Every Child Matters

(Department for Education and Skills, 2003), which had five broad outcomes, for example to 'achieve economic wellbeing', each of which suggested progression through a linear movement to achievement. Similarly, rigorous assessment in the form of tests for 7 and 11 years olds demands measurement of achievement through the comparison of raw scores to national averages. The current Government's rationale reflects the linear, 'aboveground' developmental view of transition where there seems to be an expectation that children will transition as a result of an anticipated smooth passage from one stage to another. Failure to progress in an onwards and upwards trajectory is deemed as underperformance (Department for Education, 2016), both on the part of the child, their family and the school. These policies, and others like them, place the individuals who fail as 'deviant' (Colley, 2007:429) and individually responsible for the 'failure' to achieve a smooth transition through the expected stages. This linear view is 'not postulated as a creative and interactive process...' (Quinn, 2010:119), but sees transition as having an end product and measured as success or failure (Gale and Parker, 2014).

In the second of Colley's conceptualisations transitions are still viewed as movement across or within institutions but there is scope for transition, not just across timeframes, from one stage to another, but within timeframes. This view of transition, whilst still perpetuating a linear movement between contexts, acknowledges that transitions may facilitate changes in identity and may not always be from one stage to another, but may be within or across stages. For example, an undergraduate student may also be a mother and an employee and these different roles, while being acted out within the same time frame, may impact on each other and result in shifts in identity. These shifts occur as 'horizontal' transitions as opposed to the more traditional movement of 'vertical' transitions (Kagan, 1992, cited in Lam and Pollard, 2006:124). Colley (2007) sees these transitions as more complex since they are less focussed on the individual being responsible for the transition and are transitions that are increasingly experienced 'not only [as] the product of social institutions, but are also produced by social expectations' (Ecclestone, 2007a:2). External factors, such as practices within institutions, continue to influence transition in that they may steer the individual to make particular choices, but there is a difference between the first and second conceptualisations in relation to the

way these choices are made. In the second conceptualisation, the external management of transition goes beyond placing responsibility on the individual to ensure their own smooth passage and considers the importance of institutional practices that understand 'how people progress cognitively, emotionally and socially...and how they navigate the complex demands of different contexts' (Ecclestone, 2009:12). Although still viewing transition as linear, there is a move away from a singular unilinear 'aboveground' view, where each individual trajectory must follow a similar path, to a view where structures must take into account individual contexts.

Gale and Parker (2014) have developed a typology of transition and their 'transition as induction' locates itself well within Colley's first two conceptualisations since it considers life transitions as linear, as having a beginning and end point. Using the metaphor of journey, Gale and Parker (2014) view transition to university as a linear period of adjustment where students are expected to navigate institutional norms and procedures. At this point shifts in identity, which are socially regulated occur (Colley, 2007). In Gale and Parker's (2014) typology, there is a view of transition as crises and in 'transition as induction', the crises are experienced as culture shock, '*I actually thought I wasn't going to pull through or cope*' (Ayla) and are seen as a phenomenon of the first year undergraduate experience.

Much of the research around transition to higher education relates to student expectations and alignment with institutional practices, as in Colley's (2007) first conceptualisation where transition is measured on a success/failure basis. For example, Tinto's (1988) research on student retention and in particular the first year experience of transition to university, offers an explanation of why students may feel connected to university and so persist, or feel disconnected and leave. According to Tinto (1988), transition is realised when students become fully incorporated into university life, which appears to suggest that transition is a quantifiable, tangible state, which can be achieved.

Research by Krause (2005) and Burnett (2007), also focussing on the first year experience, suggests that the first year is the most crucial and can inform a student's

failure or success, since it can often challenge existing views of self and one's place in the world,

'feeling separate from everybody in my own world, not feeling actually part of it' (Lea).

Cook and Leckey (1999) assess the attitudes and expectations of students to learning and their research concludes that the transitional experiences of some students can be influenced by their persistence to maintain learning habits developed at school despite university expectations that they will become independent learners. In addition, Skyrme (2007) has noted that the gap between the contrasting views of university and student expectations has widened and concludes that this divergence has further complicated the student transitional experience,

'I am constantly thinking what do they want me to do, what essay do they want me to write?' (Lea).

Gale and Parker (2014) suggest that the culture shock that can be experienced by some students as they enter higher education is alleviated via successful induction, which should support the first year student to adjust to the university culture, expectations and conventions. In this view therefore, the transition is best managed externally by the institution. However, this creates a default view of transition where 'the terms of the transition are set by others' (Quinn, 2010:119), where transition itself becomes flattened and universalised' (Fenwick, 2013:353) and suggests that

...educational institutions are able to determine what values, language and knowledge are regarded as legitimate, and therefore ascribe success and award qualifications on this basis...individuals who are inculcated in the dominant culture are the most likely to succeed, while other students are penalised (Thomas, 2002:431).

Lynch and Field's (2015) view corresponds with this in that they warn of the danger in placing emphasis on supporting smooth passages through transitions. Experiences of transition become pre-determined, which results in a loss of individual transition and more of a focus on an experience that is measured and controlled. Furthermore, in viewing educational transitions as linear processes requiring successful orientation,

there is often a focus on supporting individuals or groups through the use of interventions (Fenwick, 2013). This can result in a negative view of transition, which suggests it is difficult, complex and risky and whereby students opt,

'to stay quiet because it might not be relevant, so I don't do anything, even though I'm trying to join in' (Ayla).

Developmental psychology views transition as changes individuals experience in their lives. Dominated by western, white, male theorists such as Erikson (1959) and Piaget (1958), this discipline proposes stage theories of development where change is viewed as universal and inherent to the human condition and which is essentially linked to learning. Similar to the view of transition as a linear process, the developmental view of stage theory, as a way of understanding development, has received a great deal of criticism over recent times in that development cannot be viewed as following a predictable linear path that is experienced by all. Quinn (2010) has highlighted structures such as gender, class and race, which influence and determine the nature of a transition beyond a universal one size fits all experience. In addition, she cites institutional constraints, such as the 'curriculum and culture of universities...', which '...are still highly masculinised' (119) and which are not reflective of individual identities in transition. Valentine (2003:38) also advocates a shift to 'performative and processual identity that understands the multiplicity and often circuitous nature of transitions to adulthood' as opposed to a linear, cumulative, non-reversible development.

Perhaps a less well known and more contemporary developmental psychological perspective of transition is that of Cantor et al. (1987) who explore transition as 'life tasks' or personally relevant tasks that a person sets themselves to achieve during a particular period of their lives. Life tasks fit within the field of developmental psychology because they align to Erikson's theory of developmental stages and capacities for learning throughout the life cycle. Fenwick (2013) uses the idea of life tasks to understand transition as an emotional and cognitive process, whereby an individual will identify whether to undergo change as a result of appraising the impact the transition will have, in terms of 'stress, reward and expectations' (356) and whether the individual views these as achievable, at their current stage, or as creating risk. Therefore, 'new life

tasks can pose a self-concept discrepancy between actual and idealised selves' (Ibid.). An individual will adopt emotional and cognitive coping strategies, such as planning and evaluating the process of transition, adopting either an optimism,

'At least I will know that I have done something for me and I have challenged myself to do that rather than going down the easy route' (Lea).

... or a 'defensive pessimism' (Cantor et al., 1987:1180) for achieving them or preparing for the worst,

'A lot of people had done qualifications like children's development and I only did one unit on sociology of education and that was it' (Minnie).

Alternatively, some may set low expectations in order to not fail. Along with Fenwick (2013), I recognise the usefulness of such developmental insights but I acknowledge that they offer limited scope for the analysis of wider debates on transition since they are restricted to a linear and universal view where movement is from one stage to the next. In developmental psychology, an individual's notion of self is influenced by particular cultural truths, expectations, activities and relationships and therefore results in a single normative self-concept. Bynner (2005) argues that generic models of developmental psychology miss the diversity of social situations experienced during development. What seems more useful therefore is the view that an individual identifies with diverse and multiple images of the self. While developmental psychology still has a role to play in understanding learning (Fenwick, 2013), what is required is a shift away from a reliance on the 'aboveground' 'reality' of this perspective to a more outward facing focus on sociocultural influences on transition.

2.3 Social and cultural perspectives

Colley's (2007) third conceptualisation moves beyond the institution and views transition across the life course from a social and cultural perspective. The notion of life course as opposed to life cycle suggests less of a linear, staged movement and more of an organic or evolving process of transition, where transition becomes less

individualised and can be viewed across multiple interrelated relationships. In support of this, research by Maunder et al. (2012) considers how a student's transition to university may be influenced by sociocultural factors, for example, pre-university expectations, being influenced by older siblings', friends' or previous generations' experiences of learning,

'In my family, I am the first to come to university' (Minnie).

Gale and Parker's (2014) 'transition as development', where transitions are viewed as critical incidents, compliments Colley's third conceptualisation. The use of the term 'development' suggests transition is viewed as a process of transformation or an adjustment from one stage of life to another. While Gale and Parker (2014) acknowledge that there is still an element of linearity, the movement is more multidimensional and encapsulates changes in identities with a need to navigate sociocultural norms and expectations. This conception implies more of a focus on identity than in the previous one and is seen as preparation for 'becoming somebody' (Ecclestone et al., 2010:7).

From a sociocultural perspective 'adjustments associated with transitions present interesting challenges for individuals as they leave behind previous experiences and 'become' something new' (Crafter and Maunder 2012, cited in Maunder et al., 2012:140). For students in higher education, they may be preparing to become a teacher, a nurse, an artist, for example. For a professional embarking on a new role at a new place of work 'becoming somebody', in a socio cultural sense, involves a requirement to engage in new and perhaps unexpected experiences that challenge identity, *'little fish, big pond'* (JM). Gale and Parker (2014) suggest that transition in this conception is not smooth as in a linear transition, but the stages along the way are 'stilted or discontinuous' (29).

The difference between 'transition as induction' and 'transition as development' is also in the use of the associated metaphors. The linear use of journey and pathway align to 'induction', whereas 'development' is viewed more as trajectory and 'while pathways are well-travelled sequences that are shaped by cultural and structural forces...a trajectory is an attribute of a social system' (Pallas, 2003:168). Therefore, 'transition as

development' locates the importance of support for the critical incidents experienced at the level of the individual within their social context, rather than externally and at an institutional level. More individualised support is required therefore to encourage changes in thinking about learning and knowing, rather than support to follow a pathway in an orderly manner to predefined goals.

Gale (2011) defines transition as the ability of the individual to navigate change. In doing so, he refers to the role of agency in how the individual orientates through the change, which includes being equipped with tools, such as resilience, to deal with change without having full control over the nature of it. Rapport and Overing (2000:1) describe agency as the 'capability, the power, to be the source and originator of acts...' Taking this view, the individual is seen as having a stable sense of self and an ability to overcome difficulty, mostly in spite of the unevenness of structural influences such as gender, class and race. However, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) acknowledge that the influence of the structural factors can have an impact on the individual acting in an agentic way. They believe that Giddens' (1991) concept of structuration and Beck's (1992) notion of a risk society are two main central ideas to understanding agency. Giddens' (1991) model of structuration provides for a degree of agency within structural constraints whereas Beck's (1992) risk society posits that risks in life have increased and are beyond the influence of the individual, yet the individual can instigate a response to these risks. These ideas link to life course transitions in Colley's social and cultural conceptualisation, whereby agency is a way that 'individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance' (Elder et al., 2003, cited in Ecclestone et al, 2010:11). Glastra et al. (2004), build on Furlong and Cartmel's reflections, arguing that we do not live in a completely individualised world where we are free to choose from various options and so in this view, change is shaped by external forces and constraints, which ultimately impinge on our ability to demonstrate our individual agency.

This connects to Biesta and Tedder's (2006) views on agency and the purpose of education as being seen as an opportunity for individuals to develop their capacities for agentic and autonomous action. They utilise an ecological understanding of agency, since agency does not belong to an individual but is something that is achieved through

being agentic. Although agency is still defined as an ability to apply control over and to seek direction to one's life, Biesta and Tedder draw on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998). They view agency as three dimensional to acknowledge influences from the past (iterational dimension; where agency is constructed through our previous experiences and understandings); the present (practical-evaluative dimension) and the future (projective dimension). They see agency as,

a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past, (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects with the contingencies of the moment) (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:963).

This relates to the views of Colley (2007) and Worth (2009) who understand time as more than a stage process but as a 'dynamic interplay' (Biesta and Tedder, 2006:9) between the past, present and future. Agency, by definition, is informed by the past and driven to empower change in the present or the future. Since agency exists in the present, it is encompassed by the practical-evaluative dimension where agency is deemed to be aligned to the ability of individuals to make judgements 'among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to emerging demands, dilemmas and ambiguities of presently evolving situations' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:970).

Returning to Biesta and Tedder's (2006) ecological understanding of agency, the suggestion that agency is achieved in action proposes that individuals can be agentic in one context but not necessarily in another due to the importance of the context which influences our ability to act, or not, in an agentic way. These fluctuations in agency can be linked to transition since this is context based and occurs over and in time. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggest that agency is linked to 'the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations' (971). This involves the individual drawing on the three dimensions of agency and re-shaping the composition in order to have agency in a particular context.

When viewing transition through a sociocultural lens, a traditional definition; changing from one state to another becomes a contested one when research demonstrates vast

differentiation in transitions on the basis of an individual's ability to be agentic, which in turn can be influenced by the benefits or constraints of class, gender, ethnicity and educational opportunities (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Shildrick and MacDonald (2007) suggest that recent changes in education and society have resulted in a view of transition as blurred and fuzzy. These changes include the decline in the supply of jobs and apprenticeships for young people, welfare reforms that have reduced young people's entitlement to benefits and the expansion of opportunities in further and higher education for young people who may not have had access previously. With the diversification of higher education, the generation of a multifaceted student body creates welcomed diversity and widening participation on the one hand, but places more emphasis on the students themselves and their families in many cases, to carry the full weight of traversing the system. The consequences of changes in the education system, the labour market, leisure and lifestyle have had an impact on the transitional experiences of young people who are required to navigate opportunities of risk, which were largely unknown to previous generations, irrespective of social class, ethnicity or gender. The rapidity of the change gives little time to adjust and,

points of reference which, by serving as clear route maps previously helped smooth processes of social reproduction, have become obscure. In turn, increased uncertainty can be seen as a source of stress and vulnerability (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007:1).

The declines and escalations in opportunities locate the concept of transition in a less coherent and more fractured space where new ideas such as 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2004:469) arise as a result of blurred notions of transition, since it is no longer a case of a linear transition from school to work; from dependence to independence, or interdependence. Young people are living at home for longer, entering employment later and delaying entering in committed relationships and having families (Arnett, 2000). In turn, transition to higher education can be viewed as blurred since it is no longer an automatic or expected route for many.

With the move away from linearity, transitions can be understood as identity shifts, which may occur as a result of, or in response to, times of uncertainty (Crafter and

Maunder, 2012). Regardless of the individual, whether a child, young person, or adult, the experience of transition can be defined as a multidimensional adjustment to cognitive and/or social/cultural and/or physical and/or emotional capacities (Hviid & Zittoun, 2008). Such transitions can be associated with expected or unexpected significant experiences, events or processes that occur during the life course. Elements of change related to the transition can be physical, in relation to space such as change of setting; cultural, social and emotional, such as a change in status or role; or cognitive through adjustments to known discourses and practices. According to Hviid and Zittoun (2008), these dimensions cannot be viewed in isolation as transition is often an interdimensional experience and adjustment in one dimension can have a direct impact on others,

'the environment does make you feel more academic, more professional, you do feel like you are in a more academic study zone, but I don't know, it lacks something this building' (Ayla).

When a transition to higher education occurs, new students can experience such multidimensional changes. For example, as previously identified, they may experience a discontinuity between the learning they have previously engaged with at school or college and with the new learning styles and expectations at university (Cook and Leckey, 1999; Skyrme, 2007),

'it was so different to how I did it in college. I was actually thinking it was going to be the same format' (Ayla).

Alongside Gale and Parker (2014), Maunder et al. (2012) also suggest that higher education has particular practices and expectations that students are required to navigate. Therefore, adaptation not only involves academic transition, such as different educational demands, but also personal, social, physical, cultural, emotional and lifestyle transitions (Hussey and Smith, 2010),

'I can't remember the last time I sat with my mum and had a conversation with her' (Minnie).

Briggs et al. (2012) indicate that students have difficulty envisaging the university experience prior to the transition so there may be a mismatch between their expectations and reality,

'At first when we came and they said, "make sure you read a lot", I thought, seriously we really have to read through books (laughing), I thought, this is going to be hard' (Ayla).

Research by McPhail (2015) has demonstrated that a strategy to overcome this disparity is to offer students, prior to commencement at university, a taster of what they may experience once there. Her research has demonstrated that the facilitation of transitions can and should begin prior to more formal induction programmes. Kantanis (2000) also suggests that students need more support in their adjustment to academic life than has been the case previously and that support therefore at an early stage of the transition is essential in establishing positive attitudes, expectations and learning approaches. Who decides though what these positive attitudes, expectations and approaches to learning are and the nature of the support being offered? The fragment of data used at the beginning, *'I think you are always transitioning through that process'* (Minnie), suggests transition is ongoing and never fully achieved, so any support strategies, whether in place prior to students beginning university or later on in their induction, will need to do more than offer a 'smooth' passage for all in order to achieve subjective institutionally framed expectations. Therefore, in addition to reconceptualising transition there also needs to be some reconsideration of strategies and an acknowledgement of the need to avoid a one-size fits all approach to induction.

Kreber (2014), in commenting on the key challenge of higher education for students, identifies the need for students to have an inner capacity to cope with 'epistemological uncertainty and complexity' (91), which together result in 'an existential experience of strangeness' (Barnett, 2005:785) since 'strangeness' makes us feel more disorientated than uncertainty alone. 'Strangeness' results in current knowledge constantly being called into question and it is the responsibility of the university to support students to cope and then accept this as typical. Students are not only encouraged to endure the 'strangeness' but to become part of it. According to Barnett (2005), our previous ways of understanding and ways of acting are not always helpful to us at times of change.

'Strangeness' can manifest itself as feelings of disorientation and homelessness along with uneasiness, disquiet and anxiety,

'It was like starting the year again, new tutors new students, it was dead hard' (Minnie).

The feeling of 'strangeness' may emerge, for example, when students are expected to change from their previous logical, 'aboveground' ways of thinking and to engage in more 'belowground' thinking where they are encouraged to question what they previously thought was 'known'. It is the aim of higher education to both generate and help the students feel more at ease with this feeling of 'strangeness' and while it can be challenging for some, the experience of it should not suppress development but, paradoxically, it is crucial for helping to realise the sense of equilibrium that we might be searching for. According to Kreber (2014), it is only when we encounter 'strangeness' that we begin to question what we once took for granted. Any anxiety that might occur, as a result of 'strangeness', 'opens up new possibilities' (Kreber, 2014:93).

According to Giddens (1991), anxiety is the natural correlate of dangers of all types. It is caused by disturbing circumstances, or their threat. However, anxiety also helps to mobilise responses that require adaptation and use of initiative. The perceived randomness of problems we encounter in our lives can account for varying responses, with some taking refuge in 'resigned numbness' (Giddens, 1991:13), yet many are able to grasp the new opportunities, which initially, manifest themselves as problematic, but in time can be seen as openings for change,

'Like when I look back on what my fears were they were irrational. What I was worrying about was actually nothing major' (Ann).

In contrast to Kreber's (2014:91) 'epistemological uncertainty and complexity', Giddens (1991) indicates that the achievement of 'ontological security creates a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment on the individual' (37). 'Practical consciousness' is a process described by Giddens (1991:35) to explain how an individual monitors the circumstances of their activities and their behaviour. It is integral to reflexive monitoring of action and acts as an emotional and cognitive stabiliser to support the achievement of 'ontological

security'. Giddens (1991) considers how 'ontological security' can be accomplished, which is of particular interest here since it is of significance if individuals are to navigate crises, or circumstances of risk, such as transitions.

Marris (1986) discusses how the concept of grieving can be applied to many situations involving change and that even if the change is desired, reactions can be expressed as internal conflict and anxiety. Through the concept of Conservatism, which is our impulse to defend the predictability of life, Marris identifies the ability of a subject to survive in any situation if there is a sense of continuity because continuity is the basis from which we can explore new kinds of experiences with confidence. The implication being that where there is no continuity, then, despite all efforts, the familiar pattern of life is broken. In many aspects of life, Conservatism is seen as a reluctance to accept change but when related to experiences of individuals, who are experiencing change, then the conservative impulse appears much more pervasive because 'the ability to learn from experience relies on the stability of the interpretations by which we predict the pattern of events' (Marris, 1986:6).

Marris (1986) believes that we can feel vulnerable if our feeling of 'stability', basic assumptions and emotional attachments are threatened because these 'are the principles of regularity on which our ability to predict our own behaviour and the behaviour of others depends' (10). Avoiding particular experiences, which act in tension with our current understanding, is seen as a way to deal with such threats and by doing so we maintain our capacity to make sense of life,

'I don't want to go in the other direction otherwise I have to come back on myself' (Lea).

However, perhaps this avoidance could become destructive and so although we require continuity in our experiences in order to interpret experiences, we also need to be ready to revise and adapt our ways of operating in the world (Marris, 1986).

Although much of Marris's (1986) work relates to loss and bereavement, he cites other examples of change, where loss is evident, albeit peripheral, and subjects experience a sense of disorientation and a feeling of the familiar being drained of some part of its meaning. Beginning a new job, moving to new area, whilst perhaps change for the

better, 'does not overcome the need to mourn, at least a little, for the loss' (Marris, 1986:150). The disorientation of the transition can be alleviated if some familiar features of the social environment are preserved, even if they offer no value. Marris (1986) concludes that the more rapid the change the less readily we should abandon anything familiar.

Colley's (2007) third conceptualisation of transition through the life-course, Gale and Parker's (2014) 'transition as development', Biesta and Tedder's (2006) view of agency and Barnett's (2005) and Marris' (1986) ideas on seeking the familiar in the unfamiliar, all support a developing understanding of transition as a move away from a linear movement. However, although multidimensional in nature and becoming less reflective of 'aboveground' ways of thinking about transition, there is still a sense, within this socio-cultural dimension of transition, of linear journey and pathway and so it is important to look beyond this to other perspectives.

2.4 Life-as-transition

The nature of social life in general and transition as a constituent of this, in postmodernism, is one of unpredictability and diversity of choice with a rejection of universal patterns of behaviour and probable lifestyle choices. Variables such as social class and gender are no longer indicators of expected pathways in postmodern times since 'all that is solid melts into the air' (Berman, 1983, cited in Gubrium and Holstein, 1995:555).

In her work on transition to university, Christie (2009) focuses on how the increase in the diverse identities of students attending university, with parents who do not have degrees, where progression to university is not typical and where the student lives at home whilst studying, is increasingly becoming the norm. Johnston (2010:3) identifies 'multiple first years'... with ...'nuanced transitions influenced by diverse backgrounds and contexts, rather than a unified one size fits all format'. This identification arises through the expectation of this multifaceted body to move from one student context, or identity, to another. Underpinning this movement are the influences they have been exposed to previously and which diversify their experiences even further. For example,

their view of higher education prior to registration and what had influenced this, whether they are a first generation undergraduate or are well versed in understanding student identity. Once they arrive, they experience multiple contexts and their associated identities: the context of their membership to a group; their identity in a small group or larger lecture theatre; as a personal tutee; as a student on placement; as a student receiving feedback; passing/failing coursework; experiencing highs and lows. All of these multiple experiences impact on identity, thus not only are there 'multiple first years' in terms of diversity of the student body, but each individual has multiple identities as a first year to contend with.

In Colley's final conceptualisation, 'life-as-transition' (430), transition is depicted 'as something much more ephemeral and fluid, where the whole of life is a form of transition, a permanent state of 'becoming' and 'unbecoming', much of which is unconscious, contradictory and iterative' (Ecclestone, 2007a:4). This conceptualisation offers a more 'belowground' view of transition, as having no beginning or ending, consequently an individual does not ever become transitioned. As Quinn (2010:123) suggests, we are 'lost in transition'. This equates to Gale and Parker's (2014) conception of 'transition as becoming', where the individual navigates multiple narratives and where identity becomes fluid because,

the concept of transition itself does not fully capture the fluidity of our learning or our lives...we constantly change, we transform, and we move backwards and forwards, we do not coalesce either before or after even the most momentous life crises (Quinn, 2010:127).

Crafter and Maunder (2012:4) define transition as '...the experience of changing...' By viewing transition as an experience as opposed to an event that occurs, leads us to consider it more as an evolving encounter, rather than a task to be completed or a hurdle to be overcome. Transitions are, therefore, significant happenings, which we consciously, or unconsciously, seek and which 'arise from the individuals need to live, cope and participate in different contexts, to face different challenges, to take profit from the advantages of the new situation arising from the change' (Gorgorió et al., 2002:24).

However, this suggests there is still a focus on the capacity of an individual to develop a sense of self, which is stable with the ability to integrate both inner thoughts and outer realities in order to manage individual transition (Flax, 1990). A postmodern perspective challenges an individual's ability to do this since 'becoming somebody' does not involve a 'unified subject capable of being transformed' (Ecclestone et al., 2010:8). Instead, transition, like identity, is something more fluid where the whole of life is a transition,

'there is always something that somebody else handles better than you and I think that is quite a natural feeling anyway that you feel you're always moving' (Lea).

Postmodernism calls into question the nature of individual agency and the capacity of individuals to see 'self as a centered presence in experience' (Gubrium and Holstein, 1995:555). A modernist view of agency is the 'state of being present, active or self-actualised in the performance of...selfhood' (Ortiz, 2001:6). This might be seen to conflict with a postmodern view, which comes to act as a challenge to such performances, perhaps as a modernist view of agency perceives the individual as proactive in her orientation of external influences, as having freedom to act autonomously, whereas postmodernism views subjects as frequently being placed in contradictory, shifting positions. Bauman (1992) asserts however, that in postmodernism, agency cannot be neglected entirely when a subject attempts to confront change; individual agency and choice can still operate within the constraints of external structures. Similarly, Biesta and Tedder (2006) state that agency is not a possession but 'is achieved in and through the engagement with a particular temporal-relational situation' and 'can fluctuate over and through time' (18). Lawy (2003) concurs with this view in his discussion on the influence of structure and agency on identity. Rather than identity being defined as a fixed representation of an individual, it is better classified as the way an individual is influenced by, or who chooses to be influenced by, structural or social change. He argues that young people in particular, do not just simply choose identities from a range of alternative options, but identities shift as they adapt to the prevailing conditions. This is particularly important to acknowledge when offering support for transition since the shifts in identity require less homogenised, more individualised strategies that are more enabling of individual transitions,

'I've got my strategies and how to go around them, how to work my way around them and I'm doing that and that is actually helping me feel that I've settled in now' (Minnie).

Hodkinson et al. (1996) consider the individual transitions that occur in the broader context of structural change, such as through new career opportunities. These transitions can also create shifts in identities, not only professional ones, but embodied shifts that involve becoming, or unbecoming, somebody personally and professionally. During this time, there is a 'discontinuity in a person's life space' (Blair, 2007, cited in Ecclestone et al, 2010:7). Like transition, becoming, as a metaphor, is not change across a linear trajectory since there is no starting point, no defined pathway, no outcome or destination. Becoming 'always takes place *in* the World As We Know It...Bodies in flight do not leave the world behind...they take the world with them - into the future' (Massumi, 1992, cited in Jackson, 2013:115). Becoming therefore is not an experience in itself but it is 'the movement through a unique event that produces experimentation and change: a state of being in-between' (Jackson, 2013:116). Similarly, transition becomes much more than an event, it is the vehicle through which transformation occurs and like becoming, transition occurs 'over and over again, yet in each moment everyone and everything becomes something else' (Jackson 2013:121).

Allport (1955) describes becoming and the nature of personal identity as a process. Becoming involves an individual's evolving sense of self and can be understood through a stage model of the self. Allport's ideas on becoming are relevant for debates around transition because his views on identity can be applied to transitional experiences when he states personal identity '...is less a finished product than a transitive process. While identity has some stable features, it is at the same time continually undergoing change' (Allport, 1955:19). For Allport, change in identity is influenced by both the individual themselves, through their own agency, and the need to conform to the structural elements of social world. This creates a tension for transition since many, such as Thomson and Holland (2002) and Willis (1977), have argued that aspects of structure; both social and financial resources, are the main key indicators in a person's successful transition, rather than the capacity of the individual themselves. To support his view, that while structural factors are influential it is the individual and the choices they make that shape identity, Allport (1955) provides a model of selfhood. Of the stages: self-

extension; self-image and propiarte striving, the latter are the most relevant to debates around transition. Allport views self-image as a key element to 'transition as becoming' since an individual's view of themselves is highly influential in the choices they make because 'the imaginative aspect of the [self], and whether accurate or distorted, attainable or unattainable charts most movement towards the future' (47). Allport's stage of propiarte striving is also significant for theorising transition since it is concerned with the individual's ability to plan for the future. If a young person, on entering higher education, experiences difficulties in becoming a student, then an inability to look beyond these difficulties and to the future may be a significant hurdle to face.

Conversely, Fenwick (2013) views the metaphor of becoming as a way to explore transition as problematic, particularly in relation to the development of a professional identity. There is a suggestion that becoming leads to an individual becoming transformed 'as though the subject is an entity congealed into a single identity, rather than an opening in the everyday flux of practices, discourses and symbols' (Fenwick, 2013:362). It also suggests the arrival at a metaphorical destination, and as such can be viewed in the same way as the traditional linear concept of transition and the metaphor of journey. Lee (2005) concurs and states that linear measures of time are used universally to quantify progress and when viewing becoming as a transformation it makes it a 'periodic inevitability...moving from a lower stage to a higher one' (67). Lee (2005) also argues that becoming may be more generally thought of as 'overcoming' (68) as both concepts, if viewed as inevitable, are embedded within linearity, where progress or development equate to personal and/or collective renewal,

What is renewed is a sense of being that no longer holds on to a previous ideal state of existence. That state is jettisoned as time opens up new possibilities to overcome the past in order to reconfigure the present as a more desirable state of affairs (Lee, 2005:68).

Fenwick (2013:362) asks 'What are professionals to 'become' and in whose gaze?' In suggesting that becoming may not be a useful way to understand how professional transitions are experienced she claims that professionals must sometimes 'choose from various 'unbecoming' actions in order to fulfil core ethical codes for their profession'

(Ibid.). Unbecoming, in relation to transition, can be seen as a state of 'unravelling' (Fox and Allen, 2014:101) or being caught between conflicting identities. In relation to professional transitions the compromise and compliance that Fenwick (2013) seemingly alludes to in her reference to 'unbecoming actions', in some cases, is part of being a professional and follows the critical view of professionalism as ascribed to by Carr and Kemmis (1986). They acknowledge that while it is important to be critically reflective, the professional also needs to be able to recognise that some aspects of their work may be impeded and so constraints should be viewed as part of the process of becoming and developing a professional identity. In the same way, the conflict caused by 'unbecoming' can be aligned to Kreber's (2014:91) 'epistemological uncertainty', where the subject is caught in a state of disorientation and 'strangeness' (Barnett, 2005). However, Fenwick (2013), while critical of becoming as a way of analysing transition, also suggests that 'Becoming might be understood more richly in terms of emerging ecologies rather than congealing subjectivities' (364). In doing so, she acknowledges the conceptualisation of transition as a move away from universal linearity to multiple and contested non-linear pathways where 'space is not a static background for these journeys but an active and fluid participant' (Ibid.).

To further contend with the idea of becoming and unbecoming is to understand the processes of change that occurs through the influence of affect. Spinoza (2001, cited in Hickey-Moody, 2013) refers to affect as giving power to a body in order to act in either increased or restrained ways, which results in change. In the same way, a body in transition can be affected by a sense of becoming or unbecoming. The postmodern notion of transition as non-linear and zig-zag, reflects this idea of a body's capacity to change. Affect does not suggest a linear passage from one state to another but is an increase or decrease in a body's capacity to act.

According to Shouse (2005), feelings are personal and emotions are social. Different again is affect which is a 'prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another' (Shouse, 2005:online). The difference here is that a subject is conscious of feelings and emotion but not of affects. Leys (2011) describes affect as a consequence of being affected by something external. Hickey-Moody (2013) claims that affects are in between an initial feeling and a subject's

response to this. In this in-between state, Hickey-Moody (2013:79) asserts that affect 'is what moves us'. Shouse (2005:online) also states that,

the importance of affect rests upon the fact that in many cases the message consciously received may be of less importance to the receiver of that message than his or her nonconscious affective resonances with the sources of the message.

Affect is crucial to becoming and Deleuze's (1992) framework proposes that all things connect: that bodies are not autonomous but are constituted through their connections with other bodies and things (Coffey, 2012). In relation to transition therefore, affect can influence the experience. Experiences can be altered by sounds, lights, smells, the atmosphere of places, people (Hickey-Moody, 2013); such affects determine individual responses to similar or shared experiences. For example, a new student's first interaction with a peer or member of staff is bounded by affects, such as those Hickey-Moody refers to, and might influence and determine the direction or nature of the experience, which in turn may well be influential in the outcome.

In relation to transition, affect is a prompt or a 'starting place' to move out of the 'strangeness' and beyond. Leys (2011) refers to this place as 'the threshold of conscious awareness and meaning' (437). This relates to Barnett's (2005) sense of 'strangeness' because Leys (2011) goes on to state that the gap or 'threshold' that exists between 'the subject's affects and its cognition or thinking come "too late" for reasons, beliefs, intentions, and meanings to play the role in action and behaviour [sic] usually afforded to them' (443). Thus, the sense of uncertainty remains until the individual is consciously or unconsciously prompted to move out of the 'strangeness'. Affect therefore, in understanding its connection to becoming, unbecoming and transition, can be seen as the precursor to change, the medium through which a body experiences a transitional becoming or unbecoming.

The concepts discussed above are important if transition is to be understood in a different way since much of the research into higher education perceives transition as a universal, group experience (for example, Brooks, 2003; Wilcox et al, 2005). In relation

to becoming and a focus on the individual Britton and Baxter (1999), Warin and Dempster (2007) and Hussey and Smith (2010) have all emphasised the salience of the shifts in identity that might occur through transitional experiences. These findings also stress the importance of understanding transition at an individual level and how individuals use their personal histories and other influences to interpret university life. Christie (2009) also suggests that the emphasis on understanding transition should be more individualised since it captures 'multiple and contested pathways' (124). This individualisation is, in part, due to the departure from university attendance based on a model of white, young middle-class student to 'more hybrid, multiple, socially constructivist notions of personhood and transition' (Ibid.). In its simplest of terms, identity has been viewed as a stable construct, which allows individuals to locate themselves to, or distance themselves from the other (Glastra et al, 2004). In postmodernism however, this conception is not useful since traditional identities around social class, gender, sexuality and religion, for example, have been eroded and having a stable identity can be a disadvantage in the unpredictability of life; 'people must become individuals through constructing or reconstructing their own biographies and life courses' (Glastra et al., 2004:294). The western 'standard biography' of learning, work, retirement has been replaced by an 'elective biography' (Beck, 1992:3) where phases of life have become spread out across the life course in recurrent cycles.

In the same way that transition can be viewed as a concept which is individual, blurred and fuzzy, identities have also become 'more fragmented and less anchored and are influenced and even produced by a range of factors, such as leisure, music and consumption' (Lawy, 2003:332). According to Giddens (1991), the question of self-identity is 'bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual supplies about him/herself' (58). A person's identity, according to Taylor (1989), is formed through a process of engaging with others through routine interactions in the world. The individual must then repeatedly integrate such external interactions into the continually emerging narrative of the self. Giddens (1991:54) proposes that 'in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going'. Quinn (2010) however, cautions against the implication of solely focusing on a single narrative of self and encourages us to consider the broader

‘interlocking narratives drawn from culture’ (122) and not only the stories that are told but those that are silent and influenced by multiple narratives of self.

Seemingly, in opposition to linearity, the postmodern transitional experience fluctuates and can be fragmented because it is based on lived reality and is a subjective experience for the individual. In ‘transition as becoming’ the view of crises and risk is unproblematic and a challenge to be embraced. In this conception transition is viewed neither as part of a linear progression nor as a developmental experience denoted by crises to be overcome. Rather, ‘transition as becoming’ aligns with those views that consider transition to be complex, fragmented, fuzzy, yet not necessarily located within negative experiences since transitions can lead to,

profound change and be an impetus for new learning, or they can be unsettling, difficult and unproductive. Yet, while certain transitions are unsettling and difficult for some people, risk, challenge and even difficulty might also be important factors in successful transitions for others (Ecclestone et al., 2010:2).

This is based on a view of transition as a ‘condition of our subjectivity’ (Quinn 2010:123) and captures the diversity of lives and the multiplicity of transition. Grosz (1994:167) suggests identity must be considered as ‘a series of flows, energies, movements, strata, segments, organs, intensities - fragments capable of being linked together or severed in potentially infinite ways other than those that congeal them into identities’. In attempting to understand student transition to higher education, this notion of identity in flux can be related to more broader transitions, and becoming in general. This idea of fluctuation can be linked back to the fragment of data where Minnie sensed transition as something beyond stable, ‘*we are always transitioning through that process*’. If transition is seen in this way, it rejects notions of linearity, singularity and the normative, expected pathways that divert attention away from transition as transformation from one identity to another (Gale and Parker, 2014). However, my aim is to problematise and disrupt, not to dismiss outright, any notion of transition, as even the more straightforward representations will help me to develop a more complex understanding of it. If I am arguing that transition should be seen as an individual rather than a

homogenised experience, then I need to keep an open mind as to how it might be experienced by some.

Recent research (for example, Christie, 2009; Ecclestone et al., 2010; Quinn, 2010) has shown that transition has come to be understood as more individualised. This is due in part to individuals having more choice, which has become a routine part of life and so in turn, transition becomes a choice and not an inevitable stage or rite of passage. One possible reason for this can be linked to Bauman's 'liquid modern age where the liquidising powers have moved from the 'system' to 'society', from 'politics' to 'life policies' (Bauman, 2000:7). Bauman's (2004) argument is that the world is in a continual state of change and so life consists of constant transitions. This can be problematic since the fluidity of the 'liquid modern age' 'erodes self-assuredness and shared meanings, and increases anxiety' (Bauman, 2004:93). In relation to transition,

We can therefore see the contradictions between closures and openings as an unending and fragmented process, which is neither linear nor simplistically circular; while one contradiction may be resolved, a new one will surface. We might more accurately depict the process, then, as a number of zigzag or spiral movements within a web of contradictions (Colley, 2007:438).

I have discussed literature that constructs the process and experience of transition as linear, socio-cultural and postmodern concerns. In doing so I have suggested that while transition may be understood as something more than development from one stage or state to another, there is still an emphasis, even within some areas of postmodernism, on transition as movement along a pathway. I argue that the day-to-day lived experience of some transitions are individual and can be problematic but that they are not always seen in this way by those who are responsible for managing the transition from an external vantage point. In order to begin to understand the complexity of these transitions requires a different, or perhaps additional, layer of thinking therefore.

In addition to this, support for transitions, if perceived as unfolding 'within a web of contradictions' (Colley, 2007:438): stable and in flux; linear and zig-zag; 'above' and 'belowground'; individualised and social, becomes a further problem to be grappled

with. Although some of the literature calls for early intervention in supporting transition, there is less of a focus on what this support might look like if transition is more widely acknowledged as something that is experienced in different ways for different people. In the Theoretical Framework, I will introduce and discuss a number of theoretical ideas that allow me to think differently about, and take up the complexity, contradictions and emerging problematics of transition in policy and practice in order to begin to reconsider what it is and how it can be supported.

3 Theoretical Framework: Being neither here nor there

'It's sort of really affected my identity and I feel that people aren't seeing me in the same way' (Lea)

I begin with a fragment of data from a participant reflecting on her process of transition. This data entangles the idea of transition with the complex notion of identity and the relationship between self and others in the coming to know, sensing and questioning of who Lea knows herself to be. Building on the critical notion of 'strangeness' gestured to as part of the process of transition in the Literature Review, the Theoretical Framework will examine the idea of identity as expressed in transition using Kristeva's concept of abjection together with Lacan's work around the mirror stage and the graph of desire. These and related psychoanalytical concepts offer me a different, 'belowground' way of thinking and theorising about the complexity of 'strangeness' in transition. A Lacanian psychoanalytical approach is particularly useful when re-configuring concepts, like transition, that can be dominated by more straightforward, 'aboveground' definitions and meanings, as Lacan's ideas are in themselves complex and at times written in impervious language which,

force the reader to confront the limits of meaning and understanding and to acknowledge the profoundly disturbing prospect that behind all meaning lies non-meaning, and behind all sense lies non-sense (Homer, 2005:12).

I want to consider these theoretical ideas as a way to confront my own limits of understandings of transition in order to develop a different approach to the data. In addition to Kristeva and Lacan, my notion of 'worksickness' and Turner's (1964) interpretation of Van Gennep's (1960) stage of 'transition' in rites de passage, will also be considered in relation to my evolving understanding of self and identities in transition. This is in order to think beyond more conventional conceptions, which frequently classify transition as a shared or common group experience, particularly in relation to children as they move through the education system or students as they enter higher education.

In the experiencing and documentation of my own transition, Kristeva's notions of subjectivity, borders and the abject rejection of other and Lacan's (1966) mirror stage were coming to life through my experiencing of identity in flux entangled with the stories the students were telling me about their struggles to adapt to university life,

'I got a bit confused...when all the work got piled up' (Minnie).

I also began to understand that the 'non-meaning' and 'non-sense' that Homer was describing was in fact a provocation to critique 'meaning' and 'sense'. My conceptualisation of 'non-sense' shifted from its role as a barrier to my understanding to one that allowed me to 'disregard...convention' (Palmer, 2014:viii) and to engage in more 'belowground' thinking. This offered new ways to rethink and defamiliarise previously held notions of transition.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset, that my seemingly interchangeable use of Kristeva's 'subjectivity' and 'subject' with Lacan's 'identity' and 'self' is not an attempt to disrupt the flow of the writing, but to maintain the authenticity of the theorists' own use of the terms. When I make specific reference to these aspects in relation to one or the other theorist, I will follow their lead but in the more general discussion, I will use the terms 'identity' and 'self'.

Returning to the two main concepts of abjection and the mirror stage as the theoretical framework for my research around transition, both concepts are used in psychoanalysis to understand the construction of identity and so will act as lenses through which the process of reconceptualising transition can begin to be represented. Both concepts have similarities in that they consider the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious mind and the connection between what is strange and what is familiar. However, there are differences in how this occurs. For example, Lacan (1966) claims that in her/his search for autonomy and at the point at which the infant sees her/himself in the mirror, a tension arises between self and other because the image the child sees is not the other but (an)other self. In relation to transition, the transitional experience can become blurred as the child, or adult is required to reflect on the image looking back; s/he does not recognise it and s/he begins to realise that who s/he thinks s/he is may

not be stable. This separation and construction of identity works in a different way to Kristeva's concept of abjection because here the subject is not seeking autonomy from the other, as the two are related. Abjection occurs when the connection is threatened and borders are created between the subject and the other. Therefore, Kristeva's abjection leads to a reconstruction of subjectivity through an attempted rejection of the abject, whereas the construction of identity in Lacanian terms is the search for a separation between self and other, which never occurs. In terms of transition, I use the ideas on separation and construction of identity, associated with abjection and the mirror stage, in order to show how both, although working in different ways, offer alternative, 'belowground' ways of thinking about transition. If identity is seen as fluid, fragmented and in flux, as postmodern writers such as Bauman (2000), Frosh (2010) and Grosz (1990) claim, then used together, what the abject and the mirror stage offer to this study is the idea that fluidity and fragmentation occur because of the tensions, threats and disturbances to identity that are encountered through experiences associated with transition.

These ideas are explored in order to do a number of things: firstly, to consider transition differently, through lenses that enable it to be viewed as something that is deeply complex and perhaps stranger and more disorienting than many previous texts suggest. Even if transition is perceived and defined as non-linear, blurred and in flux, there may still be a suggestion that it could be 'achieved' (whatever that may infer), even via complex processes. Secondly, through using the mirror stage and abjection, alongside the other ideas introduced above, I aim to examine transition as something often overlooked or dismissed as understood, comprehensible or resolved. However, similar to the infant (mis)recognising herself in the mirror, on closer interrogation, perhaps what is read as 'perceivable' or 'experienced', may not be 'reality', since this is never stable. Transition is a widely researched area, so the use of Kristeva's and Lacan's work to build an alternative theoretical lens will open up opportunities to re-examine the complexity of this well-trodden field and interrogate some of its fascinating detail.

3.1 The object, abjection and the mirror stage

Kristeva's object is a complex idea that on the surface may not appear to be relevant to a study on transition since it is more likely to be associated with the theorising of intervention work dealing with what usually would be regarded as more disturbing challenges, such as youth alcohol abuse, racial discrimination and domestic violence. Rizq (2013:1279) states that Kristeva's ideas remain 'dauntingly abstruse' and Henderson (2014) cautions against attempting to define abjection since, by its very nature, it is disorienting and so any attempt to do so is obstructive to the individual subject. Henderson (2014) is also critical of those who attempt to use the key features of abjection to make reference to their own field of study. She is apprehensive of those who consider secondary summaries of Kristeva's concepts or attempt to understand abjection from an "Abjection is..." stance. Her reasons appear genuine in that she suggests this approach undermines the potential of abjection because,

it builds in a conceptual neatness...and the result is a separation between the researcher's text and the state of abjection. This act of separation amounts to following the processes of meaning-making that Kristeva in fact aims to disrupt (Henderson, 2014:27).

It is not my intention to attempt a 'best fit' approach to my understanding of transition through the lens of abjection. The aim of my research is to create a disruption to some previously held views of transition in order to rethink it. Therefore, in viewing transition via abjection, I hope to avoid 'conceptual neatness'. When looking at transition beyond basic conceptualisations, I aim to work with abjection to disorganise such previously held notions to produce a more complex representation of transition.

Kristeva makes use of the terms 'subject' and 'subjectivity' as opposed to Lacan's use of self and identity, in order to understand how we are not autonomous, self-conscious beings, guided by rational thinking and reason, but subjects who are exposed to phenomena: context, language, culture, relationships, history, which shape who we come to be (McAfee, 2004). In addition to this there are some phenomena that subjects are not aware of and which can be classed as those associated with the unconscious;

those 'desires, tensions, energy and repressions' (McAfee, 2004:2) not accessible to the conscious subject. Subjectivity therefore is 'not that of coming to awareness of a "self", but of having an identity wrought in ways often unbeknownst to the subject herself' (McAfee, 2004:2). For Kristeva, subjectivity is not constant, it can transform and it can be a dichotomy where on the one hand it can encapsulate what is familiar, known, plain, intimate and on the other can be hidden, secret, strange, foreign, frightening (Chowanec, 2001). This is similar to broader psychoanalytical views on identity, which highlight a contradiction or juxtapositioning between the conscious and the unconscious. This is evident in the data where Lea consciously feels a tension,

'It's sort of really affected my identity and I feel that people aren't seeing me in the same way'.

On the one hand, our conscious mind attempts to seek what is familiar and recognisable while our unconscious mind places barriers, or borders of 'strangeness' and unfamiliarity in our way. Freud refers to this in a similar way to the feeling of uncanniness or 'das Unheimliche', 'the un-home like' (McAfee, 2004:48), which is 'simultaneously familiar and strange, familiar in its strangeness and strange in its familiarity' (Kearl, 2012:101). Kristeva was influenced by Freud's notion of the uncanny and alludes to it in the extract from her text that appears in the introductory section to the thesis. We may perhaps feel uncanniness for a previous familiar life, which continues to haunt us and creates a sense of separation and disarray. In transition, when we experience this conflict, we might encounter 'strangeness'. It is not only a 'strangeness' with external structures and new people; the other, but a 'strangeness', to our sense of stability and familiarity, which creates barriers to our subjectivity, between self and other, as we look for the familiar in the strange and the strange in the familiar.

An infant is not born with an awareness of these boundaries or borders, infants are 'borderless' (McCabe and Holmes, 2011:70). Subjectivity, according to Kristeva (1991), occurs when an individual rejects or abjects what is other, then borders or boundaries are created which leads to the formation of a tenuous 'I' (McAfee, 2004). The 'I' is tenuous since subjectivity is constantly constructed and reconstructed throughout life

(McCabe and Holmes, 2011). In the context of transition, if this is the case in relation to identity, then it supports the idea that transition is complex and a process of the subject engaging in continual change. This has implications for notions of transition that view it as something to be achieved, rather than an experience that is fluid and constant.

Kristeva (1982:3) refers to 'le corps propre' when defining the 'I' as a desire for 'a clean and proper self-controlled body' (Mansfield, 2000:82). The subject's desire to maintain ownership over itself cannot be achieved, according to Kristeva (1982) and the 'I' that we strive for is unsettled by the abject. The abject challenges our autonomy and undermines its 'hygiene and the security of its ownership...', the abject '...threatens to contaminate our sense of individual identity and security' (Mansfield, 2000:83). According to Kristeva (1982), we attempt to strengthen our subjectivity by pushing away the abject. This theorisation of the abject is transferable to my tentatively developing notion of transition as an experience that unsettles the subject by creating a border between 'above' and 'belowground' worlds; between what was 'known', the familiar and what is 'unknown', the strange and where the subject strives to remove or abject what it is within the transition that creates the tenuous 'I'. Returning again to the data used at the beginning of the Theoretical Framework, there is sense that the participant was similarly feeling the threat of the abject as she seemed to struggle to be seen in a way that was familiar to her self and to others.

The occurrence of the self seeking separation, according to Lacan (1966), happens at the mirror stage and while the infant and the image are not one and the same, Lacan identifies this as the point at which a child begins to see themselves as an autonomous self, separate from others. During the mirror stage the child becomes aware, through seeing her/his image, that s/he has control over her/his body, which is the beginning of a realisation of an autonomous self, the acquisition of a self that is independent from the mother (Grosz, 1990). However, there is a tension because at this point, Lacan (1966) states that the child, usually between 6 and 18 months old, cannot demonstrate full control over physical body movements. 'While the infant still feels his/her body to be in parts, as fragmented and not yet unified, it is the image that provides him/her with a sense of unification and wholeness' (Homer, 2005:25). Lacan (1966) acknowledges this

tension but emphasises that what is crucial at this stage is that the infant anticipates that mastery of her/his own body will be achieved,

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation...the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic...and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the infant's entire mental development (Lacan, 1966:4).

Lacan refers to the 'alienating identity' because while the infant's image in the mirror supports the anticipation of mastery it also, at the same time, creates a sense of confusion because the image that is reflected back actually 'comes to take the place of the self... the sense of a unified self is acquired at the price of this self being an-other, that is, our mirror image' (Homer, 2005:25). The image in the mirror is whole but this is an illusion since it is not the same image in 'reality' or that which is seen by others (Homer, 2005).

The use of Lacan's (1966) mirror stage, of which Grosz (1990:31) refers to as the 'most interdisciplinary of his technical contributions', may not appear to be pertaining to an analysis of transitional experiences. However, in relation to transition to a new place of work, or to university, or from home to school, for example, the image a person may have of herself prior to beginning could have already been validated in the mirror; her mind, by her success at securing an interview, her family affirming her as a confident, capable child. While not having yet made the move to the less familiar, she is compelled to anticipate mastery over this new self, just as the infant anticipates mastery over full body control at the mirror stage. When she begins to experience the 'strangeness' of an unexpected twist in self, confusion might occur, in so much as the reflection looking back is (an)other.

According to Lacan (1966), the ego emerges at this point of tension, where the self becomes whole and fragmented at the same time. The function of the ego is to maintain a sense of wholeness and mastery, even if it is an illusion (Homer, 2005). The ego's role is to ground the individual, to protect from the 'strangeness', from the 'an-other' that

occurs as a result of the conflict between the infant's fragmented sense of self and the anticipated sense of autonomy. The self becomes a rival to itself, a rivalry that can then occur in future relations between the self and others (Homer, 2005) because what one sees of the self may not be what others see, since our image is mediated by the gaze of the other. However, Kristeva contends that a young infant will begin a process of separation before this mirror stage in order to develop borders (Vivash, 2014). It is through abjection that an infant achieves subjectivity and an infant's first experience of abjection is when s/he begins to renounce her/his identification with the mother. McAfee (2004:48) describes this as a paradox since the infant is both,

longing for narcissistic union with its first love and a need to renounce this union in order to become a subject. It must renounce itself – insofar as it is still one with the mother – in order to become a self.

If abjection is the process of separating oneself to create an identity, to build boundaries between self and other, then it can also be considered in a more positive way in order to (re)consider transition. A student's transition to university could be viewed in the same way if the primary carer is associated with home, and if both of these are associated with safety and familiarity; what is known. The abject, as a powerful influence, can be seen as the driving force behind an individual's desire to break away from the safety to develop, improve and strengthen boundaries through the challenge of the new, unfamiliar and the strange.

Kristeva (1982) affirms that the process of abjection continues just as subjectivity is constructed and deconstructed. In adulthood, the abject can continue to be a threat to our subjectivity because it is the way the subject defines 'I' as opposed to 'not I'. Abjection can be experienced 'in relation to any person, item, substance or action that seems to disrupt boundaries and borders and threatens the divide between the realms of subjects and objects' (Kristeva, 1982:4). The negative feelings such as anxiety, disgust, fear and repulsion associated with the abject are experienced in an attempt by the subject to distance themselves from what is abject, or unclean, 'not I', through 'an unconscious defence mechanism' (McCabe and Holmes, 2011:77). This is in order to preserve subjectivity and to protect against threats to it. Initial reflections could suggest

that the concept of abjection does not appear to be readily or easily associated with a more everyday experience such as transition. However, in demonstrating the abject, Kristeva (1982) considers that encounters with it can be common place through unexceptional experiences which cause discomfort, such as when the skin that forms on warm milk touches the lips, or the sight of blood. The concept of the abject accounts for those disturbances or interruptions within life because the abject upsets, disturbs, or undermines some established order or stable position and,

in particular those moments when the subject experiences a frightening loss of distinction between themselves and objects/others. The abject describes those forces, practices and things which are opposed to and unsettle the conscious ego, the "I" (Tyler, 2009:78).

Abjection is a useful interpretive lens to view transition, however unremarkable it may be, because the subject may feel disorientated in seeking 'I' rather than 'not I'. Kristeva's theory of abjection is relevant therefore since it is concerned with figures that are in a state of transition or transformation.

Kristeva views experiences of abjection beyond that first separation with the mother as a response to a fear of losing a sense of subjectivity and a fear of metaphorically falling back into the mother's body (McAfee, 2004). With abjection, it is seen to be always present therefore, even if on the periphery of consciousness (McAfee, 2004). For example, Kristeva refers to death and corpses as examples of how an individual experiences abjection. If a person sees a corpse, a coffin in a hearse, or a dying person then they become aware of the fragility of life. The borders between life and death become fuzzy. 'The corpse does not represent something, as a symbol might; it is a direct "infection" of my own living: it is death infecting life. Abject' (Kristeva, 1982:3). With the abject there is always a fear of losing our self therefore.

Through a process of transition, which may involve an adjustment or a threat to subjectivity, the subject may experience abjection through the fuzziness of boundaries between the "who I was" and the "who I am becoming". This fuzziness occurs since the abject 'disturbs identities, systems and orders' (Kristeva, 1982:4). This disturbance creates an in-between state, betwixt and between 'a "something" that I do not

recognise as a thing' (Kristeva:1982:2). In this realm of being neither here nor there, abjection is at its most dangerous since the person in transition can be seen as being in a vulnerable position. Here the abject,

is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you (Ibid).

The 'strangeness' that can accompany the transitional adjustments in this realm can create an even more implicit danger in that if we leave the negative feelings unacknowledged, the abject can dwell within us and begin to make us see the other as the basis for the negativity. This can be particularly disorienting in transition and therefore we need to acknowledge that feelings are not aroused because of what is strange and external to us but what is actually familiar and internal (Kristeva, 1991). The struggle for subjectivity and overcoming the abject can therefore be the same as that struggle which arises in transition as we seek to come through the 'strangeness' to find ourselves again. The struggle and the thoughts of a 'terror that disassembles' leads me to consider briefly the notions of 'worksickness' and 'strangeness' as a way to reflect on a personal experience of transition.

3.2 The strangely (un)familiar feeling of 'worksickness'

The loss of a recognisable identity that might be experienced during transition, also intimated in the data fragment, *'It's sort of really affected my identity and I feel that people aren't seeing me in the same way'* (Lea), which suggests a sense of questioning of self, can be aligned to my idea of 'worksickness'. This idea evokes a feeling of wanting to return or reproduce the familiar when a person finds themselves surrounded by the unfamiliar. It is not a sickness for work but a desire to recreate a familiar self from another time; a time when to be confronted by another self did not cause discomfort or disequilibrium. The notion of 'worksickness' can be related to the disabling effect of the abject within transition, where the subject finds themselves in a double bind (McAfee, 2004) of 'I' and 'not I' and the associated negative feelings that the abject's pollution provokes. 'Worksickness' can be used to describe what might be experienced as a

physical and emotional manifestation of the abject. Here, and during transition, the subject experiences a state where there is a sense of loss for a familiar identity, a place that positions the subject as neither here nor there, which in turn links to Van Gennep's (1960) stage of 'transition' and Turner's (1964:232) consequent state of being 'betwixt and between'.

As I was embroiled in the Kristevan and Lacanian literature and documenting my own 'transition', I imagined the term 'worksickness' as a way of understanding the sense of disorientation I felt after moving to a new place of employment. Palmer (2014) explains that the formation of new words, or neologisms, offers freedom from the restrictions of familiar words, which have meanings already attached. Palmer (2014) also states however, that the use of neologisms is not just about the invention of a new word, but how this influences us to think in new ways, and so again encourages an engagement with 'non-meaning' and 'non-sense' and the freedom to think beyond what has already been given a name and a meaning. This allows thinking to become more dynamic and 'follows a route that is completely uncharted; it writes its own theory as it moves' (Ibid., xxiii) and offers opportunities for other ways for me to understand transition. In searching for something tangible to explain the physical and emotional state I found myself in during a personal transition to a new place of work, I happened upon 'worksickness' as a way to identify with and to seek to resolve the uncomfortable, disorienting experience of transition that appeared not to be reminiscent of anything I had felt before. What I had not considered, was that the tension created by the unfamiliarity between 'I' and 'not I' was in fact an encounter with self and other that was never to be resolved.

It is the rift between a strange and familiar self that can create a feeling of 'worksickness' and since psychoanalytical theory offers a contribution to the understanding of identity and the process of identification, it is a useful perspective when considering the interrelationship between the personal (self) and the social (other). Woodward (2003) for example, states that identity is not fixed, because the conscious mind influences who we think we are, while the unconscious mind works according to a different, contradictory logic to that of the rational conscious subject.

Such contradictions and shifts in and between identities can create a sense of 'strangeness' or 'worksickness' for the subject as they seek the familiar in the unfamiliar. The contradiction within identity that Woodward refers to is echoed by Frosh (2010), who also claims that identities are fluid and in constant flux. Frosh (2010) states that a notion of a fixed identity is incongruous since identities shift over time and are dependent on the context; we adopt different identities in response to different situations and encounters with others. The fluidity occurs since encounters between the self and others create the shifting and blending of multiple identities. These ideas of contradictory and fluid identities are important when grappling with the notion of transition because they suggest that it is not something that can be pinned down or universalised. In Freudian theory, the role of the ego is to endeavour to resolve the conflict between the subject's inner and outer worlds. This creates a self that is not a unified whole and thus identity is in 'a state of flux, never quite fixed...' (Woodward, 2003:18). Hall (1990), in line with Bauman (2000), asserts that since identities are never unified, are unstable and incoherent, they are multiply constructed across discourses, practices and positions and therefore are constantly in a process of change and transformation.

When reflecting on the claims individuals make about their identities it is useful to consider Lacan's (1966) graph of desire through which we manipulate our past to make it appear differently than what it actually was. How can we be certain that the identity we desire and that which we might hope to return to ever actually existed in the first place? The graph of desire is used to examine the relationship between how an individual sees themselves and how others see them. Lacan (1977, cited in Brown and Jones, 2001) sees the human subject as incomplete because through the use of a mirror, 'successive interpretations' (59) of the image are created of the picture I have of myself in relation to the world around me, and the other people in it. Through previous experience, we may have an image of who we are, but others might see us differently. We may therefore be deluded about how we fit in and who we are. There is a difference between who I think I am, and who others think I am (Brown, 2011). This gap is inevitable and is what triggers us to try and close it. 'There is the 'I' that looks, the 'I' which is seen by others and the 'I' which is seen by me' (Brown and Jones, 2001:59). This 'I' also

includes what I choose not to see. Therefore, the identity that we search for, in order to feel like ourselves, to overcome the 'worksickness', may never have existed. If this is the case, then experiences of transition become more complex if there is a focus on becoming transitioned because arrival at a destination of 'I' suggests achievement of a stable, coherent self. If we aim to achieve transition, rather than seeing it as something that is ongoing and inextricably connected to the other, we are deceiving ourselves.

In the same way that an experience of transition, which might disorientate, creates 'strangeness' and a version of self that is deceptive, the abject can also be seen as a way in which we deceive ourselves. The abject can lead to self-deception because it involves not only the revolt of the subject against an external danger but also against the way the danger continues to threaten the individual from the inside (Baruch and Serrano, 1988). A person may think that the experience of abjection is a reaction to something external to themselves, such as a transition to a new place of work or study, but Baruch and Serrano (1988) identify that we can also experience the abject as a result of ourselves. For example, if there is a sense of struggle in a transitional experience, such as to a new place of work, then the experience can both result in an abjection of the unfamiliar external environment as well as an abjection of the unfamiliar self that we do not recognise. The self-deception occurs when we fail to notice our internal abjection and believe the 'strangeness' is a consequence of external forces beyond our control: the deceptive dichotomy between self and other. We may expect others to acknowledge and accept our presence but we may not consider how we also need to be concerned with our influence on them. This has particular implications for transition if support is only in the form of externally controlled measures and does not take into account the individual encounters with self and other within the transition. What is helpful therefore is to consider, not only the individual experiencing the transition, but those around them. Turner's (1964) ideas on the polluting nature of transition, within the liminal stage of rites de passage, offers an opportunity to do so.

3.3 Rites de passage

Although not rooted in psychoanalysis, the move to include an anthropological perspective is made here in order to develop further the ideas of 'strangeness', unrecognizability and pollution through consideration of Van Gennep's (1960) rites de passage. I aim to re-think how one of these rites, 'transition', might be used to consider the idea of liminality and always being betwixt and between to contribute to broader reconceptualisations of transition.

Van Gennep's (1960) rites de passage is a construct, which identifies stages in a person's transition through life: separation (divestiture), transition (liminality) and incorporation (investiture) and the associated rituals that individuals experience in order to navigate the transition through significant life phases, such as birth, puberty and death. The rite of 'separation' is comprised of symbolic behaviour whereby a person becomes detached or separated from a previous fixed point or identity and the rite of 'incorporation' is the passage 'from the transitional period' (Van Gennep, 1960:11) and is associated with 'ceremonies of incorporation into the new world post-liminal rites' (Ibid.:21).

During the stage of 'transition' in rites de passage; the liminal period, 'the state of the ritual subject (the passenger) is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state' (Turner, 1964:47). There is a connection between this state and Lacan's mirror stage (1966) because of the tension that is created when the infant is not physically ready to be autonomous. In relation to transition, liminality can be perceived as a state of an individual experiencing a lack of or a loss of a familiar identity (Ibarra, 2007), or 'worksickness', resulting in an experience of being caught between two states, which disrupts and disables the expected linear trajectory of the transition.

Using Van Gennep's rites de passage (1960), Turner (1964) also focuses specifically on this stage of 'transition', or the liminal period, in order to explore his notion of 'betwixt and between' (232). Turner (1964) refers to liminality as both the place in which a transition occurs and the state of being that is experienced by the person in transition. Derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold, this idea places students on their

move to university, for example, in a suspended place, an 'in-between-ness' (Palmer et al., 2009:38), which creates a lack of belonging. According to Cook-Sather (2006), the liminal stage occurs after the separation from a previous status or social state; it is a period of seclusion, or induction, during which 'initiated seniors or elders' (Turner, 1981:154). It is both a place and a sense of being, in that the transition unfolds in a between place that bridges 'what is and what can or will be – a symbolic domain that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state' (Turner, 1981:232) and in this way is similar to Kristeva's (1982:2) 'edge of non-existence and hallucination'. Cook-Sather (2006:110) describes this as a state where 'she or he is neither what she or he was, nor what she or he will become' and in Turner's words 'ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification' (1981:232).

Turner (1964) develops the idea of being 'betwixt and between' further by describing the transitional being as 'particularly polluting' (48) since this 'betwixt and between' state is beyond all recognition to those who are not in the liminal stage. This sense of neither here nor there; neither one thing or another, or both, causes the individual to be 'regarded as polluting to those who have never been....inoculated against them' (49). There are gestures to be made here to the abject and its conditions of defilement and the associated choking foulness, which moves the subject in transition to desire a 'clean and proper body', in order to be accepted by those who are not in transition, to become, or return to 'the person "she is supposed to be"' (Garratt, 2015:778). What is of particular interest is that those outside of the liminal stage do not or cannot associate with those within it, which suggests that the experience of being 'betwixt and between' is perhaps one of exclusion. It may also provide an explanation for why transition may be a specifically unique and individual experience and why it may be challenging to support it effectively, since those outside of the transition, who are often those responsible for supporting it, may not be able to recognise the nature of the transition being encountered. However, Turner (1964) suggests that if the liminal stage is experienced by more than one person, such as with new students who are starting university, then 'the liminal group is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions...linked by special ties which persist after

the rites are over' (50). There are, therefore, positive aspects to liminality since the seclusion, ordeal, loss of identity and ambiguity 'are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements into new patterns' (49).

There is still a sense of progression within the 'transition' stage of rites de passage and it is important to acknowledge that Turner's (1981) expression of liminality referred to an individual's whole being as having their identity in suspension until the transition was complete. The 'betwixt and between' state may still perpetuate a sense of movement, even if the person is in a holding place; they are waiting to move to something else, which is still suggestive of linearity as once the liminal state is complete, the transition occurs. To question this linearity a more fluid, psychoanalytical view of identity needs to be called upon. In her work with preservice teachers in an undergraduate degree, Cook-Sather (2006) develops a consideration of liminality as unstable and in constant flux, which suggests that our identity does not become suspended during the liminal phase. She states,

life goes on and people move in and out of the liminal spaces... as well as in between moments of continued life in the present...simultaneously in time and out of time, suspended and ongoing, individual and shared...thus echoing but also significantly changing the kind of transition passengers experience and effect as they move through it (115).

Cook-Sather (2006) is suggesting 'multiple liminal phases' (122) explaining that individuals experience these as they move from one role, or culture or context to another through and in time, which resonates with Johnston's (2010:3) 'multiple first years' and with Colley's (2007) view of transition as a 'web of contradictions' (438). I would add that these 'multiple liminal phases' are multiple, not only because of the many spaces we move in and out of, but because each of our selves, are constantly merging and becoming entangled with each other and with others.

In Van Gennep's (1960) rites de passage, there is a sense that the transition is experienced as a matter of expectation, that an individual is the recipient of the transformation and is not an agent within it. Cook-Sather's (2006) interpretation suggests that contemporary versions of rites de passage 'do not simply reproduce

traditional power dynamics, social practices, modes of participation and fixed senses of 'self', but rather create spaces within which to question these (122).

The structural one size fits all programmes of induction and initiatives to support the student's transition to university perpetuate the student body as a homogenous whole and view the student who does not 'transition' as problematic. However, viewing the student as an individual, whose default position is a 'sense of placelessness' (Palmer et al., 2009:38) would allow us to understand the transience of being 'betwixt and between'. Having an understanding, both of my own 'placelessness' or 'worksickness' and of the participant who felt that *'people aren't seeing me in the same way'* (Lea), offers an opportunity for us to better support the complexity of individual navigation through the betwixt place between home and university; familiar and unfamiliar; self and other. As Cook-Sather (2006) states 'we must reckon with and nurture a more complex, individual and contextual sense of self developed through a more complex, multiply informed process of identity formation' (121). How we do this is problematic and so I return to the aims of this research, which include a focus on challenging traditional notions through an interrogation of the processes and complexities of transition in order to rethink how we might offer support to those who encounter it.

This Framework has introduced the two main theoretical ideas that I engage with further in the data analysis in order to move towards some kind of resting place in relation to understanding transition. Lacan's mirror stage and Kristeva's concept of abjection in particular, will allow me to continue to weave in and out of the data in order to problematise and reconfigure some of the more commonly attached meanings that are associated with traditional or (mis)used discourses around transition. My aim is not to undermine or negate some of these previously held notions, but to question and build on them in order to represent a different, multiple and layered 'belowground' 'reality' of transition. Such questioning and reconfiguring of traditional 'aboveground' discourses will require a methodology that is reflective and supportive of more complex understandings of research. The next section builds a methodology around the methods, processes and ethics that were necessary to get at the complexity, contradictions and problematics emerging out of the interrogation of transition.

4 Methodology: Getting at transition?

'...even though I've got this idea in my head of what a student should be, I think if I get to that point, I'll probably have a new idea of what a student might be' (Ann)

Interspersed with data fragments throughout, the Literature Review developed an argument that transition is a more complex concept than traditional linear and more contemporary social and cultural perspectives might suggest. A movement towards postmodern ideas enabled me to grapple with the notion that transition is not a single event that an individual might move through, but something that is elusive and more difficult to quantify and define since transition is experienced in different ways. Working further with fragments of data, the Theoretical Framework referred to psychoanalysis in order to further pursue complex notions of transition that acknowledge the troublesome notion of identity and the relationship between self and others. The fragment of data above draws some of these emerging ideas together; reflective of a view that there is no one single truth, but many representations and that our experiences, ideas and identities change how we engage in and with our lives. In relation to transition, it suggests that it is something that is not achieved since we might aim to arrive at a point, where we believe we will have transitioned, but that once there, we realise that our encounters, thoughts and feelings have influenced and evolved our sense of where we are in the journey. Although it may have seemed strange to include data before the Methodology that lays out methods of data collection, I felt it important to be transparent about how the use of fragments of data throughout have been working on me as I engaged with the substantive literature and psychoanalytic theory, putting emerging understandings of transition to work. Their inclusion throughout the study has also allowed me to interrupt a tendency to write a linear story, when many of the processes involved in constructing this thesis were undertaken simultaneously and therefore had a considerable influence on each other.

At this point in the thesis, and amongst this level of complexity, I begin an exploration of how a messy postmodern methodological framework, sensitive to notions of movement, instability and being in a state of constant flux, is required to interrogate the ideas around transition and identity as they become subject to the slipperiness of

imperceptibility and multiple representations of transition. Alongside this paradigmatic framework, the method of analytic autoethnography will be explored in order to contend with the intricate and slippery notions of self and other in a study that aims to reconceptualise the seemingly contradictory notion that individual experiences of transition are multiple, whilst being deeply entangled with the transitions of others.

In order to be able to carry out my research, a commitment to a philosophical and theoretical framework was important. According to Koshy (2010), different theories of how we perceive the world help us to engage with it in different ways and to open up new lines of enquiry. These theories will exert a profound influence on the design, orientation and character of the study. At the same time, paradigmatic perspectives, such as positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, postmodernism and poststructuralism embody, on first viewing, different social 'realities'. However, Lather (2006) warns against these 'tidy' (36) paradigmatic demarcations and suggests that in order to escape binaries, such as positivist/interpretivist, or quantitative/qualitative, researchers need to work with the 'proliferation' of paradigms and 'locate themselves in the tensions' (47) that the binaries create. It seems that there exists both 'confluences and contradictions' in the paradigms that Geertz refers to as 'blurred genres' (2000:7), where no paradigm can claim an individual set of principles or characteristics. Lincoln and Guba (2003:255) refer to this as the paradigms beginning to 'interbreed...where two theorists previously thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may now appear...to be informing one another's arguments'. A number of such 'confluences and contradictions' occurred in the decisions I began to make about my research methodology, which included a potential clash between a postmodern orientation and a psychoanalytical framework. There are some psychoanalytical perspectives that are developmental, driven by meta-narratives and thought to correspond to 'reality' and therefore 'truth' rather than acknowledging the importance of being local, unique, personal and contextualised. Although I encountered this conflict, they are also complimentary of each other in relation to their focus on the self and other, since both hold similar positions on the nature of self as incoherent and unstable.

4.1 Postmodernism and autoethnography

In the process of considering the most appropriate approach for the study, I recognised the need to respect the different views and transitional experiences of myself and the participants. A postmodern approach offered opportunities to search for meanings beyond an attempt to interpret the experiences of others and look for single truths and shared meaning, but to focus on those meanings that were expressive of the individuals living them and how these meanings were influenced by the other. Zeeman et al. (2002) summarise the value of choosing postmodernism as a way to look at transition since,

the existence of alternative stories on one event, the existence of more than one interpretation of the world and the thought that the self has more than one view or part, bring about big shifts and freedom (96).

In relation to my study, these alternative stories of the self and other in transition allowed me the space to contend with the complexity that comes with reconsidering and problematising transition beyond simplistic versions. It also allowed me to explore the grappling with identity that may accompany transition, as is suggested in the fragment of data that opens this Methodology.

The notions of universal truths and objective 'reality', in order to validate knowledge, are rejected in postmodernism (Kvale, 1995) since the view is that they lead to 'preconceived and sweeping narratives' (Alvesson, 2004:845). In the same way that I aim to reconsider ideas and meanings of transition through deconstructing and problematising experiences, rather than constructing and sanitising them, postmodernism seeks a 'shaking up' (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009:197) of existing versions of social 'reality' in order to give voice to other versions of 'reality', which may have been neglected (Hargreaves, 1994). Postmodernism replaces single truths or 'metanarratives' (Lyotard, 1984:17) with Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (2009) 'local, always provisory and limited stories' (180); stories that do not seek to offer comprehensive explanations that ignore differences and individual lived experiences. In order to engage with these individual stories, I both entangle data and present it as single voices. This is so I can zoom in at times on the five individual 'selves' in transition, acknowledge that

these different selves are inextricably linked with the other and come to appreciate that there are no single truths, but truths that are waiting to be challenged (Daly, 1997).

The doubt that postmodernism casts over the ability to depict a single 'reality' can become a contested point however and raises questions about the representation of the data and authority of the researcher and the research. If there is no truth in the data, just versions of 'reality' that influence and infect each other, then what can be said about transition, when examined through a postmodern lens, that holds any relevance? However, the nature of postmodernism as a paradigm that does not seek truth in data, just versions of 'realities' fits well with the aim of this research, which is to 'strive for multiplicity, variation, the demonstration of inconsistencies and fragmentations, and the possibility of multiple interpretations' (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009:183).

What becomes more complex is that if all we have are contested stories of self, then what and who is self in postmodern research? As with language, self becomes slippery when considered in relation to notions of truth and knowledge in postmodern research. In a similar way to psychoanalysis, postmodernism refers to the self as 'an illusory notion constructed as static and unitary, but in reality completely fluid' (Powell, 1997:1483). In making claims about self as 'illusory', Powell refers to 'individual self-representations that create the illusory sense of wholeness that people perceive' (1997:1496). Olson (1998), in exploring the elusiveness of self, makes reference to the inconsistency in accounts of the self and cites more than half a dozen definitions of self from the literature. Of particular interest to a postmodern autoethnographic methodology is Strawson's definition (1997), which attempts to grasp the complexity of self by claiming that 'many mental selves exist, one at a time and one after another, like pearls on a string...' (cited in Olson, 1998:653),

'... like yes, I am a mum, and I do work, and I do stay in education, so it's good' (Ann).

Gergen (1991:7) states that 'under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction [*even though I've got this idea in my head of what a student should be, I think if I get to that point I'll probably have a new idea of what a student might be*']; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated'. It

is not the intention of postmodernism to reject all other philosophies as false, as it is not my intention to dismiss any conceptualisation of transition, but to 'create a context of doubt' (Wall, 2006:2) in order to question the dominance and to demonstrate that knowledge can be accrued in different ways.

It is important here to outline that my use of 'individual' is not that which can also be classed as an autonomous self. As Zeeman et al. (2002) state above, the self is more than singular, so although I aim to reconsider transition as an individual experience, I do so under the premise that it is an individuality that it bound by and to the experiences and influences of others. In postmodernism, the world does not revolve around a conscious and autonomous subject, there is no single subjectivity but subjects who are generated by the discourses around them (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). If we also accept that these discourses are not based on grand-narratives, but multiple truths, then we are each similarly influenced by our unstable selves and those of others. It is for this reason, so as to not 'try to repress the...frictions, contradictions and cracks which unavoidably emerge in any discourse' (Ibid.:180), that I have presented the data as fragments, often entwined and entangled with others but always remaining distinctive and located to a 'self'.

By viewing the research through a postmodern lens, the approach to collecting and analysing data needs to be concerned with avoiding the 'totalizing description of a certain reality in which the researcher speaks for Other and blocks any alternative voices' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009:199). The intention of my research is to express notions of transition through the multiple narratives and 'small stories' that reflect experiences of transition. This aligns with postmodernism since 'partial, local, and/or historical knowledge is still knowing' (Wall, 2008:2). In choosing a methodological approach for my study, I was mindful, therefore, of the need to select one that would acknowledge self, other and personal narrative in the process and so I turned to analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006).

Autoethnography was originally referred to by Hayano (1979) who, as a cultural anthropologist, used self-observation in ethnographic research and used the term to refer to the study of the ethnographer's 'own people' (Hayano, 1979, cited in Pace,

2012:4). It is associated today with the work of Ellis and Bochner, who define autoethnography as 'an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural' (2000:739).

In the research literature, autoethnography, like postmodernism, is difficult to define due to the wide array of textual practices associated with it and is often represented by an array of terms such as critical autobiography, personal narrative, ethnographic autobiography, autobiographical ethnography and reflexive ethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). This suggests that there is not one particular type of autoethnography but if viewed as a conceptual framework, it is based on the assumption that the self is always connected with others and that 'an individual culture is an individual version of their group culture, which they construct in relationship with others' (Chang, 2008:1). Autoethnography is useful in conveying personal understandings of lived 'realities' that are socially constructed and therefore offers an opportunity for me as a researcher to engage with the lived experiences of participants and the 'interpretations, experiences and voices emergent in the culture' (Davis and Ellis, 2010:285). It is also a relevant method to utilise since it is complimented by a postmodern orientation. Wall (2006:3) refers to postmodernism as the 'philosophical open door into which autoethnography creeps' because if the research uses the self as part of the frame of reference, then universal truths are not useful and such research is better served by an 'alternative knowledge production process' (Ibid.).

This approach resonates with the intentions of the study to explore my experience of transition to a new place of work alongside the transition of students entering higher education for the first time and how transition impacts on, and forces multiple reconsiderations of, the very notion of 'identity'. The elusivity of transition and the corresponding search for alternative representations are also echoed in a postmodern autoethnography since 'no longer are knowledge statements considered to be mirrored reflections of reality as it is in itself; rather, they are human constructions of models or maps of reality' (Polkinghorne, 1997:7). Autoethnography, as a method, allows for engagement with personal accounts of transition and working with data as sources in order to understand the multiple discourses within which we operate and which may,

or may not, represent the broader social and cultural multiple realities of transition and identity.

The different approaches to autoethnography take a number of forms and each can be distinguished by the amount of emphasis placed on the researcher's self, the study of others and a combination of the interaction between the two (Ellis et al., 2011). If viewed as a continuum autoethnography, at its most autobiographical, treats the researcher as the sole topic of the study where the autoethnographer's voice is privileged as the main character in the story (Davis and Ellis, 2010). The position on the continuum is arranged according to how self, as researcher, is represented within the research. In my study, I explored a personal 'lived' experience but included participants with experiences as equally valued and important in the process, since engaging with others in the text means that 'self cannot be constituted solely by self, but includes the perceptions and interpretations of others' (Fraser, 1984, cited in Holmes, 2009:408).

I wanted to avoid an autoethnographic approach that keeps self at the centre of the research for two reasons. I believed that the voices of the participants were integral and their inclusion in the analysis would represent a more engaging and multifaceted view of transition in this particular research. I also acknowledged that the self-absorption of introspective, evocative accounts in the research process could be considered to 'contribute nothing to the systematic understanding of social processes' (Delamont and Atkinson, 2004:679) and as such, would not have contributed to a broader understanding of transition. In my research, I adopted and built on a similar type of autoethnography to that where the other is represented as visible within the text and where the mirror that reflects the gaze of the other attempts to avoid a singular, coherent and easily recognisable view of transition. This is known as analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006). According to Anderson (2006), autoethnography qualifies as being analytic by meeting five characteristics: complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher's self (or selves), dialogue with participants beyond the self (or selves) and a commitment to theoretical analysis.

4.2 Analytic autoethnography: self and other in transition

Reflecting on how my experience of transition was tangled in the transitional experiences of others, I used Anderson's (2006) characteristics of analytic autoethnography as a structure to explore how this entanglement was to be represented. I focused specifically on narrative visibility of the researcher's self in relation to dialogue with participants beyond the self and analytic reflexivity.

Narrative visibility of (my)self in the research was achieved through my role as participant and the use of my personal experiences of transition. This visibility was often entwined with the visibility of others within the text however and so at times, individual selves became blurred as I moved myself around (in) the text and at different times, we each became multiple selves. In her autoethnographic account of her experiences as the daughter of a mother with mental illness, Ronai (1997:9) explains how, as a researcher in an autoethnography, she changes direction 'forward, backward and sideways' within the writing as her position as researcher, daughter, victim is given a voice. She uses these identities as layers to weave in both story and theory in order to avoid placing herself centrally as the sole-authority on the subject. In terms of my positions in the research, I was similarly confronted with shifts in identities, which were at times unfamiliar and familiar, comforting and inconsistent versions of, for example, experienced professional, new colleague, Senior Lecturer, doctoral student. These identities mingled with each other, and with those similarly multiple and conflicting identities of the participants and influenced our representations of transition. Ellis and Bochner (2000:739) also consider the position of the autoethnographer as fluid and uncertain, '...as they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition'.

The mingling of my visibility amongst that of the other participants was important. If I only made (my)self visible, then I am under the illusion that even if multiple selves do exist, they are not influenced by others. By acknowledging the place of others in my personal experiences and by exploring and including the wider notion of multiple selves and others in transition, allowed me to represent transition, both as an individual experience, as well as one in which the self is exposed to the influence of the other,

'...they didn't see me as an Early Years Teacher; it was like I was a first year who didn't have a clue' (Ann).

Powell (1997) states that 'given this fluidity and relationality, one's own sense of identity is inextricably entwined with, and dependent upon, the identity of others' (1497). Therefore, dialogue with participants in autoethnographic research on transition, that has a focus on self, was equally important since experiences and narratives of transition are interrelated; where self is not separate from other, there is no 'self/other' dichotomy. Instead, postmodernism 'proposes to "fragment" these narratives and study each fragment on its own...by studying the interactions and details of everyday life...based on its situation and context' (Fontana, 2004:842). It was for this reason that I chose to not present each participant's data as a separate and unconnected story of transition, but to fracture them into smaller pieces so as to emphasise the possibilities of multiple selves with different stories to tell. In addition, the fracturing and fragmentation allowed for the stories of transition to be used alongside other stories in order to acknowledge that these multiple selves were connected to other multiple selves, 'like pearls on a string' (Strawson, 1997, cited in Olson, 1998:653). Each fragment of data had a relationship with the others, influencing other data in terms of making meaning and enabling a rethinking of transition.

Coffey (1999) also sees the separation of the self from the field as untenable and this division becomes problematic since it creates a gap between the researcher and the culture being studied. Although the context of Coffey's work is ethnographic, it is still relevant to the visibility and positioning of self and other in autoethnography, particularly so, since Coffey (1999:22) states that the separation of self from others renders the researcher 'mute', which can result in a representation of the other as 'ambivalent' (Varga-Dobai, 2012:2).

As Reed-Danahay (1997) has suggested, the autoethnographer is a 'boundary-crosser and the role can be characterised as that of a dual identity' (3). Alongside the location of (my)self in this autoethnography, I also held a dual participant-observer role (Anderson, 2006). This is reflected in what Coffey (1999) refers to as 'the conceptual machinery of familiarity and strangeness' (23). Coffey (1999) explains that cultures are

not homogeneous and so to adopt 'a stance of 'stranger' or 'unknower' denies...the situatedness and connectedness of the fieldworker self, alongside other selves' (23).

The juxtaposition of the self and other in my autoethnographic examination of transition was used to enrich the analysis rather than reinforce the gap. Maydell (2010:online) states that postmodern autoethnography 'as a study of self always includes multiple reflections of others which elicit a variety of expressions of self'. So self and other are not seen in opposition to each other because the data is co-constructed both by the researcher and by the participants. This may again appear to contradict a reconceptualisation of transition as an individual experience but only if that individuality is seen as fixed and stable. The co-construction of the data supported the acknowledgement that the individual is inextricably connected to and influenced by others. This does not mean to say that individual experiences should not be brushed over, on the contrary, it is to emphasise that these experiences are complex and provide challenges that need to be contended with. Similarly, Holmes (2009) asserts that a relationship with the 'necessary other' allows for a 'reconsidering of discourses that construct a sense of who and what I understand myself to be, and how in turn, I contribute to the discourses I write myself into' (406).

The self in autoethnography is seen as being exposed to, and reflected in, interactions with the other,

Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of the personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:739).

In relation to my use of autoethnography, this refocussing of gaze was important because I located my experience of transition with the other and understood that my 'reality' of transition could not be separated from the 'realities' of others. In the writing of an autoethnography, Garratt (2014:343) states

...to declare narratively “this part is me” and/or “this part is other” or, alternatively that “this is a composite fiction of multiple others not including me,” would be nonsensical as such issues are lost to infinite reflexivity.

Although I identified data to its source, I did not aim to classify or represent it as autonomous, deterministic depictions of transition. This is because of the connection between self and other, which similarly in psychoanalysis is complex and cannot be glossed over. Gannon (2006) calls for autoethnographies that ‘represent and trouble the self at the same time’ (477). This was the aim of my autoethnography, which was framed by postmodernism and psychoanalysis, where, in order to reconceptualise transition as something that is more complex, the self is not untroubled or sanitised because it is entangled with the multiple selves of others. The individual experiences of transition can be reflected on, but there is an acknowledgement that these experiences are not separate from others but are being mutually constructed and reconstructed throughout.

The representation of ‘reality’ in different ways is a key principle of postmodern research and that the dominant, most clearly visible voice is not that of the researcher who attempts, in some other approaches, to present a single interpretation of an experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasise the rise of selves in qualitative work and make reference to ‘making ourselves visible in our texts’ (1053), but an analytic autoethnography also needs to partake in dialogue with others beyond the self and in doing so this would happen, not through

one “moment”, but rather many; not one “voice”, but polyvocality; not one story, but many...to extend our understandings of the “other”, to provide us with material for “cultural critique” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:1060).

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) explain that the use of polyvocality should do more than let the participants speak for themselves. According to Delamont and Atkinson (2004), polyvocality, where multiple voices create shifting narratives, goes beyond including quotations from the participants or including extracts from interviews. I recognised that my position as implied narrator, including fragments of data in order to engage with the

literature and theory and to support the flow of the discussion, may have reinforced a univocal, privileged position and do little to avoid the creation of a 'self/other' binary.

This was a challenge that required some consideration because, as a more contemporary approach to qualitative research, autoethnography, in its various forms, has received critique in relation to its focus on self and the associated view of it as solipsistic. One of the most often quoted issues with autoethnography is that it can promote self-indulgence and narcissism and where 'the telling and retelling of... experiential texts may detract, at times, from the storied lives of others' (Trahar, 2009:8).

Although writing about race and how the visibility of 'whiteness' is invisible to those who are white, Ahmed's (2004) reflections on the relationship between self and other are relevant, both to a discussion on the need for polyvocality and in order to avoid claims of narcissism,

...the anthropological desire to know the other functioned as a form of narcissism: the other functioned as a mirror, a device to reflect the anthropological gaze back to itself, showing the white face of anthropology in the very display of the colour of difference. So if disciplines are in a way already *about* whiteness, showing the face of the white subject, then it follows that whiteness studies *sustains the direction or orientation of this gaze*, whilst removing the 'detour' provided by the reflection of the other (Ahmed, 2004:70).

Autoethnography uses the self to explore connections to others and in some cases, where the focus is solely on self, to make connections with broader social and cultural phenomena. This results in the metaphorical use of a mirror in order that the self is reflected in multiple representations of others. There is a danger, however, that the self in autoethnography is the self that is reflected back in the mirror so that the presence of the other becomes lost. This is the detraction that Trahar (2009) refers to in that the autoethnographer may choose to only see the parts that are familiar as self in the reflection or by 'putting themselves before their subjects or before the demands of knowledge or meaning' (MacLure, 2003:111).

The loss of 'detour' that Ahmed (2004) refers to creates a 'self/other' divide. I endeavoured to avoid such a binary by incorporating fragments of the data, both throughout the thesis and by entangling them within the text and through my deployment of various reflections produced by different kinds of mirrors when trying to produce a more polyvocal text when analysing the data. Some of the mirrors that reflected my own data and data from other participants were distorted so as to fragment and de-familiarise the gaze that was reflected back. These tactics allowed for the detour that the other provided and aimed to dispel any sense of privilege and implied authority over the data.

In a polyvocal text there should be 'no single implied narrator occupying a privileged interpretative position' (Delamont and Atkinson, 2004:672). The privilege that is referred to is, however, difficult to avoid when the story has elements of the personal attached to it and this is the case in my study since it is based on my personal encounter with transition, alongside those of others. Garratt (2014:1) argues that 'it would be disingenuous also to suggest that some parts of the narrative were not more personally resonant than others'. In my research, there were some moments and encounters that echoed my personal experiences and so it was important to also ensure the other voices were given such moments. I achieved this through the use of the other participants' data to begin each part of the thesis and also in the way individual fragments were used to frame and direct particular elements of the analysis. While my own autoethnographic data was visible and at times set the scene for the analysis, the other participants' data took a more central role at other points.

In an analytic autoethnography, which aimed to make visible the voices of self and other, there was a need to think reflexively about how I might overcome the potential formation of a 'self/other' dichotomy, which may have arisen when attempting to make the multiple voices heard. Analytic reflexivity was required because alongside myself, the other participants 'form part of the representational processes in which they are engaging and are part of the story they are telling' (Atkinson et al., 2003:62).

4.3 Reflexivity in autoethnography

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explore the necessity of reflexivity in their description of the eight phases of qualitative research. Its origins relate to the acknowledgement of validity, reliability and objectivity in positivist interpretations. As research evolved into more qualitative methods of inquiry, a blurring of boundaries (Geertz, 2000) occurred as a result of researchers' access to numerous paradigms, approaches and methods, which entailed more interpretative and open-ended representations. In turn, this led to new challenges over the researcher's position within the text as an interpreter of interpretations (Geertz, 2000), which still perpetuated a 'self/other' dichotomy due to the need for subjectivity and separation from the research itself. As more challenges were made to the traditional notions of scientific research, new opportunities to reconsider the objectives and forms of social science research were seen as ways to embrace the crisis. This blurring of genres led to a crisis of representation and as a result 'there can be no single language game, overarching metadiscourse or hegemonic paradigm governing qualitative research' (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998:516). The consequence was that diverse models of truth and representation emerged (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), which in turn led to the need for reflexivity, acknowledging how the researcher is always implicated and engaged in the process of inquiry (Delamont and Atkinson, 2004). In a postmodern autoethnography, reflexivity is particularly important since individual subjectivities pose more challenges in that they are unstable and fluid, making it difficult to acknowledge or recognise them. Therefore, in an autoethnography that includes a reciprocal relationship between researcher and participants, analytic reflexivity is a

self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one's actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others (Anderson, 2006:382).

The purpose of analytic reflexivity in my study was to keep seeking to dispel any sense of a 'self/other' binary since, as researcher and participant, I was located within the research process. It is important to acknowledge that I was not a 'disinterested bystander...[rather someone who]...is implicated in the construction of knowledge'

(Gray, 2009:498). I was not seeking to distance myself, or create a 'self/other' distinction and therefore it was important that I adopted analytic reflexive practice in order to document how I was implicated and entwined in, rather than outside of, the process. Delamont and Atkinson (2004) state that the autoethnographer cannot act 'as a static entity, separate from the research setting' (673) because analysis of the social world and the shifting identities within it is not possible if the researcher treats their own self as separate. One of the characteristics of analytic autoethnography is that the researcher's own responses are part of the mutually constructed and reconstructed data. I was able to remain reflexively engaged in this construction and reconstruction through the adoption of a postmodern methodology, which shifted the focus of research from seeking universal truths to 'blurring the lines between the researcher and the researched, self and other, with participation by all throughout the process' (Willis, 2007:154).

In my research, the representations of self and other were not unproblematic however, since they were connected to issues of representation. When I, or one of the other participants, reflected on our experience of transition, it was not a 'neutral description of some out-there reality' (Taylor, 2006:194) because self is not fixed or stable and so the representation of "what really happened" is similarly fluid due to how we recall that self at that particular time. Holman Jones (2005) uses autoethnography as a response and as a way to overcome the crises of representation and looks at 'the personal, concrete, and mundane details of experience as a window to understand the relationships between self and other or between individual and community' (767). In the same way, I explored the problem of representation in ways that render self not separate from other, since through our selves we represent, and are represented by, others (Taylor, 2006). This is evident in Ann's data included at the beginning of this Methodology, where she expressed a sense of identity as fluid. Although she does not acknowledge the role of others in this fluidity at this point, there are glimpses of a reflection of self as not static or stable, but open to the possibilities of change.

In this study, (my)self was positioned firmly within the research and so reflexivity required more detailed consideration, since the unique relationship between (my)self and the participants meant that our voices were entwined. To omit the researcher's

voice reduces the work to a summary and interpretation and is therefore not autoethnographic (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Through being reflexive, looking both outwards and inwards, my position as researcher shifted to 'partial and bounded' rather than 'impartial and god-like' (Foley, 1998:116). It is viewed as a reflexivity, which includes 'mutual informativity' (Anderson, 2006:383), where the interrogation of self, alongside others, may transform the researcher's own beliefs, actions and sense of self. Looking inwards and outwards required an active analytic reflexivity on my part to become both visible in the text and through making links between the self and others, the self and the social and the self with the context (Starr, 2010).

Anderson's (2006) characteristics of complete member researcher status and a commitment to theoretical analysis worked concurrently in my autoethnography because analytic autoethnography is framed by personal experience within the context being studied that can be analysed and applied to broader theoretical concepts. I was part of the personal, social and cultural world of transition being studied and I had personal transitional experience to draw on. Having a commitment to a theoretical analysis is Anderson's (2006) solution to going beyond the provision of documenting personal experiences or offering an 'insider perspective' (386) and in order to avoid claims of narcissism in autoethnographic research. This feature of analytic autoethnography was evident in the data analysis, which set out to consider individual, yet mutually influenced and constructed, experiences through metaphorical and theoretical lenses in order to understand how transition is encountered and how we can support transition, however it may be experienced.

4.4 Research Processes

4.4.1 Context

The research was carried out at a university in the North West of England. The initial focus groups in May 2014 were arranged at the campus at which the participants had spent their first year of university. The second set of focus groups took place in November 2014, shortly after the participants had entered their second year, at a newly

built campus, which the university faculty had moved to during the summer vacation. The dyadic interviews took place on the same campus in June and July 2015.

4.4.2 Participants

As this research has an autoethnographic methodology, I include myself as a participant in the process. Having trained as a primary school teacher in the late 1980's and early 1990's I taught for seven years in the North West of England. I went on to teach at a higher education institution for thirteen years, moving between Primary Teacher Education and Childhood Studies programmes during my time there. I then secured a new job as a Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at a new institution.

In keeping with the analytic autoethnographic characteristic of dialogue with participants beyond the self, there were other participants that contributed to this study. The participants' short, self-written pen portraits appear in the appendices (see Appendices 1-5) but to describe the sample here briefly: at the start of the study, two participants, Ann and Lea, were mature students in their mid-twenties, of white British heritage and were both working mothers of young children. Lea had been enrolled on a degree course previously and had returned to higher education after a period of employment. Ann had attended college and had entered employment prior to starting at university. Two students, Minnie and Ayla were nineteen years old when the research began and of South Asian British heritage. Minnie had significant caring and other responsibilities at home and Ayla became a course representative during her second year, as she felt able to support others and act as voice for the student cohort.

The participants were anonymised through the use of self-chosen pseudonyms in order to adhere to what had been agreed at the start of the research and to maintain confidentiality. For myself, the majority of my own data was recognisable as such through my use of 'I', but where it became entangled amongst others, it was identified as JM.

After a seminar with my first year group of Childhood Studies undergraduates on 'Supporting Transitions' in November 2013, I contacted the students the following May to ask if they were interested in following up some of the ideas that had been introduced in the session. I explained that this would contribute to a research study and that there was no expectation for them to participate. Of the thirty students, four students agreed to participate. I had originally secured 12 participants but being able to schedule time when we were mutually available was problematic, as most students did not live on campus, commuted only on the days they were timetabled and had other responsibilities outside of university, such as employment. The four participants who I was able to meet up with, some of whom lived similarly demanding lives, all additionally expressed an interest in the subject of transition themselves as a reason to contribute. This was either because they were finding their transition to university challenging or because they had memories of challenging transitions to school. Lea also expressed an interest in the research process as another reason for taking part.

A further transition, to a new building at a new university site, occurred at the beginning of their second year and so again I invited them to participate in another focus group in the following November (2014) since I thought it would be interesting to listen to their experiences of another significant transition. The focus group was followed by individual dyadic interviews in June/July 2015, which all four students chose to attend. Lea had spent a term in a European university and had just recently returned prior to the interviews taking place.

4.4.3 Data collection methods

All established research methods that traditionally align themselves with qualitative or quantitative research are confronted in postmodernism and we 'abandon all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives...and prejudices as resources for study' (Vidich and Lyman, 2000:60). Ellis and Bochner (2000) advise the researcher to make use of other qualitative methods that follow an autoethnographic narrative. They cite 'short stories, poetry, fiction, photographic essays and journals' (757) and Wall (2006) supplements these with personal stories and excerpts from interviews. Importantly, autoethnography 'does not proceed linearly' and 'is not conducted according to a

special formula' (Ellis, 2004:119). This compliments a postmodern orientation, where knowledge is seen as unstable, not fixed, a representation rather than one single truth and where the researcher 'attends to the feelings, intuitions and multiple forms of rationality of both the researcher and the researched' (Deetz, 2000:33). Alerby and Bergmark (2012) claim that postmodern research should not rely on methods and procedures which are pre-defined, since reality has many nuances and so research methods need to 'develop inclusive methods to grasp the complexity of reality' (95).

Although a feature of autoethnography is that there is no prescription in terms of the methods selected, some authors do identify specific autoethnographic methods, such as co-constructed narratives (Bochner and Ellis, 1995), interactive interviews (Ellis et al., 1997), dyadic interviews (Ellis, 2004) and layered accounts (Charmaz, 1983). Denzin and Lincoln's (2012:4) idea of researcher as 'bricoleur' was applied to my particular selection of methods for this autoethnographic study. They use this term, where the researcher actively constructs methods, which are both fit for purpose, adaptable and appropriate at the particular time in the particular context. This is a less structured approach to method selection than in other qualitative approaches where methods seem to naturally and universally correlate to the chosen methodology, such as observation methods in ethnography. With such methodological freedom, I had a multitude of methods available however, I needed to be mindful that my selection did not predetermine my analysis. Hodkinson and MacLeod (2010) caution that 'research methods are all biased' (185) and if a particular assumption has already been decided then this will determine the types of questions to be asked, the methods and the methodology to be adopted.

Given the unnecessary requirement for prescribed and predictable method selection in autoethnography, I chose to utilise a combination of methods, which would create 'a narrative of hybrid subjectivities and self-Other interactions' (Garratt, 2015:779) in order to acknowledge the (dis)connected position of both (my)self and others in the research. The methods chosen were a combination of those which would be viewed as traditionally qualitative: focus groups; those which are aligned more to autoethnographic data: dyadic interviews and those which were actively constructed for this research study: journal and visual images. With the participants' permission, the

focus groups and dyadic interviews were audio recorded and the data transcribed at a later stage by myself. Although separate from the other methods, which included involvement and contributions from all participants, I used a journal to log my experiences of transition. I felt that it was not appropriate to ask the other participants to do the same as this would have been time consuming for them and I was conscious of not wanting to encroach too much on their time outside of university.

The journal recorded my own experience of transition to a new place of work. It consisted of phrases, words, questions and observations that charted a physical, social, cultural, emotional and cognitive journey through a period of adjustment. I originally chose to write a reflective journal, but this did not seem to do justice to those aspects of the experience that were difficult to 'capture'; like the affects of my transition or those things I recorded that were not immediately recognisable as being linked to transition: *'I sensed my room had been used while I was away. Someone's been in here'*. A number of the entries related to 'abject' ideas that emerged from my reflecting on the more concrete experiences of transition: *'Something wasn't right'*. The early entries were too descriptive, lacking in specific detail and were time consuming. The use of a simpler journal that focused on short entries, allowed me to record, as far as was practically possible, 'spontaneous reactions' (Humphreys, 2005:842) to the transition in the moments as they happened, since the entries consisted of single words or short phrases related to thoughts, feelings, events and behaviours (see Appendix 12). These supported later recall of those experiences in a much more effective way than lengthy journal entries perhaps could. There was no pattern to the entries in terms of documenting these 'reactions' over time, although I found myself making more entries during the early stages of my transition and less in the latter stages of data collection. This reflected the more frequent and disruptive adjustments in my transition that occurred at the outset and as I struggled to come to terms with the intensity of the change. I frequently consulted the journal at times of the focus groups and interviews to prompt my own experiences of transition in order to participate in a dialogue rather than a more formal researcher participant dynamic. This was not a journal detailing my reflections on the research process, as is common in qualitative research, it acted as

primary data in an analytic autoethnography, where my(self) was both visible in the data as well as in the analysis.

In the focus groups and interviews the use of a set of cards, which depicted photographic images of humans, animals and/or objects, were used for the specific purpose of further elicitation of thoughts, feelings and experiences of transition, as well as to provide a visual narrative of individual transition. These cards came in a published pack of approximately 60 images (Bijkerk and Loonen, 2009). They cannot be included here in accordance with the photographer's wishes for them to not be reproduced in a downloadable format, but a selection can be viewed on her website (<http://www.plainpicture.com/en/search?string=iris+loonen>). I had used these in previous teaching contexts to provoke discussion or to help students enhance the expression of their thoughts on a variety of themes and topics. Early in the research design, I had considered the collection of quasi-experimental data (Silverman, 2011) in the form of the participants producing their own images to plot their stories of transition. However, the use of the published images had previously proved successful in promoting discussion, so I decided to proceed with them as part of the data collection process. Further to this, these published images provided the opportunity for participants to 'tell a story *with* images' rather than 'to tell a story *about* images that themselves tell a story' (Riessman, 2008:141). An essential aspect in this is that the participants' reflections using the images were *of* their experiences rather than *what* they depicted (Alerby and Bergmark, 2012). Images, as well as written and spoken words, are texts (Van Manen, 1997) and therefore can be viewed as a 'methodological implement when attempting to grasp people's experiences concerning different phenomena around the world' (Alerby and Bergmark, 2012:96).

Clifford's (1986) crisis of representation suggests that research cannot 'know' lived experience directly and so an attempt to make a direct link between experience and text, including visual images, is problematic (cited Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Postmodern research is not bound by representations that attempt to 'capture' what is 'real'. Images are not objective representations of 'reality' and so I was not seeking true representations of individual experiences of transition since 'nothing in the world is fixed or immutable. We ground things now, on moving foundations' (Aitken and Zonn,

1994:14). The type of images used did not impede the reflection but offered opportunities to explore supposed, as opposed, to actual 'realities'. Therefore, what is viewed by participant, myself and other viewers, is conditioned by the social and cultural knowledge each brings to the viewing. For the purpose of my research, this was not a challenge but an important facet in evading universal truths.

The use of the images was intricately tangled with the use of the focus group. Initially, in the focus group, the main aim of the images was to act as a stimulus for discussion. The participants were asked if they wished to select an image that was reflective of their experience of transition. Harper (2002) values the use of images as starting points for dialogue and to offer opportunities to understand the world as defined by the subject viewing them; this was the original purpose for their selection. However, rather than just acting as a stimulus in the focus group, these descriptions became metaphorical provocations; for example, a speeding train became the other students on the course leaving the participant behind. The responses became more than descriptions of events or personal responses; they became reflections on personal meanings and shared experiences and therefore the visual images 'proved to be able to stimulate memories that word-based interviewing did not' (Harper, 2002:19). This was important since the narrative that emerged was integral to the personal experience of transition that we each reflected on. Alongside this, 'visual representations of experience...can enable others to see as a participant sees, and to feel' (Riessman, 2008:142). This is an important feature of autoethnography, particularly when the focus moves beyond the self and where researcher, as participant, cannot be separated from the narrative being constructed.

As a method, the focus group supported interaction between members so that all views could be listened to (Cohen et al, 2011). Rather than in a more formal group interview, where I would have posed questions as the researcher from a predetermined agenda, the focus group provided more opportunity for us to discuss our reflections on our experiences of transition (see Appendices 6 and 7). This was particularly enabling through 'the development of a permissive, non-threatening environment' where participants were able to contribute in an informal context (Hennick, 2007:6). It also supported the application of three of Anderson's (2006) characteristics of analytic

autoethnography: complete member research status, narrative visibility of the researcher's self and dialogue with participants beyond the self. However, the application of these characteristics was not without its difficulties since the identification of self as both researcher and researched can still perpetuate an imbalance in power relationships between self and other (Madriz, 2003). Although the researcher/participant dichotomy may seem to perpetuate a 'self/other' separation, Madriz (2003:371) contends that focus group methodology is more suitable than other research approaches for 'shattering a colonizing discourse in which images of research subjects as the Other are constantly reproduced'. This distance was reduced in a number of ways. For example, my dual role of researcher/participant was less visible than it may have been had I adopted a more observational role as researcher, and as a participant, I did not need to take control of the focus group as it developed. My role of participant was possible due to the more unstructured feature of the focus group and where the other participants were able to contribute to the direction and nature of the discussion (Creswell, 2007).

The use of the images meant that each participant had an opportunity to make a verbal or non-verbal contribution and through expressing interest in each other's stories, we initiated a dialogic format whereby we each simply showed our chosen image or also described how it related to our experiences of transition. Fine and Weis (1996, cited in Fine et al., 2003) refer to the active nature of research methods in their capacity to enable different kinds of identities. In relation to voice for example, interviews, particularly where the topic of discussion is sensitive or challenging, provoke a different response than the more social focus group. In an individual interview, the participant's voice can appear solitary and may even be represented as hopeless, lacking in authority or power. In focus groups, with other participants, voices can be more positive and where 'a far more textured, less judgemental sense of self is displayed...we see a cacophony of voices filled with spirit, possibility, and a sense of vitality absent in the individual data' (Fine and Weis, 1996, cited in Fine et al., 2003:268). However, I acknowledged that although the topic of transition is not generally perceived as contentious or overly problematic, it can be highly sensitive for some when reflecting on personal experiences, and so while focus groups can enable voice, they may also dis-

enable it in some circumstances. The issue of participant voice will be discussed further in the section on ethical considerations.

Following the focus groups I required an approach to interviewing that offered a more personal and individual space. Through previous stages, the notions of transition each student experienced were personal to them and it seemed more useful to provide a different space to reflect. The focus groups, in terms of offering support in the earlier stages of the study were no longer required; the other participants and I, through our shared and mutual discussions around experiences of transition, seemed to have developed a relationship of trust and they appeared quite comfortable to take part in the more personalised one to one dyadic interview.

Interviewing in qualitative research can take a number of forms, such as structured or semi-structured and are designed to stimulate responses from the participants in relation to the focus questions chosen by the researcher. While such interviews can vary in their degree of formality, there exists a clear division between the researcher and the participant (Stinson and Bullock, 2013). Dyadic interviews adopt a more conversational form 'in which the interviewer tries to tune in to the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics within the interview itself' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:62). This was made more effective through beginning each interview with the narrative from the previous focus group. This offered time to reminisce and reflect on the transitional experience. It also offered the participants an opportunity to request removal of data that they did not want to be used in the analysis.

In dyadic interviews, although there is a focus on the participant, the experiences and feelings of the researcher, as participant, are also considered. As the participant selected their image to continue their story of transition, I also did the same thing and engaged in a dialogue about how and why these images plotted our increasingly entangled narratives. While the context of the transition was different, I was able to reflect on my own experiences of transition alongside those of the other participants. Recalling and reminiscing about aspects of my own experience of transition enabled me to engage with and respond to those experiences the other participants reflected on (see Appendices 8-11).

In addition, the entries from my journal provoked further points for reflection, alongside those contributions of the other participants. This resulted in an entangling of ideas from the focus group discussions, my journal, the dyadic interviews and the visual images to the point where the methods became less exclusive and linear, but mutually informing. I have included extracts of the transcripts from the focus groups, dyadic interviews and my journal in the appendices, but I decided not to include the complete transcripts as I felt this would contradict the entangled and mutual construction and deconstruction of ideas and may have obstructed my desire to avoid the presentation of single, sanitised stories. The construction and reconstruction of ideas and the merging of methods allowed for what Ritchie and Rigano (2001) define as an approach to research interviewing that 'foregoes the search for one true or real meaning of the data and adopts a more relational concept of meaning by emphasizing differences and ambiguities' (cited in Stinson and Bullock, 2013:22). The result is a polyvocal narrative, both of the participant and the autoethnographer as researcher and participant. This was achieved, for example, by both parties asking questions or by empathising with a shared experience. This supported an autoethnographic methodology because meaning became co-constructed. In this type of interview, the autoethnographer is no longer at the centre of the data collection process, but a part of it, providing a space for other voices, for new and different data (Stinson & Bullock, 2013).

4.4.4 Data analysis processes

The personal story of the researcher is critical in autoethnography, but Raab (2013) cautions against the autoethnographer becoming the privileged narrator and simply describing what happened, rather there should be an attempt to illustrate how these personal reflections can be (dis)applied to broader cultural and social experiences, for example, of transition. These links or comparisons may not be distinctive however and in a postmodern autoethnography on transition, the purpose of data analysis is not to generate a new theory or make claims such as 'Transition is...' through describing the 'reality' of transition. Rather it is to provide a perspective, a sliver of a glimpse into experiences of transition. In autoethnography, how these resonate with the reader, on a personal level, allows them to make representations of transition through their own meanings.

As autoethnography takes many forms (Raab, 2013), deciding on a format for the presentation and analysis of the research proved challenging due to the inclusion of my own data alongside the data from the four participants. To overcome this challenge, Emerson et al. (2011) suggest the inclusion of data as multiple voices through the establishment of a narrative structured around a theme or topic. This method of inclusion of the data reflected the characteristic of analytic autoethnography: dialogue with informants beyond the self (Anderson, 2006) since analytic autoethnography is 'grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it as well' (Anderson, 2006:386).

My journal, the focus groups and dyadic interviews had amassed a considerable amount of data, which I firstly dealt with by composing individual transcripts of the data as it was collected. I then separated out each of the participants' contributions to create individual stories of transition. This was to begin the reconceptualisation of transition as an individual construct. Both during this process and then retrospectively, I went back through the data and followed the process of inductive analysis, which resulted in the data being fractured (Strauss, 1987), no longer existing as detailed stories but as smaller pieces of data. While I wanted to maintain the individuality of the data, I also needed to avoid presenting separate, chronological and linear stories, which would have implied a distinction between self and other. In keeping with a postmodern analytic autoethnography, I needed to acknowledge the connection between self and other, whilst at the same time maintaining a respect for the individual encounters with transition. This created a contradictory and challenging dilemma. The solution was to fracture the data so that it,

remains, never securely legible in any (stable) present, but coexists as a repetition that finds ways to endlessly redistribute and reinvest itself...in new and different forms of the data's flows and vibrations (Holmes, 2014:781).

This fracturing enabled the stories to be entangled with each other and with other texts in the analysis in order to reflect the continuous state of construction and deconstruction that identities experience as they brush up against and with other identities. Although the data was put to work in this way, the individual identities were

still maintained and identified as distinct through the visibility of their/our individual voices.

In inductive analysis, the pieces of data are temporarily categorised into themes (or what I have called 'illusions') that relate to the same content but as the process goes on, the data and associated constructs are refined continuously since 'flexibility is required to accommodate fresh observations and new directions in the analysis' (Dey, 1993:111). As is the characteristic of inductive analysis (Patton, 1990), these themes were not selected prior to the data collection, as in postmodern research there is no truth waiting to be uncovered. The themes were influenced by a reciprocal reading of the data itself, the literature and the theoretical concepts. Similar data fragments were grouped into the themes, then comparisons were made within each pile. This differentiation created further piles or sub-piles, which shared similarities. I found this process useful to organise the masses of data I had collected. Through this inductive analysis method and from the reciprocal merging of data and category, the themes were used to present and analyse the data as interpretations of transition in order to understand transition as an ambiguous and fragmented concept, which may be associated, or disassociated, to broader social interpretations of transition.

The themes of transition that occurred in this way were:

Tour and Detour

Betwixt and Between

Pollution

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) refer to the concept of 'plugging in', which involves 'plugging the theory and the data into one another' (vii). 'Plugging in' emerged from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:4) original concept of one literary machine being plugged into another and relates to multiple texts in research: theory, literature, data, metaphor, methods, and selves as all being influential. This process of 'plugging in' follows different 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:5) and is dependent on our own theories, readings, texts and subjectivities. This fits well with a postmodern autoethnography that seeks no

truth in the data and which hopes to resonate in an individual way with those who participate with/in it.

Part of the process of 'plugging in' is about becoming entangled with the research process itself, to the point that nothing becomes methodical or compartmentalised. Jackson and Mazzei (2012:4) characterise this as 'reading-the-data-while-thinking-the-theory', which leads to the creation of a different relationship between texts as 'they constitute one another and in doing so create something new' (Ibid). Such a constitution for me, meant that no fragment of data or aspect of theory or literary notion became privileged over the other because each, at different times, resonated more vociferously with me than others. This (re)constitution, also sought to disturb the data/analysis binary by showing how each aspect of data, theory, literature, metaphor and self constituted each other and 'intervened in a process' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:5) to complicate, rather than to stabilise thought in a linear and coherent way.

The use of the looking glass and particular parts of Alice's journey through it, could suggest a more linear reading of the data in that, at times, a more deterministic, anticipated experience is expected. Alternatively, it could be plugged into the data, theory and literature in a way that gave a more distorted and unexpected view of transition, where things do not transpire in a linear and stable way. The looking glass then, as well as the utilisation of other mirrors, meant the data analysis was in keeping with Deleuze's notion of the zigzag or a 'crosscutting path from one conceptual flow to another' (Mazzei and McCoy, 2010:505). This notion of zigzagging; going back and forth, was reminiscent of my own developing representation of transition, as well as my aim to open up the data to different realities, rather than to pin it down to one particular 'truth' of transition. Through using the data in this way, and the associated voices of Alice and Gregor Samsa, my aim was to analyse the data so as to not simplify it but to offer a postmodern, multilayering of it, through the entanglement of theory, literature and metaphorical ideas.

4.4.5 Themes became illusions

In my analysis of the data, I used the term 'illusion' to classify some of the individual fragments of data. There are a number of reasons for adopting the idea of 'illusion' as opposed to theme or topic. An illusion is not something that does not exist, but something that is not what it seems. Gregory (1997) refers to illusions as departures from reality. In scientific terms, an illusion can either be due to a physical cause, for example, when light bounces off an object and creates disturbances, or can be due to a misapplication of knowledge, for example when clear plastic gives the impression it is clear glass. An illusion, in this scientific definition, can be both a process and/or a product. The movement of light in the previous example is a process that occurs in order for the disturbance, or product, to be experienced. According to Westerhoff (2010), the purpose of illusions is to create a distortion in perception for the individual since 'what you know you should see does not affect what you actually see' (15). An illusion may also lead us to see something that is not there or to see something else in its place, like a shadowy figure, with no clearly demarcated boundaries. In relation to data as an illusion, the use of illusion as process encourages the individual to engage with the data in a way that does not control or manipulate it, or them, into a specific way of knowing, but offers opportunities for it to be interpreted in its own right.

The success of an optical illusion rests on the creation of fragments, rather than whole pieces of concepts or images, in the consciousness (Westerhoff, 2010). In the same way, this perception of illusion is further connected to my use of the fragments of data, which started as more complete, linear stories, of the participants' experiences of transition that were then fractured. This had a practical purpose, in order to make the pieces more manageable but also fractured the uniformity and linearity of the stories into more fragmented and multiple pieces, the use of illusion as product.

In theoretical terms, the idea of illusion was also chosen because of its connection to the Lacanian concept 'graph of desire' (1966), which suggests that the self we search for may never have existed. Powell (1997) describes the self as illusory, arguing that we think we maintain a conscious and coherent self when in fact the wholeness of self is an illusion since we grapple with the complexity of our multiple selves. Lebow (2012) claims

that 'identity is maintained through illusion and frequent rewriting of the past' (27). He considers that as identity is unstable, we continually re-script our pasts in order to accommodate our present needs. We do this through drawing on memories, which in turn creates misrepresentations, or illusions that are both processes of rewriting, and products of accommodating. Memories are subjective because we do not remember everything and we do not necessarily recall everything in the way it actually happened. Seeing data themes as 'illusions' is significant because what I recorded in my journal and what the other participants recalled of their transition, can be distorted by time and subjectivity. Lebow (2012) claims we have an illusion of our self, since our memories are inaccurate and so create a conflict to who we think we are and who others think we are.

The use of illusion as opposed to theme is also connected to the idea of multiple 'realities', which avoid single truths or unified selves. An illusion can be a result of a different perception of 'reality' and I wished to avoid making claims about the data. It was not my intention to misrepresent the data but in postmodernism, there are no single truths so the truth cannot be misrepresented. An illusion only captures data 'at a moment in a place' (Olney, 1972 cited in Ranza, 1977:3), which was particularly pertinent because the illusions shifted as I carried out the process of data analysis. They had multiple meanings, as the data could be interchangeably matched to one or more of them; they were therefore, also blurred illusions, representing one thing or another at the same time.

These illusions began to be represented during the collection, transcription, reading and re-reading of the data and were additionally influenced by the literature and theoretical ideas that had already influenced my thinking around transition. However, the way this occurred was through a mirroring process where data was reflected in the illusion and vice versa. The illusions were both produced by the data but also they then were used to classify the data. Therefore, the data and the illusions interacted with each other. Neither and both led to the creation of the other. Dey (1993:102) explains that in this way the meaning of the individual category, or construct, is 'bound up on the one hand with the bits of data to which it is assigned, and on the other hand with the ideas it expresses'.

4.4.6 Mirror metaphors

Denzin and Lincoln (2012) characterise the researcher as a quilt maker who includes multiple voices within the text to offer different representations of 'realities' and 'stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together' (5), which are woven into a complex story to avoid a stable, autonomous singular 'reality'. Although the metaphor of quilt is useful, it is suggestive of linearity in that the quilt making process results in a final product. In my research, I included the voices in a similar way as the quilt maker, although I adopted the metaphor of mirror. This metaphor seemed to resonate more with the non-linear path the research took in order to think differently about reflections on transition. The different patches in the quilt were replaced with a variety of mirrors and in addition to Lacan's mirror and Kristeva's abject, these were used to reflect and refract the voices in the data, so that the analysis produced more complex, evolving, on-going stories and conceptualisations of transition, rather than an idea of transition that is clean, coherent and which finds a resolution.

Metaphors are useful in postmodern research because they allow for a shifting of understanding from the literal to the figurative and were used in the analysis to create a further level of fragmentation and 'imagery in order to reflect and refract the data presented to provide another dimension within which the reader can toy with the images presented' (Grbich, 2004:100). The use of mirrors as metaphors is not uncommon in postmodern data analysis therefore and Lacan's mirror, for example, allowed me to think about the implications of transition by going beyond rational and meaning-making interpretations to include affective and emotional aspects of identity (Walters, 2014).

For this study, I took documented experiences of transition and held them up to a number of mirrors. How light is reflected and refracted in and from mirrors was used as a way to analyse the data in order to understand transition differently. In reflection, the image imitates what is seen in the mirror but refraction involves a more distorted level of reflection since the refracted mirror is,

dimpled and broken, obscured in places... As such, it throws unexpected and distorted images back. It is unpredictable in terms of what might be revealed and what might remain hidden (O'Connor, 2007:8).

The particular mirror used is also significant, as is the way the light is reflected, since flat, concave and convex mirrors offer different images: real and imagined, stretched, magnified, compressed, diminished. As with transition, the reflection is not always a smooth or linear one and where there are obstacles or barriers, the experience can be thrown off course, as in refracted images in the mirror, resulting in a change of direction, where other routes through need to be found. Refraction is necessary when thinking about problematising transition because there is no guarantee, or need for things to become clear and in postmodern research, the use of reflection and refraction is a tactic to blur any illusion of clarity so that multiple truths and representations of those truths are formed.

Mirrors as metaphors are therefore used to arouse transition's alternative, strange and fragmented 'alienating identity' (Lacan, 1966:4) in order to foreground something more of the problematic, nonsensical understandings and reconceptualisations that were beginning to reflect my 'reality' of this process and that of the other participants.

Focussing on the mirror metaphors of looking glass and house of mirrors, the analysis emerged via the interpretations and meaning-making produced from the collections of data. Lewis Carroll's novel 'Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There' was a useful framework through which to analyse and question transition, not only because it frames Alice's journey through the game of Chess as a linear one; she is a pawn and so can only move in one direction, but also because of its use of the looking glass, which reflects a strangely (un)familiar world back to Alice. The second mirror metaphor that was employed in the analysis was the house of mirrors. In an amusement or fun park, the house of mirrors is a maze like attraction, which includes a series of curved mirrors, designed in such a way so as to distort and refract the images reflected in them. This type of mirror is used to analyse the 'strangeness' and disorientation that a person in transition might encounter and the (mis)recognition with the self that occurs when the image that appears is (an)other.

This metaphorical approach to the analysis was provoked by my use of psychoanalysis as the theoretical framework, where in particular, I was inspired to think much more about Lacan's (1966) mirror stage and Kristeva's (1982) concept of abjection. Additionally, different mirrors are used for different purposes and therefore give different perspectives and images of the same things. Although scientifically, mirrors, as objects, are considered to reflect objectivity, the holding up of different fragments of data offered more distorted and multiple 'realities' of transition. This emerged from a psychoanalytical lens, where mirrors are perceived as a 'symbolic means to another way of representing the world' since 'reflection leads to introspection, a repository of experience in the physical world not bound by the rules of science' (Schlig, 2011:416). Although the functionality of mirrors as reflectors has a scientific explanation, the use of mirrors, the importance of light and dark and their associated properties, sought to avoid the implication that light illuminates what was otherwise unknown. MacLure (2006) is critical of types of qualitative research, such as action research and grounded theory, which seek 'closure' and to 'dispel illusion and illuminate the dark places of ignorance with the light of reason' (225). The use of mirrors as metaphors in the analysis embraced illusion and distortion so that when the data was reflected it 'unsettle[d] the still core of habit and order in the uncertain hope of shaking things up, asking new questions' about transition (MacLure, 2006:224).

4.5 Ethical considerations

Postmodern research celebrates a move away from objectivity, proactively employs the fracturing of the 'self/other' divide and engages in the potential and often purposeful action of distorting the data (Taylor, 2011). This does not advocate an anything goes approach however, but distrust in meta-narratives means that postmodern research can be slippery and difficult to pin down (Bauman, 1993). This can result in ethical issues beyond those that are classed as normative.

Ethical considerations in autoethnography are heightened, according to Ellis (2007), since the researcher herself, through her personal stories is implicated in the work and this has a bearing on her associations with the participants and others that are known to her. In my research, although I have contact with hundreds of students, my institution

and the discipline I teach creates a more local identification of my participants than if I was not a part of the research. These relational ethical issues can be overcome by making the research visible to the participants and allowing them to respond about what has been written (Ellis, 2007). In my research, at each point of contact, where we shared the narrative, the participants had the opportunity to request exclusion of sections of the data that they no longer wished to be included. Taylor (2011:14) refers to 'grey areas' of data collection that are based on conversations. This data might be perceived as being 'off the record' due to the more informal nature of the data collection, as with dyadic interviews. Taylor (2011) continues that when the discussion between the researcher and the participant is based on a shared experience, that it is important to provide the participant 'a greater feeling of control over her own representation' (14). In addition, I felt that as I was also using my own data, and would be able to select what to use and what not to use, that the same opportunity should be afforded to the participants.

They also received copies of their full transcript and were again able to request omission of data. Adams et al. (2015) refer to this as 'process consent', which views consent as dynamic and ongoing and which continues for the course of the project. It was during this process that I also kept the participants aware of how I was to use the data. I ensured that even though I was sharing the data as a full transcript with them that this was not how I would present their data in the analysis. I contacted them and explained that I would be using 'snippets', sentences or just a few words alongside and amongst data 'snippets' from myself and the other participants (see Appendix 13). Again, they had the opportunity to decline my requests but all agreed for me to use the data in this way. In relation to these processes, I communicated with them via email in order to give them time to read the data, think and respond, rather than asking them in person where they may have felt in a more difficult position to decline my requests. This helped to alleviate the issues that are linked to coercion and 'informant-friendship', to be discussed below.

In relation to my research and the nature of the participants as my students, I perceived one of the main ethical considerations as relating specifically to providing legitimate and open opportunities for participants to opt out of the study. Norton (2009:181) states that in carrying out research with one's students the researcher must take care of

'undue influence or coercion, given your power and authority as their teacher'. The consideration comes in relation to the issue of data collection and whether an individual student wished to take part, in an interview or focus group, for example. My main concern here was not that the data would be limited or compromised but that a student would feel that the social pressure of non-participation would be worse than participating under coercion. In addition to this initial layer of tutor/student relationship, I acknowledged that as the research process progressed, my relationships with the four participants developed. This was in part, due to the additional time we were spending together as well as the shared experience of transition that (dis)connected us. These were the students that had started their undergraduate study at the same time as I had started my new job at the university. Although I would not class this relationship as a friendship, Taylor (2011:8) refers to it as 'informant-friendship', where 'friendship' is used to describe the relationship between two people, which is 'variable and contextual'.

While the entangling of narratives was important for the nature of the research, which does not seek an essentialist view of transition, the subsequent 'informant friendship' that developed also raises further issues. Returning to the issue of coercion and the 'insider research' dilemma, Taylor (2011) suggests that there may be a sense of either party wishing to please the other. This may be simply in terms of logistical arrangements such as places and times to meet up for data collection purposes, or it could be more complex in terms of having gone so far in the research and then deciding to not go any further. The 'informant-friendship' relationship can make these decisions more difficult but it is hard to anticipate if and when this might happen and so cautioning against it is challenging. However, I would argue that as the relationship beyond a more traditional tutor/student rapport develops, there is more openness and less likelihood that participants feel coerced to continue.

In addition to being responsible for the other in the research, a further ethical consideration is the protection from harm of self in autoethnographic research. Allen-Collinson (2013) states that an engagement in analytic self-reflection can make the autoethnographer vulnerable to thoughts and experiences that are often so determined to be forgotten. Adams et al. (2015) also acknowledge that autoethnography can be a

risk since it requires us to 'examine our identities, experiences, relationships and communities' (63). This can be the case in many autoethnographies, which focus on particularly traumatic experiences, such as abuse, bereavement, breakdown of relationships or terminal illness. In my research, what was more problematic to me, was deciding how much of the personal within the professional I was prepared to expose. Once the word is written it cannot be erased. Of particular concern, when writing about myself and reflecting on a challenging experience, was becoming open to the criticism of autoethnography as narcissistic and self-indulgent. Risking exposure to claims of navel-gazing would be to further render myself as vulnerable and unable to cope with what I was experiencing in my transition. Adams et al. (2015) suggest that in deciding whether to put oneself at risk: academically, personally, professionally, is something that the individual autoethnographer can only decide for themselves. Deciding what to include and what not to include in the analysis, in terms of my data, was an important consideration in terms of the risk in making (my)self appear vulnerable and lacking in resilience. I concluded that my data, since it reflected what I had experienced in those moments in time, was part of my transition, was a part of me, and others, and so to omit or separate out elements of it, would be to diminish the experience in some way.

As Freeman (2015) notes, there is no 'one size fits all ethical coversheet for autoethnography' (97). In acknowledging the direct relational ethics that I deal with above, I also considered what I would refer to as distant relational considerations. As my research is autoethnographic, the 'graphy' element involved data collection in a field of study, which was also my place of work. Although my colleagues were not my participants, they appeared in a more distant, invisible way in my data since I could not separate them from the experience of transition I encountered. This is particularly relevant in a study that argues the self and other are in constant flux and are mutually constructed. This distance is further blurred because, as my colleagues, some were more directly or indirectly influential in my transition than others. Freeman (2015) comments that 'we are all of us agents of research and agencies of documentation, caught up in endless experience and reportage' (97). It therefore becomes difficult, when our personal experience is entangled with others, to decide how much to include in the study. All of my data is personal to me and I could not separate myself out from the

encounters and experiences I had and continue to have. In the same way, if the participants made reference to particular lectures or taught sessions I could not separate out the other students and tutors that were present and who contributed to the experience. As Ngunjiri et al. (2010:online) state,

This multiplicity of others exist in the context where a self inhabits; therefore, collecting data about self ultimately converges with the exploration of how the context surrounding self has influenced and shaped the make-up of self and how the self has responded to, reacted to, or resisted forces innate to the context.

Clegg and Slife (2009) identify further ethical issues that are characteristic of postmodernist perspectives, such as sensitivity to power relations and the value-laden nature of all knowledge and how this is represented. These issues are connected, since representing the 'realities' of others links to power, as texts are ultimately interpreted and reconstructed by the researcher. I may mis-represent the meaning in a different way to that in which it was intended (Salton, 2013). In my research, the participants, including myself, are not considered to be in isolation from each other. The representations of transition that are voiced are done so with the participants, rather than looking 'into their lives from the outside' (Ellis, 2007:13). This is so that the divide between the self and other is blurred and achieved through ensuring opportunities for negotiated dialogue in the form of the focus groups and the dyadic interviews. Hertz (1997, cited in Gubrium and Holstein, 2003) comments that the blurred distinction between self and other enables participants to recognise and adopt an active participation in the research process. However, Behar (1996, cited in Gubrium and Holstein, 2003) suggests this can create a further challenge since when we make the participant more equal 'we turn the interviewee from a faceless member of a category to a person' (58). This is where the more normative ethical practices of anonymity and confidentiality, as discussed below, are vital.

Walker-Gibbs (2013) describes the issue of giving and hearing voice as a further ethical challenge in postmodern research. The challenge is the capacity to maintain a commitment to enable the voice of the participants without trying to objectify or

totalise their 'realities' of transition or attempt to represent them in ways that may 'constrict how they are understood' (134). By attaching names to the data, I went some way to enable the individual voices and in some cases, individual stories to be heard, but I acknowledged that I could not claim to fully represent their voices in the way they may have been intended to be heard. As an autoethnographer, I am as much open to the same subjective interpretations as I would be in any other kind of qualitative research inquiry. We are 'embedded within our standpoint and from which we are unable to remove ourselves' (Garratt and Hodkinson, 1998:517) and so to separate myself from recognising that my own subjectivity is influenced by multiple interpretations and experiences is challenging (Ngunjiri et al., 2010).

Mazzei (2009) defines voice as being beyond the words spoken and voice as 'missed meanings, silent meanings, and excessive meanings' that are 'shifting, uncertain, uncontainable' (45) and so, simply attaching names to data did not alleviate this concern. There are also the voices of others: families, friends, colleagues, for example, that may strangle or liberate our voices but inevitably add multiple layers to them. Mazzei (2009) warns the researcher of only listening to the voices that we are used to hearing and those which present a 'reality' we can recognise. In my research, one participant, Ann was representing her transition to university in a seemingly linear way, in an onwards and upwards trajectory, particularly early on in the data collection. Although she was encountering difficulties, she saw these as hurdles that she would get past and in the end become transitioned,

'I do not like the fact that there are not enough computers. So I bought a laptop. Instead of just dwelling on things I seem to be facing them and changing my strategies instead of thinking I can't do this' (Ann).

Although some readings of this might create tensions with the reconceptualisations of transition I found myself increasingly drawn to, it was important to acknowledge this as her experiences and so I included much of this data in the analysis.

This leads me to be wary of assumptions for how we describe our participants' voices and how 'we inscribe or re-inscribe their voices according to our own voices in a

manipulation of data' (Jackson, 2003, cited in Mazzei, 2009:48). It was only through my own interpretation of Ann's data that I reflected and contemplated how her early experiences of transition were more linear than zig-zag and this was in turn set against my own shifting understandings of a linear transition. This all suggests that I must embrace, rather than be fearful of, the messiness of voice and consider what the voices say as well as how I hear them, particularly those voices that are not spoken out loud. These are the voices beyond the spoken word, such as the images that were chosen to represent 'realities' of transition. These are the 'voices spoken in the cracks, the sighs, and the expressions' (Mazzei, 2009:49), the facial expressions, the bodily gestures that reflect or deflect the spoken word and the images. If we choose to ignore these, or do not see them in the first place,

we settle for an easy reading [or hearing] and thereby lose the possibility of tripping up on a translation that entangles us in the layers and registers of uncertainty (Ibid.).

In order to engage with the challenges of our voices in the data, in order to avoid only listening to what we want to hear, Mazzei (2009) suggests that we 'ask questions not just in response to an answer voiced, but to ask questions of a withheld response, a nonresponse, or a masked response' (54). The use of the images helped to do this in that the pauses they created offered opportunities for me to listen to what had been said and to listen to the facial expressions and body language. This was reciprocated when I made my image selections and so this listening was mutual and further contributed to the entangling of narratives.

Mazzei and Jackson (2009) argue that practices which claim to let the voices speak for themselves do nothing to prevent the unequal power relationships that are present in research practices, such as deciding which voices to hear and which to silence, which responses to pursue and which to gloss over. If I hear what I want to hear do I give this more time and space in the analysis? As St. Pierre (2000, cited in Varga-Dobai, 2012) has also pointed out, for the poststructuralist, where language is deconstructed, and for the postmodernist, where language is unstable and slippery, the voice and words of the participant cannot ensure validity and truth. Different contexts can change the

meanings of words and 'what a question or an answer means to a researcher can easily mean something different to an interviewee' (St Pierre, cited in Varga-Dobai, 2012:6). In my research, the challenge of representing voice while avoiding the creation of meta-narratives were dealt with through the way the voices were polyvocally presented in the analysis. My responses were part of the data, since my self is not a static entity, my data and that of the other participants' was fluid and became entangled through listening to and through conversing with each other. This data was a mutually reconstructed analysis, which tentatively gestured towards representations of transition.

In addition to the ethical considerations that are specific to a postmodern autoethnography, I also sought ethical approval in terms of the more conventional research procedures as it was essential to secure a value base, which ensured that the research was conducted morally, with beneficence and with a 'high regard for the rights of the participants' (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007:173). Therefore, because ethical practices are central to the research process, decisions about the methods, analysis and the participants needed to be taken with regard to ethical judgements and the implications of key issues such as the representation of accounts and data analysis, confidentiality, protection from harm and informed consent. Through achieving ethical approval via the university's research ethical guidelines and research ethics procedures in association with the British Educational Research Association's Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2011), I could be sure that the ethical considerations in my research were addressed systematically. As a result, this ensured the integrity of the knowledge produced and promoted the practice of ethical responsibility towards the participants.

Before the start of the study, each participant was given an information sheet, which informed them of the nature of the research, their place in it, how their anonymity was to be maintained, the details around ensuring their data remained confidential and their right to withdraw at any time. Once they had this, I then asked them to sign a consent form, which included the information detailed above. Anonymity and confidentiality were addressed throughout since I used pseudonyms and made no reference to the name of the setting. The data itself from the focus groups, interviews and journal was stored electronically via a password protected file and the audio recordings were similarly protected and were deleted after transcription.

4.6 Overcoming challenges to validity, authenticity and legitimacy

Notions of validity, authenticity and legitimacy are slippery in postmodern research since there is no intention to seek generalisations in terms of experience. These ideas are problematised deliberately since they refer to the acquisition and explanation of how 'truth' and 'reality' are constructed and presented, which rub against postmodern ideas. Rather than a single truth, postmodern research gestures towards complexity and therefore if achieved, it can be said that the research has achieved its own version of validity. Grbich (2004:59) suggests that validity in postmodern research has as its centre a 'crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transformation, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach'. This reflection and refraction allows for the creation of more complex meanings and understandings. These multiple and shifting representations reflect the nature of postmodern research and so suggest 'a close grappling with the question' (Ibid). In my research, this complexity was attempted through the dismantling of the 'self/other' dichotomy and through the different representations of 'realities' in the data analysis. Autoethnography is a recognised post positivist approach to research and the expression of multiple 'realities' are valid, particularly since much of the critique of the more traditional qualitative research demonstrates that nothing is ever truly independent of the writer (Dyson, 2007).

'Validity' in autoethnography is also judged by whether it helps readers communicate with others, or offers a way of re-thinking something (Ellis and Bochner, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Humphreys (2005) argues that autoethnography acquires 'validity' if the story to be told contains elements of the everyday, albeit multiple 'realities', that others can relate to. Transition, in whatever context it arises; starting school, a new job, moving home, experiencing bereavement, are examples of shifts that can be identified with, since they form part of the cycle of everyday life for most of us. Referring back to the dyadic interviews, as we told our stories of transition, I was able to reflect more deeply on my own, through the other and it is in a similar way that autoethnography achieves 'validity'; that an individual's response can resonate with another. Plummer (2001, cited in Ellis, 2004:126) supports this when claiming 'what matters is the way in

which the story enables the reader to enter the subjective world of the teller - to see the world from her or his point of view, even if this world does not match reality'.

In this part of the thesis, I have identified and provided a rationale for the methodological choices taken in order to carry out the research. Postmodernism, with its focus on fragmented and disconnected ideas, seemed to resonate with aspects of what I was experiencing in relation to my own sense of being in transition. In terms of my chosen approach to autoethnography, I placed others alongside and within my story of transition. However, my specific use of autoethnography was neither one type or the other, since I adopted a fragmentary approach to my personal story of transition, developing the analysis through the inclusion of personal data and data from the other participants. Therefore, my autoethnography was a combination, a hybrid of those that are described in the literature whilst still being aligned to analytic rather than evocative autoethnography. While this approach to my choice of autoethnography may appear to be a productive entanglement of different types, as Ellis (2009) has stated, autoethnographic approaches,

are flexible, reflexive, and reflective of life as lived; they do not follow a rigid list of rule-based procedures. Often they are multivoiced and include interaction among researchers and participants in the research context as well as stories participants bring to the project (16).

Next, I work with more fragments of data and through the use of a number of mirror metaphors and the illusions of 'tour and detour', 'betwixt and between' and 'pollution', I begin my analysis of transition.

5 Analysis: 'In a strange land within my own country'

'At the start you are not speaking to anyone and everyone's just giving you the looks and you are thinking, oh my god, who are you supposed to go and talk to about all of this?' (Ayla)

The analysis works with mirrors to reflect and refract the data in and among the literature and theoretical ideas. Different kinds of mirrors are used as metaphors to help me examine more closely the problematics of, and develop ways of looking at and thinking differently about, the processes of transition. The data in this analysis is held up to mirrors to reflect participants' experiences of transition and in doing so can be characterised as illusionary, since it makes no claims to the singularity of transition and 'is in keeping with a postmodern disrespect for boundaries' (MacLure, 2006:225).

My transitioning to a new place of work was wrought with challenges and in a similar way to Ayla in the fragment of data above; I experienced a sense of exclusion and disorientation. Being 'in a strange land within my own country' (Aragon, 1924) resonates with the idea that perhaps even the most straightforward seeming 'aboveground' experiences of transition can become more complex when, on looking in the mirror, the self is confronted with something very different to what it is used to. The image that is reflected 'is the other who does not understand me, who treats me as an enemy, who does not speak the same language as me' (Chowaniec, 2001:2).

The analysis endeavours to reflect my partial and subjective experience of transition to a new place of work set among the other participants' data as they move from school/college/work to university. The data is drawn from combinations of journal entries, focus groups and interviews and is presented polyvocally, as multiple voices within the text, in a deliberate attempt to engage with the messiness of how self is unstable and is entwined with the other. To distinguish data from other text, fragments are italicised throughout. The combination of data from all participants, organised by the illusions of 'tour and detour', 'betwixt and between' and 'pollution', are used to explore moments in transitional experiences through retracing the steps or through highlighting the deviations and barriers along the way.

Alongside the data fragments of the participants, I also include the voice of Gregor Samsa, from Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' and the voice of Alice, from Carroll's 'Through the Looking Glass'. Gregor's experience of transition relates to the illusion of 'pollution' and is used as a way to discuss how transition might infect and seep into self and others. Alice's voice provides support in the analysis of the illusions 'tour and detour' and 'betwixt and between', since her seemingly straightforward and deterministic journey through the looking glass becomes more reflective of a nonsensical and strange 'belowground' transition.

Cixous and Calle-Gruber (1997:178) write that 'all narratives tell one story in place of another story'. The analysis of the data using theory, literature and metaphor tells different stories, one in place of another and according to Jackson and Mazzei (2012), this means that the data and the analysis become something else, something other than they could have been in a different telling of the story. This represents the idea of illusion and a refusal to make a single claim to any single truth of transition. My use of Alice and Gregor, added another layer to the story being told, allowing the data to be represented across 'multiple, conceptual perspectives, a view that opens up...rather than crystalizes representation' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012:ix). These multiple layers may create what Denzin (1997) refers to as 'messy texts', which are 'many sited, open ended, they refuse theoretical closure...they are always multivoiced, and no given interpretation is privileged' (xvii).

5.1 Tour and detour

The illusion of 'tour and detour' comes both from the literature that explores transition as either linear or non-linear and through the data itself. At times, the data reflected experiences that appear to take straightforward tours or routes through transition, which feel more familiar and recognisable. At other times, the data suggests transition is a zigzag, unstable and fragmented toing and froing process, involving navigations that are more complex. These are transitional detours through aspects of time, place, feelings, identities and affects, which can distort and disorientate the transition.

With these linear and non-linear perspectives in mind, 'Through the Looking Glass' is a useful metaphor, which, when entangled with Lacanian ideas of the mirror stage and graph of desire, offers interestingly critical perspectives to the analysis of transitional experiences.

5.1.1 A transitional tour

In my professional life, I have experienced a number of what would be described as linear transitions, straightforward, 'aboveground' 'tours' from one stage or place to another. These have been self-imposed, in the main, with the purpose of seeking new opportunities to develop personally and professionally. In most cases these transitions were also multifaceted in relation to shifts in physical, cultural, social, emotional and cognitive capacities: from class teacher to senior manager in a primary school; class teacher to university lecturer; Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies to head of year of a final year Primary Education Teaching degree. The move that has occupied this study was made in September 2013 when I started a new post after having been in the previous one for thirteen years. I moved from one higher education context to another, Senior Lecturer to Senior Lecturer within the same discipline. I recall my feelings at the time were ones of nervous, yet optimistic anticipation, '*excited and fearful*', feelings that were reminiscent of what Minnie expresses here,

'At the beginning I felt like I was in a new open space and I was on my own. But then I was happy because it was a new experience so I was sort of looking forward to it even though there was still that feeling of being alone. However, I did have some optimism about starting because you have that support and comfort from someone like you; you know you're in with someone'.

Both my own and Minnie's initial experiences seem to be suggestive of a more deterministic view of transition, which starts at the beginning and offers a sense of movement *forward*, onwards and upwards through a time of change but where there is an *optimism* for getting through, which supports the persistence to keep going.

Similarly, data from Ann also seemed to reflect that the nature of transition is perhaps being experienced as linear at times. When I fractured it, I found that Ann's data seemed to dominate the illusion of 'tour',

'I want to finish my education before I am 30...I don't want kids after I'm 30. I feel I've done that part of my life and my education is my next step...then developing a career' (Ann).

Reference was made to transition as a journey to be travelled,

'It's not the end it's just the next step' (Ann), with barriers in the way, *'even though I've completed this side of the grass, I've still got a long way to go to where I need to be'* (Ann),

but which was a natural part of transition,

'I've got to May and it's not over and I don't feel sad about it I just feel it's a natural process. At first, it was like that's where I need to be, and now I'm here, I think yeah just keep going' (Ann).

Ann had expressed the need to see transition in this way as part of her strategy to deal with it. She is mother, a partner and has a job outside of university and she sees her student identity as only a part of who she is. This places the nature of transition and how it is experienced in a similar way to Grosz's (1994) definition of identity as segmented, fragmented and where one identity, such as student, is only part of who we are. To Ann, these different identities were distinct and separate and what was reflected back in the mirror was not a merging of these identities, for example student, employee, woman, colleague, mother, partner, but only one or other of them. Images of these 'stable' identities were reflected onto others,

'...every day my kids know what I'm doing and where I'm going and "mummy are you at uni today?" "Yeah mate" or "are you at work?" My youngest one asks, "mummy are you at Monsters University today or are you at Asda?" And I'm like "am I in my uniform?" "No, you're at Monsters University" (Ann).

Identities are seemingly categorised according to clothes worn and spaces occupied.

'Everything I do has to be fitted in neatly. I don't take my work home and if I do, I do it when my children are in bed, I don't do it in front of them' (Ann).

Where identities are compartmentalised, transition seems to be experienced in the same way. This seemed to result in 'measuring' the rate of transition in these different identities, prioritising the ones that offered most uncertainty. Ann had referred to initially being concerned over her age on starting university, *'I felt so much older than everyone else'* and described the associated feelings of being *'really alone, it was a proper fear'*. As the anxiety about transition involving moving into closer contact with a different age group eased, the focus switched to her next priority, her academic identity,

'The learning is a different transition because you are learning something different or you are adapting to a different routine, so that is completely different, I'd give a completely different opinion on that but my sense of coming here, I've passed that phase' (Ann).

Taking this data into account, transition could be initially perceived as an 'onwards and upwards' (Colley 2007) mind set. Similarly,

'It was a proper wake up call submitting my first assignment and getting my feedback 'cos I was devastated at my mark. I got 47 and I still say now I only got 47, but I got to appreciate that has got me to where I've come now' (Ann).

Barriers may occur and these may be dealt with in a matter of fact way, as manageable hurdles to be overcome rather than uncontrollable obstacles preventing the forward movement.

Rackin (1987, cited in Schlig, 2001) perceives the metaphor of a looking glass to represent something different to the non-sensical experience often projected. Rackin's (1987) 'Through the Looking Glass: Alice Becomes an I', projects an image of the emerging autonomy and independence of Alice as she approaches adulthood. She has gone beyond Lacan's (1966) mirror stage and Turner's (1964:232) 'betwixt and between' state as, according to Rackin (1987), she has 'surpassed the point where she is a static

entity entranced by the image of her own reflection in the mirror' (cited in Schlig, 2001:420). She is able to reflect on her own identity and evolve over time. This emergence of a partial autonomous 'I' and a self that appears able to have an (in)ability to engage with the 'strangeness' is noted in the following fragment of data,

'Instead of just dwelling on things, I seem to be facing them and changing my strategies instead of thinking, I can't do this' (Ann).

This data could be understood as reflective of a more linear notion of transition since it alludes to an onwards and upwards mind-set. It is very different to other fragments, which express a more complex and problematic experience of transition. Although Ann is encountering challenges that require her to operate in a different way, I sense she is embracing the transitional experience and has the tools that have enabled her to go beyond being 'a static entity',

'I think I've just fitted in. I'm just here now. This is me' (Ann).

5.1.2 A transitional detour

'Through the Looking Glass' (Carroll, 2009) begins with Alice in her sitting room wishing she could go beyond the looking glass to the room she can see on the other side, which is the same as the one she is in, only the things are the other way around. She anticipates an 'aboveground', linear experience, but when she enters Looking Glass House and then Looking Glass World beyond, nothing is what it seems and things are not as they should be, 'a most curious country it was' (Carroll, 2009:36): flowers talk and paths lead nowhere or take her where she does not want to go.

In the same way, other data might suggest that the linear prioritisation that appears to dominate Ann's early transitional experiences above, does not continue in a straightforward trajectory, at some point the organisational strategies are thrown off course and Ann's and other participants' experiences of transition seem to take a detour from the linear trajectory,

'I couldn't function. I decided to keep out the way. I was in complete shock' (Ann).

'We just went crazy' (Minnie).

Detours as refractions in the transition, in the form of additional new identities can throw the linear trajectory into turmoil,

'In terms of operating as an early years teacher, I've kind of gone backwards with the journey as opposed to where everyone else has gone' (Ann).

This turmoil might occur because previous 'aboveground' experiences of transition are not always helpful in navigating new 'belowground' ones; they become illusions that shatter the 'smoothness' of the transition. Previous transitions are now themselves illusions, distorting what had, at one time, been understood as familiar and straightforward shifts.

This illusionary notion was reflected in my own transition to a new place of work as it moved towards a more complex experience, where the process of my transition took a 'detour' as it was complicated by the shifting context I moved into. The 'detour' was accompanied by a sense of pollution and contamination as I appeared to disturb the status quo, unsettling the 'business as usual' dynamic. I was bringing the unfamiliar to what staff in the new institution knew as familiar and their response, as I reflected in my journal, was that,

'They are surrounding themselves with stories and people from the past. They can't seem to move on. Is this what I am doing myself?'

When reflecting back to Gale and Parker's (2014) framework for transition, what appears to be omitted, on first analysis, is another type or layer of transition that helps to explain even more unsettling and more unexpected shifts in identity where the interplay of the multidimensional nature of transition seems magnified beyond what is manageable at the time. Most transitions, in relation to professional or educational movements at least, are likely to be anticipated, or there is opportunity for some level of preparation. Gale and Parker's (2014) framework does not seem to include a type of transition that explains the unexpected and leaves the individual ill-prepared and without a sense of direction.

'I feel like somebody different here, a lot actually. Nowhere near do I feel I belong here and I don't feel I ever will. This isn't for me. Too many people' (Ayla).

This data reflects the sense of otherness that Ayla felt when the image that was reflected back to her from the mirror was unfamiliar and polluted her need for a stable self. The need to identify with being '*near*', or nearer to others, to be similar or the same as others, perhaps explains the desire for her to seek proximity to others and self, in order to feel familiar and to avoid a sense of alienation and becoming unravelled. Being '*here*', does not intimate an arrival at a destination, but could be reflective of the sense of difference in being '*there*', at college, where routines, expectations and the self were '*known*'. This resonates with Ahmed's (2006) ideas on disorientation and how being '*here*' generates a feeling of not fitting in. The overriding feeling of needing to get out, back to '*there*', before the experience causes too much disturbance is created by the feeling of separation and distance, the '*alienating identity*' (Lacan, 1966:4), that has become too painful to endure.

This lack of direction and proximity to a self that Ayla thought was stable became pertinent to my own move. I had anticipated change, such as adjustments to physical, cultural and social dimensions, assimilating into an established team of people for example, but I did not expect the impact of the change on my own understandings and '*performances*' of my '*personal*' and '*professional identities*'. I had not anticipated this multidimensional disturbance so when it came, it was an additional challenge to face,

'I thought it felt right but after a few weeks, days if I'm being honest, the excitement has subsided and I've started to think I've done the wrong thing in coming here' (JM).

I am drawn again to the reference to '*here*' in this data. '*Coming here*', although relating to a physical movement, can also be analysed as the difficulties encountered when a familiar self from elsewhere, the past, is challenged. '*Coming here*' and finding an unfamiliar self is a threat to the familiar self that was over '*there*', where I had established my professional self within the faculty and the wider university. Prior to '*coming here*', from the vantage point of what I perceived as a safe and familiar self, I believed I had established an identity as a valued professional; colleagues knew me, my

capabilities, my personality traits. I had a number of responsibilities, which identified me as an authority in particular areas, which added to my perceived established, stable, deserved and respected 'professional identity', '*I am experienced and confident in myself*'. However, this data fragment creates an illusion of self because the identity I reflect back on, in a postmodern sense, cannot have been so described, since identity is unstable and in constant flux.

On moving to the new institution, '*coming here*', my recollected '*experienced and confident*' identity seemed to hold no currency as I tried to assimilate into what I initially perceived to be an established, close team of colleagues where it was clear that there was no shortage of expertise. The initial weeks seemed straightforward; I was the new member of staff and had some support to manoeuvre through unfamiliar procedures and processes. At the time, I felt like I was a visitor and would soon be returning to the more familiar, known world over 'there'. Perhaps this was because my contract was temporary in the first instance.

From the outside, this would perhaps appear to be an expected response to a transition that occurs to most people on numerous occasions in their lifetimes. I had changed jobs before and similarly experienced the sense of unfamiliarity and disorientation that comes with change (Marris, 1986). The difference here was, that instead of the unknown thoughts, feelings and events that constituted '*coming here*'; people, spaces and self, becoming more familiar as time went on, these things were becoming more unfamiliar, more complex, more strange and confusing with each passing day, week and month.

To explore something of why this feeling of being disorientated and unsettled might occur, it is useful to draw on psychoanalytical perspectives where identity is not viewed as fixed. This is supported by Hall (1990) who refers to the increasingly fragmented and fractured nature of identity and where we operate in multiple sites and through multiple positions. Perhaps we cannot rely on what we have done previously to help us with what is to come. Alice encounters a wood in *Looking Glass World*, which appears to offer her some shade from the sun. She approaches it enthusiastically and claims 'Well, at any rate it's a great comfort after being so hot' (Carroll, 2009:54). The shelter and security of the trees however are illusions since the shade creates shadows and becomes eerily

dark and she is unable to remember the name of anything, including her own. 'And now, who am I? I WILL remember if I can! I am determined to do it! L, I KNOW it begins with L' (Ibid.).

This gap and tension between who we are, and who we think we are (Woodward, 2003), between what we know and what we think we know, offers an interesting detour, a provocative dynamic when trying to make sense of the incongruities and discrepancies that may happen in some transitions. As Lacan (1966) states, our identity, however secure, is always threatening to return to the fragmented body. It is this fear of fragmentation that drives us to secure and stabilise identity. To do this, we may use previous 'successful' transitions as mirrors to reflect what we think should happen in a new transition. When the image that is reflected back is not the one we expect to see, it is blurred and fuzzy, an illusion, like a visit to the house of mirrors, our transition is thrown off course and again we experience the 'alienating identity' that Lacan (1966) refers to or the 'indeterminate space between bodily insufficiency and anticipation of wholeness' (Lacan, cited in Bellamy, 1992:94). Perhaps those previous transitions were only 'successful' in our minds since we manipulate the past in order to deceive ourselves (Brown and Jones, 2001). Or, perhaps we are looking in the wrong mirror. Research by Bertamini and Parks (2005) has shown that when we look at our image in a mirror the reflection is not a mirror image, the reflection is smaller than it actually appears to be in 'reality'. Therefore, can we know that the reflection in the house of mirrors is *the* distorted image? All mirror reflections distort the image we have of ourselves to varying degrees.

Returning to the data that alludes to the linearity of some transitions, Ann initially appears to have 'transitioned'. When a child sees her/his own image reflected back from the mirror s/he begins to develop a sense of self, what the child sees is an image of her/his ideal ego. This is the beginning of the child's rejection of the mother and is similar to Kristeva's explanation of a child's first experience of abjection in order to achieve autonomy. However, as Billig (2006) notes, this image is 'mirrored and reversed, and thereby inaccurate. It is a trap that ensnares the child. Moreover, it is external to the self, and it prefigures a disturbing split within the ego' (13). With this in mind, it is

interesting to note that Ann, who identified herself as *'just here now'*, later appeared to become lost in her transition as it became more complex,

'I've kind of gone backwards with the journey as opposed to where everyone else has gone'.

Her satisfaction at being *'here now'* is again reminiscent of a self that is not stable or familiar and the trap that Billig (2006) refers to lies in wait to fragment and create instability within (her)self. This could be reflective of the mirror stage where the infant's self, when looking in the mirror is being fragmented; even though the image that is reflected back is whole, it is an illusion that conceals the reality that the infant's ego is not yet unified (Lieberman, 2000).

As the infant develops, *'this totality becomes idealized into a model for eventual integration and as such is the infant's primary identification, the basis for all subsequent secondary identification'* (Muller and Richardson, 1982:30). This identification is so significant that once a stable identity is formed it can become rigid. Therefore, any experience that is unknown or unfamiliar can lead to the *'taking on the armor of an alienating identity with the external world and to an experience of the self-seeming inverted and therefore somewhat awry'* (Lieberman, 2000:95).

'I think it is not just that it has affected the way I think about myself and the way I engage because I'm more tired and I've also been getting a little more ill this year. I was relaxed last year, I don't think I was getting as many illnesses, whereas now, because I'm stressing out more, I'm getting more ill and again that is adding to another thing that is affecting me 'cos I want to be 100% focused all the time' (Lea).

Lea notes how she is getting *'...more tired'* and *'...a little more ill this year'*, becoming contaminated by things that constrain, inhibit and infect the imagined/imaginary *'clean body'* with impurities of tiredness, stress, distraction, exhaustion and pathogens. In reference to the mirror stage, the infant's fragmented sense of self when s/he anticipates a sense of autonomy from the mother, *'comes to take the place of the self'* (Homer, 2005:25). This creates a rivalry that can re-emerge in future relations between the self and others. The fragment of data above could be understood to intimate this

rivalry with self and other. Lea's competing identities of being ill/being well, being relaxed/being stressed, focussed/not focused create rivalries as they did at that first point of (mis)recognition at the mirror stage. At the same time, she feels the gaze of others as a rival, *'it is not just...the way I think about myself'*. Not only is she fighting with her own (mis)recognition but also with the acknowledgement that others may be seeing her in a way she is not expecting, or in a way that she does not want to be seen.

Through the mirror, we can gain insight into the reciprocal interchanges between interiority and exteriority...The reflection in the glass is at once both the self and a radical otherness, an image privileged with a truth beyond the subjective and at the same time taken to be the very essence of that subjectivity (La Belle, 1998:9).

One participant, when recalling her reaction to receiving a mark and feedback on an assignment for the first time as an undergraduate student, experienced a similar sensation of seeing both self and other, a (mis)recognised self, at the same time,

'It knocked me down... 'cos I thought "oh yeah, I'll be all right I can do this" and then I thought, "oh god I can't"' (Ann).

The assignment, as a mirror, simultaneously reflected and refracted both a positive sense of self and Ann's ability to cope as well as a questioning of an unsettled, (mis)recognised self. In this example, her split sense of self may have been her own comparisons with a previously successful and confident college 'self' or alternatively, it may have been Ann comparing her 'self' and her academic performance with others on the course.

According to Garratt (2015:778), the image that is reflected in the mirror 'arouses psychological distortion' and leads to further (mis)recognition. In particular, some experiences of transition manifest as if entering a new and unfamiliar world,

'That is how my whole placement was and it was really uncomfortable' (Ann),

as a new and unfamiliar person,

'It was like I was a first year who didn't have a clue what I was doing and was just left there' (Ann).

The unfamiliarity with place and a self that was not seen in the same way by the other resulted in Ann changing her behaviour to fit with the expectations,

'They don't know what I'm here for so what's the point trying to explain...they knew what it was about. They chose to ignore that so I felt like I couldn't perform to the way I was training'.

The reflection by the other of Ann *'as if she was a first year'*, was not an image she recognised, it was refracted as a 'radical otherness' (LaBelle, 1998:9). Perhaps this created an 'alienating identity' (Lacan, 1966:4) which appeared distorted, illusionary, not 'I'. These illusionary and distorted images of the self that are reflected and refracted in the mirror suggest 'strangeness' and something of the barriers individuals face when encountering some transitions. MacLure (2006) refers to one of the purposes of postmodernism as 'estranging the familiar' (224), to move beyond a unified self in order to grapple with complexity and uncertainty. Ann's estrangement with herself, as reflected by the other, could be seen as contributing to the complexity of the transition but MacLure (2006) encourages us to not suppress the other, but to embrace it in order to overcome uniformity and single truths.

As with Lea and Ann above, who could both be encountering rivalries to their own sense of self, the (mis)recognition the infant experiences and the distorted and disturbing image in the house of mirrors, could also relate to the complexity of my transition. I may have created a (mis)represented image of my 'professional self' that was perhaps not a 'true' reflection of who I thought I actually was. This created a sense of 'strangeness' and unfamiliarity with (my)self and leaves me questioning how can I 'transition' at all if my self is unstable?

Strange indeed is the encounter with the other—whom we perceive by means of sight, hearing, smell, but do not 'frame' within our consciousness. The other leaves us separate, incoherent; even more so, he can make us feel that we are not in touch with our own feelings, that we reject them or, on the contrary, that we refuse to judge them—we feel 'stupid,' we have 'been had' (Kristeva, 1991:187).

Walters (2014) states that the image of wholeness eludes us as adults, it is not just a stage we experience as young children. It is for this reason that we 'remain fragmented and split, always (nostalgically) seeking out a sense of wholeness (even though this state never existed) in what we see reflected back' (102). In relation to a person who experiences transition therefore, there is perhaps a need to see ourselves as transitioned, and not to question '*What's wrong with me?*' (JM), but to seek recognition and value, in order to overcome the 'strangeness' and to be 'seen in ways that fit with how we would like to believe we are seen' (Bibby, 2011:35).

In reflecting on her transition to university, Lea commented that '*...it helps because I've had experience of the real world*'. Likewise, I had anticipated a smooth, linear transition to a new place of work because of my previous experiences. In 'Through the Looking Glass', initially, Alice also believes that her journey will be straightforward since she perceives the room beyond the mirror to be the same as her own room, 'only things go the other way round' and once in the room she states 'I shall be as warm in here as I was in the old room' (Carroll, 2009:19). She projects a sense of confidence and self-importance as she prepares to go through the looking glass and this is reflected in some of the data from the participants,

'I was happy because it was a new experience so I was sort of looking forward to it...I felt like we were mixing in with each other and getting know to each other' (Minnie).

Once there however, Alice almost immediately begins to notice that the differences are more than just the inverted image, 'They don't keep this room so tidy as the other' (Carroll, 2009:20). A number of the participants also experienced a sense of difference and disconnection, questioning their motives,

'I was like, wait a minute, what am I supposed to do?' (Minnie)

'I was really struggling and thinking should I be here?' (Ann)

The sense that was being made from the familiarity of everyday objects and experiences was becoming shattered. In my own transition, I felt similarly disappointed and let down by the environment I encountered. For a long time I had wanted to make the move to a

new institution. I had been very happy where I was, but I also felt that I had contributed all I could and wished to move on in order to learn and develop. The image I had created of the value of a new 'beginning' was not helpful however and like Alice, I did not anticipate the disturbance that a seemingly 'smooth' transition seeks to avoid. Once there, in Looking Glass World, many of the things she experiences make no sense to her; they are nonsensical. Insects, for example, are familiar to her from her everyday experiences but insects that talk and question her are unsettling and shatter her epistemological certainties. In the same way, my certainties of who I was and what I was able to do were becoming shattered. Alice's nonsensical experiences in Looking Glass World, and the uneasiness some of the participants were feeling, were being mirrored by my own constant questioning: *'What's wrong with me? Am I naïve? I'm not me-why?'* What was nonsensical to me was my inability to get to grips with the unfamiliarity I felt for/to/with (my)self.

Gale and Parker (2014) refer to undergraduate students experiencing culture shock in the early transition to university,

'I remember at the start of the year I felt really alone' (Ann).

This can manifest itself as a reaction to previously preconceived ideas of what the experience will be like (Maunder et al, 2012). Many students create a version of being a student that does not match the 'reality' through influences such as their peers and the media, which may expose them to a romanticised view of university,

'...it was a completely different environment from what I was used to and what I had experienced' (Ann).

When Alice prepares to go through the looking glass, she claims 'I'm sure it's got, oh! Such beautiful things in it! Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare!' (Carroll, 2009:20). MacLure's (2006) 'smoke-and-mirrors' metaphor reflects the mirror in Looking Glass House. While the actual movement through the mirror is smooth, the glass melts 'like a bright silvery mist' (Carroll, 2009:21). As soon as Alice enters and meets the other inhabitants, she begins to experience the unexpected. Chess pieces move of their own accord and she is invisible to them, books are written in a language

she does not understand, which may also be reflected in the experiences of some students as they navigate new 'academic worlds',

'I felt that my world and the academic world were separate and moving at different speeds. I was fearful that I would not be able to catch up' (Lea).

Carroll (2009:27) writes as part of the narrative 'you see she didn't like to confess, even to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all'. Lea refers to being '*fearful*' and I reacted to the 'strangeness' in a similar way. For a considerable period of time, I did not admit to myself, or anyone else, the struggles I was encountering with the transition. I worried that it would reflect badly on the 'professional self' I was trying to seek and maintain. I felt it was a part of the process that I needed to endure and move on from, based on my own understanding of what transition was at that time. I was also disappointed with myself for feeling so lost and for the inability to respond and embrace the 'strangeness'. My reaction was to not persist and as my contract was only for twelve months I reminded myself, '*I'm leaving after a year*'.

In some transitions, there is a sense that initially they set out to appear safe, straightforward and manageable. However, as with the looking glass, these can be deceptive as the 'bright silvery mist' descends and blurs the familiar, known worlds we inhabit. The mist appears poetic and romantic but it can be illusionary in that it distorts our view of transition. The mist operates like the abject, unsettling and contaminating our sense of self, our 'clean and proper self-controlled body' (Kristeva, 1982:3). In practice, both for new staff and students, the mist is the 'strangeness' and disorientation that is felt as part of the transition and so there are strategies in place to support the experience in order to make it easier to navigate. Gale and Parker (2014) cite the importance of induction to support the transition and to alleviate the culture shock that may accompany the disorientation in the move to university. Induction, however, tends to be a temporary strategy, an acknowledgement that those in transition need to be thought of as beginners and in need of support in order to re-establish a sense of (unachievable) ownership over the 'clean and proper body' and while the unfamiliar becomes more familiar. This suggests transitions are understood as being measurable and perpetuates the notion that they are linear and time-bound in their development.

As the transition unfolds, as the mist starts to lift, the support is removed and there comes a time when the person in transition is expected to simply manage, to get on. Yet those in transition may not feel any more familiar or able to embrace the 'strangeness' long after the mist has dissipated and the mirror has melted away. This links to the young child who seeks independence from her/his mother during the mirror stage. Those in transition see the opportunity as one of new beginnings, as does Alice as she moves through the looking glass, but when the 'reality' of the experience is assimilated, what the person then may experience is a (mis)recognition of self and of the experience. As in the mirror stage, a tension arises. The person in transition, experiencing culture shock, is fearful of a return to an 'alienating identity' (Lacan, 1966:4),

'I just burst into tears and I was like, "I don't understand what I've done wrong"' (Ann).

While I was initially comforted by the reflection looking back at me; success in securing a place at the institution through achievement of qualifications and successful performance at an interview, the reflection that I now see is of (an)other, *'it was very confusing'* (Lea).

Lacan (1966), as a psychoanalyst, refers to psychic disruptions, but this idea can be more broadly applied here. By asking the questions, *'I'm not me - Why? What's wrong with me?'* (JM). Or by not understanding *'what I've done wrong'* (Ann), for example, might suggest the person in transition has, in some way, let their guard down, the armour is penetrable; the infection has taken hold, a weakness is detected and the transition has become disjointed and thrown off course. The person in transition, like the infant in the mirror stage, has an image of self that is in contrast with its actual image. For example, Ann had worried that she would not settle at university because *'I felt so much older than everyone else and I thought that would like separate me from everyone and I felt really conscious about my age'*. When she realised that she was not being judged, she expressed relief and a certain amount of embarrassment for presuming others would perceive her in this way. Ann went on to comment about how realising that she was not going to be judged helped her to *'find peace'* and move on in the transition. However, the mist that accompanies 'strangeness' can return to deceive us and it is [t]his illusion of unity, in which a human being is always looking forward to self-mastery, entails a

constant danger of sliding back again into the chaos from which he started' (Lacan, 1991:15). Transition, as a blurred, fuzzy, misty concept can be perceived in the same way. It may not be a process to be achieved, or mastered, it may feel like an illusion, where the transitional subject, or those on the periphery, may think there is a final point, an end product, but often, there may not be such a conclusion, since, according to Lacan (1977), the ego is 'an inauthentic agency functioning to conceal a disturbing lack of unity' (cited in Brown, 2011:119).

Although some data identifies different aspects of identities as transitioning at different rates, participants did not identify with having fully 'transitioned'. They expressed contentment with being where they were within a transition,

'I would say I am somewhere down the line, like I am in the middle now 'cos I am much more involved' (Ayla),

but also saw transition as a process,

'I don't feel like I'm there and I don't feel like I'm that person that will ever be there you know. I don't know everything, I'm not going to know everything, but I don't feel like I've learnt enough' (Ann).

Reviewing my ideas about transition through the illusion of 'tour and detour', I acknowledge that they can begin as a linear experience, or they can have sections or moments of linearity. Strategies can be employed to help us move onwards and upwards, but these linear periods, or tours in our transition, can frequently become more-than-linear and often take a de-tour to periods of unbecoming. As Ecclestone et al. (2010) have stated, the non-linear nature of transition should not necessarily be seen as a complex phenomenon due to the diversity of experience, which renders it difficult to objectify. It aligns with Grosz's (1994) notion of identity in flux and that it is not a stable, congealed idea. The risk and challenge that can accompany a transition can aid the process and can be seen as potential avenues for further transformation in the future (Giddens, 1991).

5.2 Transition as being betwixt and between

The illusion of 'betwixt and between' is connected to the illusion of 'detour', where the person in transition can find themselves lost in a state of disoriented unbecoming. It is framed around references to alienation from a familiar self as I, and other participants grapple with transitional experiences. This alienation is associated with the unravelling of identities that accompanies an embodied shift or being caught between the constant (re)formation of self. It is also connected to Van Gennep's (1960) second rite de passage; the 'transition' or 'liminal' stage, where the person in transition finds themselves in an ambiguous state, where identity is disrupted as a result of being in a place that is neither here nor there.

'They keep saying what we are moving onto and I'm waiting for that move 'cos that's where I feel I should be because I have already done this' (Ann).

Once Alice's initial movement through the looking glass occurs, things do not become any clearer for her. She enters Looking Glass House and finds a book written in a language she cannot understand. Quickly though, she realises that if she holds it up to the mirror, the words are reflected back as a lateral reversal of the image and she finds she is able to read the poem, although does not understand the meaning. The experience does not become easier once the initial adjustment is made. Alice finds a strategy to read the poem but cannot understand it. Similarly, the participants found that their initial strategies to ease the transition were not helpful when they came to use them again,

'It has become a little more difficult, so I can't just use the same, coming in early and calming myself down before I start a session, strategies I used last year' (Lea).

'I don't feel that engaged. I have no idea what it is. Last year I felt really engaged, it was the environment. Here it is like come in, getting it done thinking when is this lecture gonna finish I want to get out of here, it's just that' (Ayla).

These transitional zigzags can also be related to Barnett's (2005:378) idea of 'epistemological strangeness',

'I couldn't function...I was in complete shock' (Ann),

where unfamiliarity instils a fear to act or to confront what is not familiar. Barnett (2005) suggests that 'strangeness' results when a person in transition experiences a tension between what is known and what is expected to be known. He claims that this is a useful state and that, when transition relates to students in higher education, it is the role of the university to both provide the student with opportunities to encounter 'strangeness' as well as to appease it through the use of supportive strategies. This also aligns with Gale and Parker's (2014) 'transition as development', whereby those in transition should be supported to individually embrace the uncertainty, rather than be the recipient of predetermined expectations. It could be said, from a psychoanalytical view, that what is operating here is the tension between the conscious and the unconscious self. In relation to affect, this tension places the individual at a threshold (Leys, 2011), not quite ready to grasp the 'strangeness' but to be in possession of it. In terms of transition, the fragments of data above appear as aggravations and can be seen as relating to external structures, which impact on our ability to demonstrate agency in transition (Glastra, et al., 2004). However, if the 'betwixt and between' state is experienced as a result of identities in constant flux then the alleviation of the 'strangeness' cannot be from external sources, such as induction strategies for new students or new employees.

The first two of Colley's (2007) conceptualisations of transition consider it a process to be managed externally, the third however considers the individual's agency and ability to move beyond the constraints of external structures. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) view agency as three-dimensional: it acknowledges influences from the past (iterational), the present (practical-evaluative) and the future (projective). These dimensions are useful for analysing how individual agency can be used to navigate transition. Opportunities to discuss transition, creating and recreating our own narratives, opens up possibilities to achieve agency, maintaining control of and giving direction to the transition,

'I think you've got to take it as a positive 'cos obviously you don't get everything structured like that all your life, you get ups and downs, so it has changed me a lot in that way 'cos I am more flexible in what I do' (Minnie).

In some of the data, where a more positive sense of transition is gestured towards, agency appears to be focussed on the present but there are indications of iterational and projective dimensions,

'My targets are individual now. The next one is the 3rd June and after that it will be something different so yeah my targets are smaller, not like a big chunk of like nine months , it's just little targets now' (Ann).

Here, Ann articulates a sense of Emirbayer and Mische's three dimensions of agency, as she navigates herself around the iterational, the practical-evaluative and the projective in relation to managing the process of transition. Other participants hint at a strong present or practical-evaluative dimension, in some cases using practical strategies to deal with barriers to transition,

'I go past the library anyway so I started to come in earlier, might as well make the most of it. It is just about changing my mind set' (Minnie).

Biesta and Tedder (2006) highlight however, that individuals can be agentic in one context but not necessarily another. Fluctuations, in agency, or the illusion of capable, agentic self, can result from unexpected barriers or additional challenges, as demonstrated earlier where previous strategies for managing the transition fail us at times of crisis. This instability can create situations where we find ourselves being caught 'betwixt and between'. According to Turner (1964:232) being 'betwixt and between' is a state a person finds themselves in when they are unable to identify with neither a past or impending self, similar to Jackson's (2013) view of becoming, not as an experience in itself, but as movement, which can result in a process of being in between, caught in a tension. In my own transition to a new job, this state was experienced as a result of my inability to draw on previous professional experiences in order to settle into a new role. Through reflecting on the '*unfamiliar dynamics*' of the workplace and a lack of recognising who I was: '*Am I naïve? What's wrong with me?*' I began to ask myself other questions,

'Have I made the right decision to leave a place that I was so settled, is it a risk too far? Did I miss the alarm bells?'

These tensions became what I might describe as being 'betwixt and between' transition. At the time, I reflected on my lack of experience in dealing with these things as barriers to moving on, but what was I to move on to?

The data above is reflective of being 'betwixt and between' as it juxtapositions being so 'settled', maybe complacent, set against 'risk' and feelings of alienation. The fragment evokes a sense-making process that those in transition perhaps undergo in relation to self-preservation. Reflecting on my own experiences here, I had to make cognitive shifts in the form of new knowledge production and the adaption or development of new ways of working. Social, cultural and emotional disruptions were experienced due to changes to my role, responsibilities and professional identities. I was trying to make sense of my confusion and disarray. I believed that my established 'professional identity' along with an accumulated subject expertise, knowledge of the sector and of university processes and systems would secure a successful and smooth transition. I would take a 'tour' from one place to another, in the same way that Alice, in anticipation of moving through the looking glass, believes that 'things are just the same as our drawing room' and 'it'll be easy enough to get through' (Carroll, 2009:20). However, it had not. '*Am I Naive? I never used to be*' (JM). What I had not anticipated was that the shift was to be more complex than this and that there would be the need to rebuild my (mis)recognised and unravelling identities. This reconfiguration required 'a permanent state of becoming and unbecoming' (Ecclestone, 2010:8), an embodied shift. Ecclestone et al. (2010) associate such shifts as 'setbacks' (7) with a zig zag nature; being over 'there', '*coming here*', being 'there', '*coming here*', '*going through*', 'being *nowhere near*', where a person in transition is responding to changes in experience or shifts in identity.

'That's how I felt and that's not how I felt at the start of the year when I was so excited. By the end of it I was like "no, just get it done, just get it done". So it just felt like I was going through the motions because it was something that I had to complete, not something I wanted to do' (Ann).

Here, despite the discomfort of the seemingly unrecognisable feelings, the idea of persistence and particularly of '*going through the motions*' interests me. The complexity of the shifts and the notion of unbecoming can be aligned to MacLure's (2006:227)

'smoke-and-mirrors machinery of representation'. The illusion of a 'smooth' transition deceives and plays tricks on us so that we do not know who we are or where we are anymore. Just as Alice was about to go through the looking glass, she observes that when 'our fire smokes, smoke comes up in that room too – but that may only be pretence, just to make it look as though they had a fire' (Carroll, 2009:19). My sense of '*not fitting in*' (JM), initially evoked an unrecognisable otherness associated with being confronted with an unfamiliar self or a self that was lost and in turmoil: '*Oh my god, who are you supposed to go and talk to about all of this?*' (Ayla). Perhaps though, by resisting what seems to be familiar, usually evoking a habitual or well-rehearsed response, we are afforded an opportunity to contemplate a sense of discontinuity similar to Turner's (1964) concept of the person in transition being 'betwixt and between'. It is perhaps not something to be deceived by, but to be reconciled with. Jackson (2013) also contends with this notion when considering transition as becoming and unbecoming. She asserts that we need to be accepting of what may appear as discontinuity, since both of these states place the individual in a constant process of being in between due to the ever changing, evolving state of becoming and unbecoming somebody.

Returning to the incongruity of the familiar and unfamiliar self I recall, this was compounded by the fact that my contract was temporary and I wondered whether my sense of moving at different speeds, falling behind and being on the periphery were related to this. Perhaps, because it was a temporary job, my reaction was to avoid the 'strangeness' and to quietly focus on doing my job, '*I can do this*'. However, from some of my colleagues' perspectives, why would they take time and energy to develop a relationship with someone who was only visiting for a while? In the same way, why was I trying so hard to assimilate, to '*prove myself*', if '*I'm leaving after a year*'? I found myself caught in-between two minds and for a little while, I remained in a place similar to that which Gregor Samsa found himself in as he 'lay quietly with weak breathing, as if perhaps waiting for normal and natural conditions to re-emerge out of the complete stillness' (Kafka, 1915:8).

As time passed by, a passive return to these 'normal and natural conditions' seemed to elude me. Rather than embracing the contagion and the 'strangeness' that came with a paradoxical desire both to remain in this new place that I had worked so hard to get to,

while simultaneously *'Dreading Monday'*, I invested my energy into searching for a resolution to the unfamiliarity. This included surrounding my space with things that I found comforting in an attempt to move out of the 'strangeness', which literally seemed to be polluting the atmosphere in and around me,

'My Office. Filled with transitional objects.'

'Today there was a flood in my office, a flood to cleanse?'

Affect can influence the body's ability to navigate the particular path we follow in that it can both move us forward or pull us back (Zournazi, 2002). Seigworth and Gregg, (2010:1) explain that 'affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon'.

In a similar way to my own attempts to remove myself from the 'strangeness', Gregor Samsa also looked for a way to return to his previous self, to move out of the unfamiliar body he found himself in, as if in anticipation of a prompt, or something to move his body back into a form he found recognisable. As I looked for my own prompt to move out of the 'strangeness' that accompanied my sense of feeling in-between what was unfamiliar and familiar, affect, in this particular case, also appeared to be diminishing my body's capacity to act. I experienced an inability to respond to situations that in the past I would have confronted. For example, on arriving at my office one day I found it had been unlocked and was occupied by someone else. A colleague was engaged in a tutorial with a student so I felt reluctantly obliged to let them continue. But this left me without a space to work in and I later recorded my lack of action at the time, *'I couldn't get them to leave'*. In this situation, affect appeared to 'suspend' my body *'...(as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations'* (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010:1). The sense of my body's neutrality was not an ambivalence to the situation but was akin to feeling stuck, as if frozen between my body's 'capacity to affect and be affected' (Ibid.:2).

As I grappled with my body's dis(ability) to act I felt a sense of frustration and confusion as to why and what it was that had prevented my lack of response to such an insignificant irritation. At the time I had no answers but recall noting a sense of

'regret...not acting sooner to stand up for myself'. While I felt constrained in my ability to act, it was as if I had been contaminated by the 'strangeness' and unfamiliarity, I also felt that my lack of action was infectious and polluting to others. Affect not only moves our own bodies to act but can be 'found in those intensities that pass body to body...in those resonances that circulate about, between and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010:1). I felt that some of my colleagues were being short-changed and deprived of a colleague who should have been better able to deal with the transition.

These affects and bodily sensations of being invaded and full of dis-ease took me back a number of years prior to this when I travelled overseas and spent some time teaching in Sri Lanka, a country with a very different culture to any other I was familiar with. I had experienced home sickness during this period; a physical and emotional reaction to the unfamiliarity of my surroundings and the limited opportunities to make contact with the familiar. A sickness, which manifested itself as disorientation and a longing to return home, or a return to a 'there-ness' of self as opposed to the 'here-ness' of another self. At the time, I had not considered the full impact on my sense of identity of this desire for home other than feeling uncomfortable with these feelings and surprised at my self-centredness. On reflection, the homesickness was perhaps an attempt to remember and be nostalgic for home,

The idea of home also contributes to the desire to stabilize identity and the expression of longing for home can also be translated as a need to secure the sense of who we are when our spatial location can be seen as compromising that security (Woodward, 2002:49).

As I struggled with the transition to a new place of employment the idea of 'worksickness' evolved from this earlier experience of homesickness. Although I denote it as a feeling in the Theoretical Framework, I also describe 'worksickness' as a state that places a person in a neither here nor there place in relation to identity. In this way, it can also relate to affect, which is seen by Leys (2010) as a prompt to move from this place of 'in-between-ness', out of the 'strangeness' and beyond.

As affect is on the periphery of consciousness (Leys, 2010) our bodies' power to act, or to become destabilised, can be a consequence of being affected by something external since bodies are not autonomous or disconnected from other bodies or things (Coffey, 2012). Affect, as a forceful move to action, can influence our experiences, for better or worse. It was with such force that I felt my body attempt to be pulled back into what it knew to be familiar, whilst at the same time being pushed forward into what was unknown. This pushing and pulling of my body resulted in the feeling of 'worksickness'.

As the weeks progressed, I had met friendly colleagues but overheard unsettling whispers; been encouraged to contribute, but felt undermined. I was experiencing an increasing feeling of disorientation with (my)self, a 'strangeness', or 'worksickness'. In my journal, I had used a number of words and emotions to describe this sensation, including,

'Wistful, Sad, A Stranger.

I feel Butterflies, Panic, Lost, Unfamiliar'.

I could not reconcile this feeling with previous experiences of transition. Merleau-Ponty (2002:296) describes such moments of disorientation, not only as 'the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea, which is the awareness of our contingency, and the horror with which it fills us'.

This idea of 'worksickness' encompasses the illusion of being 'betwixt and between' because it is a state that holds the self in a place that we do not recognise. The lack of ability to recognise the 'professional self' I thought I was can be related to what Brown (2011:119) refers to as a 'failure of fit' between the conscious and unconscious, which creates a gap between who we are and who we think we are, and who others think we are. This gap affects our complete sense of self, which leads to a desire for such a self. 'We may well have fantasies of who we are and fantasies of the world that we occupy, fantasies emanating from different aspects of our fragmented selves' (Ibid.). As I think about my experiences as 'barriers' to 'moving on', I am taken to Lacan (1966). Am I constantly seeking the sense of completion, or recognition I felt in that first moment, where I saw myself in the mirror for the first time? Lacan (1966) refers to this as a desire

for what I now lack, self-completion. Lacan's (1966) graph of desire explains how I might manipulate the past to make it appear more like what I thought it was, in order to seek recognition from others.

According to Lacan (1966), the recognition is deluded because 'The mirror image is most certainly a caricature, at best a holding device, for an ego that would never be fully complete (cited in Brown, 2011:122). This fantasy of self is created in the Imaginary Order where images of oneself are perceived as 'I' and 'not I', an inside and outside to oneself (Brown, 2011). The image of myself that was reflected in the journal was 'I' and 'not I' at the same time because like the child, I recognised 'I', (my)self, through the personal experience I was recording, but in the same instance, I did not recognise (my)self. My 'I' was unstable because it was relying on others, who I saw as a risk to my *'experienced and confident'* self, to define me.

Similarly, Alice, in her attempts to confront the 'strangeness' she encounters in Looking Glass World, tries to see what is familiar in the unfamiliar. She tries to identify rivers, mountains and towns in the landscape but only sees giant bees making honey, which, on closer inspection, are in fact elephants. She also makes the decision to 'go another way and perhaps visit the elephants later on' (Carroll, 2009:44). From her vantage point, she is searching for something that is familiar in her world. Mansfield (2000:83) suggests that 'We are unsettled by things that cross lines, especially those that seem to belong to both sides, that blur and question the whole process of demarcation'. I began to question whether my previous role had been as established and defined as I was imagining, or was I creating a vision of an experience that was not a real reflection of reality in order to manage the loss of identity I was feeling? The 'strangeness' of the encounter with the other disorients us, sends our transition on a detour and places us in a space that is neither *'coming here'* or being *'there'*, that is neither one thing or another. This is reflective of the state Turner (1964:232) refers to as *'betwixt and between'* or Quinn (2010:123) as *'lost in transition'*.

According to both Lacan (1966) and Kristeva (1982) this seeking of recognition of (my)self is illusory and is never achieved since it is dependent on the other, who is also in a constant search for recognition of (her)self. The desire for completeness is

never satisfied, it is always in demand. Similarly, transition can be seen as a desire to secure a state of familiarity and ontological security (Giddens, 1991) but a state, which, if compared to a search for a stable self, can never be achieved,

'Yes it is like a wake up call, so now even though I have woken, up I'm still in a bit of a muddle' (Minnie).

Like, desire, perhaps transition is a constant process of attempting to seek completeness, which is not possible when bodies are in a constant state of fluidity and flux (Bauman, 2000). Mansfield (2000) refers to the formation of the subject, after the mirror stage, as the point at which the subject is condemned 'to a life of loss and a specific type of insatiable nostalgia called desire' (2000:81),

Sensing (my)self in the 'betwixt and between' state, I reflected on the concept of 'worksickness', where I experienced a desire for something I once had. In this case, it was desire for a self that perhaps did not exist in the first place. The thing that was tying me to this 'betwixt and between' state was a sense of sorrow for the 'professional self' I thought I was and who I thought I had lost. In terms of transition therefore, this state of 'betwixt and between' can be seen as critical. If the conflict between the inner and outer worlds is never really resolved, then bodies in transition will always remain in a 'state of flux and never quite fixed or unified' (Woodward, 2002:69). We are all in a constant state of being 'betwixt and between' in some aspects of our identities.

In postmodernism, identities are fragmented, multiple and constructed across numerous discourses, practices and positions. One participant, Lea, reflected on the '*impossible task*' of transition, which suggests for her, that it is something she believes cannot be achieved.

'Trying to move on. Trying to forget. I tell myself you need to move on. Stop going back over it. It's finished. But, you can't just forget' (JM).

This data is also connected to the idea that transition sends us into a need for linearity leading to closure in order to move on, but the nature of transition for me was such that it was continuous and evolved with me. If our identities are fragmented, our

transformation through them is equally fractured, non-linear. We are always in transition.

5.3 Transition as pollution

The unfamiliarity that is associated with being 'betwixt and between' is also connected to the illusion of 'pollution', both in terms of a physical sense of feeling unfamiliar with new people, places, atmospheres and systems, as well as a lack of familiarity with self. Not only is this an unfamiliarity that pollutes the self but one that seeps into others in the way they may come to feel polluted when their own familiar worlds become infected.

By way of grappling with the unfamiliar environment, the personalities and practices within it, as well as the hauntings, contagions and dis-ease of my(self), I realised that the sickness again had manifested itself as a desire to (re)orientate to somewhere that felt familiar, to escape the pollution of the other that I felt was seeping into who I was. Whereas before I wished for a return home, in this new state of discontinuity, I felt a strong desire to return to a previous self in order to halt the 'worksickness', the process of my professional 'unbecoming'. Kristeva (1982) describes the search for familiarity of self, or 'I' as a search for 'le corps propre' (Kristeva, 1982:71) or clean and proper body. However, I cannot achieve this, or overcome the 'worksickness', since my self is unstable and so any sense of my clean body is always in danger of being contaminated.

I'm slightly unwell, an attack of dizziness, I haven't been able to get up, I'm still in bed now. I'm quite fresh again now, though. I'm just getting out of bed. Just a moment. Be patient! It's not quite as easy as I'd thought (Kafka, 1915:11).

In this extract from 'The Metamorphosis', Gregor Samsa, in his attempts to appear like himself to his family and employer who are on the other side of his bedroom door, equates his transformation into a giant insect to being 'unwell'. The 'dizziness' he refers to is disabling his body, which is no longer as it was and which has become contaminated by a body that is foreign to him and will become so to his family. The pretence he tries to maintain in order to appear well, 'fresh' and himself could be perceived as a way of

protecting his family from what he has transformed into, from what he sees as a possible threat to their established order, as if he is also hoping for a return to a clean and proper body (Kristeva, 1982), even when he knows he is unable to.

When reflecting on the 'betwixt and between', or liminal state of transition, Turner (1964) also refers to the transitional being as 'particularly polluting' (48) since this state is beyond all recognition to those who are not 'in transition'. The metaphor of a house of mirrors and the associated idea of distortion are used simultaneously with the illusion of pollution to analyse data. I begin this section by including some fragments of data that evoke a sense of pollution of the body for me.

'Everyone would always stare' (Lea).

'I feel like we are being watched more here' (Ayla).

'I felt so invaded because I was sat out there and everyone could see. I've never felt an invasion like it before. I was sat at this computer and I was having palpitations, which I've never experienced before' (Ann).

Terms such as '*being watched*', '*stare*' and '*invaded*' are used and each troubles the idea of the clean body that transitions neatly and without becoming dirtied in some way.

Pollution as a concept can be interpreted through a number of lenses. Pollution, as a physical and scientific entity, suggests negative connotations for an individual or a society as it is associated with dirt, damage and dis-ease (Russell, 1974). Pollution can be slow and visible as it leaks into crevices and cracks in the environment or the atmosphere. It can be invisible or sudden, like noise and it can provoke an attack on the senses. Its toxic nature can cause an irritant to an otherwise clean atmosphere. Social and cultural perceptions move away from scientific notions and associate pollution as being like dirt and filth, connected to death, corpses, childbirth, illness and bodily fluids such as blood, excrement and those associated with sexual activity (Namiyama, 1987). Lennon (2013) claims there are different degrees of dirtiness, which provoke different responses. For example, we are likely to react to mud in a different way to excrement or a dead body, and although all can be classed as dirty, there is hierarchy of words, which reflect these varying degrees of dirtiness. Polluted, corrupted and defiled have a

greater degree of influence than words such as tarnished or stained. A person in transition and the context of the transition can be similarly reflected. A transition to university or to a new job may not be seen as polluting to self or others as a transition through a mental illness or a transition from one gender to another. Even so, returning to the data above, there could be a sense of feeling polluted or being infected by the transition.

My use of pollution as an illusion of transition was provoked by a combination of ideas: pollution as an environmental hazard in terms of its physical characteristics of leakage and the visible or invisible destructive nature of it and of the conceptual use of pollution as an abstract idea, which places the individual in the role of pollutant or polluted. The illusion of pollution seems relevant, not only because of the connections to the concepts of abjection and betwixt and betweenness, as discussed in the Theoretical Framework, but also because a number of aspects of the data make reference to the effects of people or places being polluting, or polluted, such as floods, sickness, dizziness, poison, infection:

'I start feeling dizzy and sick' (Ayla).

'A second and more damaging flood in another office, what did it wash away?' (JM).

'My relationship with my mum is quite a toxic one' (Lea).

Pollution is used here to analyse some of the effects of a transition on participants. While Turner (1964) focusses on the person in transition as a pollutant to those around her, the experiences of my own transition and those of some of the participants, could also suggest that this is a more complex, fluid process, whereby the person in transition can also be polluted by the people, or things, around them, which results in a disturbance to the transition,

'I close my door to the atmosphere, tension' (JM).

'...trying to fight your way through people, trying to find a place to sit, trying to find a computer to use...' (Lea).

In these fragments, Lea and I could be understood as feeling infected by the pollution that is external to us and which is perhaps obstructing our transitions. We use physical barriers: *'close the door'* and *'fight your way through'*, in order to protect ourselves from the pollution that leaks into our transition and makes it more complex. For Lea, her strategy of *'fight'* suggests a more confrontational approach and a willingness to face the pollution and move out of the *'strangeness'* and so might suggest a persistence to engage with the complexity of her transition. In my case, the physical barrier of closing the door was insufficient to remove the *'atmosphere'* that was on the other side. In the way that affect connects bodies (Deleuze, 1992), the pollution seeped through and remained with me as I struggled to know what to do. The result was a decrease in my body's capacity to act (Hickey-Moody, 2013), since closing the door was to ignore and not confront the pollution in a similar way to Gregor Samsa, who tries to pretend that he has not metamorphosed into an insect. At that point, I recall not being able to respond to the *'tension'* that was being created, so I remained in a state of uncertainty, not ready to move out of the *'strangeness'*. *'Just a moment. Be patient! It's not quite as easy as I'd thought'* (Kafka, 1915:11).

In addition, the person in transition can be toxic to themselves,

'I am not very comfortable in groups of people. I have never been comfortable in groups of people' (Lea).

This idea of toxicity or pollution is used in my study to think about the aspects of transition that can be classed as barriers. In Kristeva's world, aspects that society consider to be abject are bodily waste, murder, decay, incest, human sacrifice, perversion. Similarly, pollution, either naturally occurring or as a result of human action, can be harmful and therefore, like the abject, is seen as negative and must be ejected from the body, from the mind, from society. In the same way, the person in transition can be seen as needing to be expelled by others,

'They have not bothered to get to know me' (JM),

because they are creating an imbalance to the established order,

'You are just fobbing my ideas off here, what a ridiculous thing to say' (Ann).

To see the transitional being as pollution or filth, those external to the transition, may view them as a danger, '...the danger of filth represents...the risk to which the very symbolic order is permanently exposed, to the extent that it is a device of discriminations, or differences' (Kristeva, 1982:69).

'And then I had the students say "please don't use more than 4 or 5 [references] 'cos they will expect that in the future". So they were asking me not be as academic as I wanted to be 'cos they didn't want to do that level in the future' (Lea).

This data fragment seems to position Lea, who is trying make sense of her 'new beginning' at university, as a risk to the order that the established group had created. For Kristeva, perhaps she would be viewed as 'filth' or as the abject that needed to be expelled. In relation to transition into higher education, Thomas (2002) noted that it is those who fall outside of the 'dominant culture' (431) of socialization who are disadvantaged, whilst the students who are most likely to succeed are those who conform to the dominant group identity. This brings me back to Ahmed's (2006) uneven ground and while Thomas' work does not explicitly relate to 'non-traditional' students, it is concerning to think they might be perceived in such a way. Returning to the data above, Lea was a threat to the expectation the others in the group had about how many references to include in a group project. They were viewing her desire to improve the work as a risk to their work in the future and changing tutor expectations. She too was in danger of being like a foreign body that splinters the status quo.

This notion of pollution as harmful to the subject is further supported by Douglas (1966) who asserts that 'dirt is matter out of place' (44), whereby dirt is anything that pollutes the established order. If an experience of transition is perceived as the dirt that is 'out of place' then the subject will seek to abject the dirt because it interferes with what the subject knows as familiar. Douglas (1966) states that what is not clear or understood and contradicts the dominant social perception is unclean and therefore polluted. Just as the subject may feel polluted by the transition, they may also themselves act as the dirt and seem out of place to those who are not in transition and who are then, in turn,

polluted by the subject in transition. In relation to transition in the house of mirrors, the image reflected back could also pollute the image the subject has of themselves,

'I have got to get rid of that you can't do it and think I can do it' (Minnie).

This in turn may pollute those around them,

'You could see people thinking she's not doing anything academic, and I was thinking I am' (Lea).

'You are always battling with your choices, whether good or bad for you and others' (Ann).

Reflecting on this leads me to consider that my presence as a new, unknown entity in the 'stable' and established world of the 'other' and the impact of the 'other' on my illusionary notion of (my)self as *'competent, confident and capable'*, could be perceived as a mutual cross-contamination of worlds. For myself therefore, pollution is a metaphor for the barriers that an individual faces when experiencing transition; barriers that are single- or multi-dimensional, but which leak into and seep between, across and through the person in transition, making the experience more unsettling and difficult. In my analysis of transition I also consider that pollution can be reciprocal in that we can each pollute, and be polluted by, each other and in the next section I make use of the polluting notion of abjection, alongside the metaphor of the house of mirrors, to continue to rethink the notion of transition.

5.3.1 Abject images in the distorted mirror

In the house of mirrors, each mirror pollutes the imagined self by refracting confusing and distorted (mis)representations of images of the body. The ideas produced by these reflective possibilities are used to analyse transition through the lens of Kristeva's concept of abjection. When I stand before one of the mirrors and see the strangely contorted image of my body, I may experience abjection because I see my body as twisted, bloated, diminished, blurred, fluid, as it takes on a distorted and toxic abject dimension; 'the repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck' (Kristeva, 1982:2).

The use of concave and convex mirrors to create the distortions in a house of mirrors are based on scientific principles and the placement of the mirrors, or the distortions, are not random. However, although this technical premise is acknowledged, beyond these laws of physics lies the psychoanalytical binary of 'truth' and illusion. While the explanation is scientific in nature, the purpose of the house of mirrors is to make it difficult for the subject to discern the difference between the images reflected back, since they reflect competing versions of 'reality', which may or may not be illusionary versions. According to Johnson and Regan (2011) when we see the body, or aspects of it, as distorted, it creates an (un)recognisable, yet oddly familiar image of the self. Johnson and Regan (2011:8) also state that in addition to the mirrors themselves creating the distortion, the (un)familiar image is also created by 'the expectations that individuals have when they enter, which in turn have been shaped by the representations encountered before entering, and so on'. Therefore, a visit to the house of mirrors can be likened to an experience of transition where previous expectations of an experience may not match what occurs in 'reality'. The distortions, while designed to make us laugh at ourselves, can also shatter the sense of familiarity we have of our self. Is this how others see me?

When exploring the idea of identity, Kristeva uses the term subjectivity to explain how subjects are not independent selves and as a result, subjectivity does not necessarily become stabilised. The subject's unconscious mind is always on the periphery of the conscious mind and is ready to de-stabilise subjectivity at any time (Mansfield, 2000). When looking in the mirror, we may experience the abject because our identity is distorted and so the image acts as a barrier to our subjectivity. Kristeva (1982) views the subject, not in an autonomous way, but as a self that is based on interactions and experiences that shape who we are to become. Subjectivity is not about an awareness of self but about the unconscious elements of self: desires, for example, which we are not aware of. The distortion in the mirror can be the embodiment of these unconscious desires, just as dreams are in psychoanalysis and therefore, the image in the mirror may be an illusion or may reflect 'reality'. When we see our distorted image we abject it because we wish, consciously, to create borders between the 'I' and the 'not I' that is refracted,

'I wouldn't even refer to that image as representing me anymore' (Ann).

Perhaps we need to see the distorted image in order to separate from it. If a subject's experience of transition is like the distorted image in the mirror, then they experience abjection because a conflict between the 'I' and 'not I' occurs. Some data highlights frustration at the barriers to engaging fully with a previous version of self,

'I am finding it harder to be a student because I just can't find the facilities to effectively do what I need to do and that makes me feel, well I'll just go home, it doesn't matter' (Lea).

The image that is created, as a consequence, is distorted and this distorted image can be seen as the abject, or the pollution, that disturbs the transition. Mansfield (2000) describes the process a subject attempts to engage with in order to overcome abjection,

The subject is merely the hypothetical inside of an imagined container, whose walls are permeable. The subject tries to stabilise itself as this inside, yet supposedly unconscious materials are forever pressing on it, threatening the conscious (81).

Kristeva (1982) refers to the repelling of the abject as a contradictory act. The infant both abjects her/himself and her/his mother at the same time, in order to seek autonomy. Bodies in transition can be seen as participating in a similar paradox since 'abjection of the mother is forever associated with the longing to return to the place of origin' (McCabe and Holmes, 2011:78). This act of abjection is not a conscious one however and as McCabe and Holmes continue, 'situations that challenge our sense of subjectivity', such as experiencing an embodied shift through the transition to a new place of work or study, provoke within us an 'unconscious defence mechanism' (2011:77) so that we may separate ourselves from that which is abject. In the fragment of data below, Lea uses her anticipation of a previous '*really bad time*' as a way to prepare herself to cope,

'I had a really bad time and so I did not expect to be fully transitioned by now. I expected this to be the point that it would hit me the hardest because this is the time it

hit me the hardest last time. I am expecting it to happen again but I am also expecting to handle it differently as well'.

Lea's description of transition being something that '*hit me the hardest*' takes me to Mansfield (2000:83) who refers to the challenges of subjectivity and self being about,

flows which puncture our skin and make us – despite ourselves – doubt the integrity and autonomy of the selfhood which we identify with the wholeness and closure we look to our bodies to define.

This skin puncturing, in the way that a splinter embeds itself and begins to infect the skin, causes contagion, evoking a sense of dis-ease with (my)self,

'I need to prove myself. Should I prove myself?' (JM).

Kristeva (1982) might suggest that this creates an attempt to strengthen subjectivity through the paradoxical process of alienation whereby 'I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit' (3), as I noted in describing 'worksickness', I felt '*Nervous, Anxious, Sick. Stomach Ache*', as I tried to settle and make sense of my own new beginning.

Giving birth to a 'new life' amidst the defilement that Kristeva alludes to is similar to the process of becoming and unbecoming. According to Rizq (2013), this giving birth is an act of self-preservation, an attempt to return a self that is clean and where order is restored, where the subject is constantly working against those relentless flows which, 'unflinching, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself' (Kristeva, 1982:1).

'It stresses me out and I've noticed myself getting behind on things and last year I was always the one with my hand up and now this year I'm like I can't print it off so I'm not going to read it and I feel devastated that I've not done the reading, but it has been ok because I've still known the general topic' (Lea).

Among Kristeva's ideas of being 'haunted...beside himself' (1982:1), this fragment of data documents how Lea, on seeing herself in a distorted mirror, was able to '*notice*'

herself, reflecting back to a time when she was 'clean' and 'ordered', *'last year I was always the one with my hand up'*. Now she is contaminated in some way, dirty, the image she sees is refracted, *'and now this year... I've not done the reading'*, perhaps articulating a disconnection, a loss of unity, familiarity, control and even habit.

The abject is triggered by abject materials that do not respect boundaries and rules, especially the boundaries that delineate subject and other (Vivash, 2014). Therefore, when we see the distorted image in the mirror we reject it since, in the same way as Kristeva notes, it acts as a risk to our subjectivity; it pollutes and blights our self-image, *'I have always gone through my life highlighting negative things in myself'* (Lea).

However, the rejection is not final since abject substances,

hover at the periphery of one's purview, at once fascinating in their capacity to dissolve the borders of subjecthood and welcome the subject back into the comfort of the oneness with the maternal figure, and yet terrifying in their threat to the very foundations of one's subjecthood (Vivash, 2014:103).

The power of the abject to return and 'dissolve' our subjectivity is reminiscent of the smoke and mirrors illusion of self that we continue to grapple with in order to reject the danger to our subjectivity that might accompany transitional experiences. This refusal to acknowledge the abject was reflected in some of the data as persistence to continue, even at times of challenge. At no point did any participant express a desire to leave early, *'I came to develop, to learn, so I need to focus on that'* (JM). The responses suggested a sense of tenacity, whether in spite of or because of the transitional experience. There is a sense of perseverance in the sense of looking beyond the abject to a more familiar sense of self,

I got to appreciate that has got me to where I've come, I'm trying lots of different ways with my learning this year and a lot of them haven't worked and I've realised that I've had to be quite inventive and do some crazy things to get things going in the direction I wanted them to go' (Lea).

Duschinsky (2013) concurs with Kristeva's (1982) notion of abjection, that we reject what acts as a threat to the social structures due to an innate desire for order,

'I thought no, walk away, walk away because I had seen the way they all click in there and I thought you've got no chance' (Ann).

His assertion therefore is similar to Kristeva's (1982) occurrence of abjection as something that 'is thus not a lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system and order. What does not respect borders, positions and rules' (4).

As Ann's data above might suggest transition can be seen as similar to abjection if it is viewed as a threat to our existing identity, or what we consider our identity to be. Goodnow (2010) claims however that the abject has a discriminating characteristic in that 'all threats to boundaries cannot result in an equal sense of horror' (28). He goes on to assert that if the abject is only defined as negative and disturbing then this does not 'enable us to say whether the emotion that results will be one of horror or one of panic, suspicion, aggression, or amusement' (33).

In the same way that the mirrors offer different (mis)representations of the self, transitional experiences can be represented in different ways for the subject. They might not feel equally debilitating, or threaten identity, just as the mirrors will not all give the same amount of distortion. For Lea, this resulted in the adoption of a mind-set that helped to diminish the distortion:

'I realised that I needed to have a more relaxed manner than going "I've got to catch up with everybody" and go two times the speed as everyone else to catch up',

or the adoption of a mindset to alleviate the difficulty of the experience,

'I'm just trying to fit in with all the people, trying to fit in but a little bit in the distance' (Ayla).

Consequently, an experience of the abject, like transition, is not necessarily a negative one and as Rizq (2013) explains, the self seeks ways to maintain or restore order in order to avoid threats to one's subjectivity.

The fundamental purpose of the distortions in the house of mirrors are to entertain, to make us laugh at ourselves and each other,

'I've been trying to use more humour this year' (Lea).

Humour, for Lea, was a way to restore order and to overcome previous anxieties related to transition. However, humour in this sense can also be seen as a smoke-and-mirrors illusion. When we see ourselves in a distorted mirror, we may laugh in order to mask the shock that occurs as a result of the reflection we see.

Returning to the notion of transition as polluting or dirty, in relation to the abject, Kristeva (1982) claims that '...the pure will be that which conforms to an established taxonomy; the impure, that which unsettles it, establishes intermixture and disorder' (98). Lea reflected,

'I have always been quite punky, quite rocky, but I let that be hidden by what I thought other people wanted me to do'.

She expresses a self as polluted and confined by others as she tries to comply with her family's 'established taxonomy'. When viewing transition as the distorted image in the house of mirrors, the image is the impurity, the abject pollution that affects, or leaks into, either the participant's experience of transition or the established order. This pollution can be through the self, or others, or both,

'I needed to get away from all things that confined me and controlled me, one of which is me as well' (Lea).

However the conflict that is created manifests itself as the abject, which the individual seeks to repel; like the distorted image, in order to feel pure, have a clean body once again,

'I shaved the hair on the side of my head off. Just doing that one thing was a cathartic experience, it was like a release' (Lea).

The body is permeable to the penetrability of pollution, to the distorted image that infects it and since the abject defies boundaries, the self is resistant to unity. The clean and proper body in transition is contested therefore,

'I've transitioned? I have a feeling that you never feel 100% transitioned' (Lea).

Mansfield (2000:85) describes the abject as 'the destabilisation of all systems of order, meaning, truth and law'. Thus, the connection between the abject and a view of transition is seen as disorienting,

'...when I came back university I felt very lost as a person' (Lea),

as fragmented,

'I am wanted by some and I am rejected by others' (JM),

as illusionary,

'I felt isolated and now I'm not isolated at all' (Ann),

and continues to dominate my perspective of it.

Analysing transition through the house of mirrors metaphor has contributed significantly to my evolving notion of transition. Although not related to transition, Johnson and Regan's (2011) research utilises a house of mirrors metaphor to explain how an individual's profile on a social media system such as Facebook, can be open to multiple interpretations once placed in the public domain and viewed by others. The significance of this research for my own is that they identify a number of stages in this process, which are aligned to a visit to the house of mirrors. Prior to entering the house of mirrors, an individual has a sense of who they are,

'I'm just here now, this is me' (Ann).

Once inside, this changes due to the reflection that they see in the mirror,

'Everyone's just giving you the looks and you are thinking, oh my god, who are you supposed to go and talk to about all of this?' (Ayla).

On exiting, the image the individual now has of themselves is different and they may also appear different to those who entered with them,

'I responded, stood up and that was the turning point' (JM). *'I just felt I had to say it to find peace'* (Ann).

Johnson and Regan (2011:3) refer to this stage as 'rendering', where a new version/s of the self is formed,

'You know what? I am stopping being concerned with what people think about me and I came back with green, blue, pink, everything in my hair' (Lea).

These renderings may be different according to the viewer but occur as a result of what was seen in the mirror. Once the subject has viewed the distorted image in the mirror, it is forever imprinted on their identity, long after they have left the house of mirrors. Transition, if compared to a visit to a house of mirrors, can be represented as an individual's attempt to make the distorted image clearer, or to make the impure pure, even though this might never be achieved. Change occurs, but the individual does not reach a final state of transition because they are no longer the self they were before they entered.

'There is no 'on' to move to because you are not the same, so moving 'on' becomes impossible, unnecessary, since you only move 'on' to leave something behind and in transition, you never fully leave it behind, you take it with you' (JM).

The aim of this analysis has been to open up ideas around transition as perhaps being associated with the illusionary notions of 'tour and detour' through linear and multidimensional experiences; of being 'betwixt and between' through a (mis)recognised sense of self and alienating and unravelling identities; and of 'pollution' through the contamination that accompanies unfamiliar and strange bodies in transition. It has also provided an opportunity to pursue my notion of 'worksickness',

which through its connections to 'strangeness', disorientation and (dis)ease incorporates all three illusions together.

Through the mingling of literature, data, theory and metaphor I have presented my reconceptualisation of transition as a notion that is slippery, complex, open to multiple interpretations and felt in diverse ways, even by the same person. At the outset of this research, I acknowledged that the metaphors of journey and pathway perpetuated a once long trodden and simpler, less complex view of transition as movement from one point in a person's life to the next. I had thought that in reconceptualising transition, new metaphors would be more effective in representing it as something other than 'journey'. However, journeys are not necessarily singular and straightforward, they can be constant, challenging, life changing, spontaneous, previously untraveled and made with no thought as how to navigate them. Since journeys are ambiguous, no one person will have the exact same experience, even if the journey is shared, they are often travelled alone.

Each metaphor I have employed so far also seems to be indicative of a journey: an adventure through a looking glass, a visit through the house of mirrors and it has become important to maintain it as a way to understand transition. In my concluding thoughts, I take another journey and use the metaphor of rear view mirror to reflect on the aims of the research and the questions posed at the outset and to identify the contribution this thesis makes to new knowledge around transition.

6 Concluding Thoughts: Transition in the rear view mirror

...doing it now was obviously something more remembered than experienced, as what he actually saw in this way was becoming less distinct every day (Kafka, 1915:22).

I will conclude the thesis by using the metaphor of a rear view mirror to reflect back to the research questions posed at the beginning in order to incorporate the past and present with a future yet to come. The research questions endeavoured to problematise some of the more commonly held beliefs about transition in order to think differently about how to support students' transitioning, and in turn, how they might support the transitioning of the children they will go on to work with. These concluding thoughts consider how the study contributes to the literature around transition and to methodologies of studying transition in the future. I will reflect on the limitations of the study, which includes ways of furthering the research beyond what is presented here and I will contemplate the role of this thesis in my own process of transitioning.

Brown (2011) asserts that in order to think about and make plans for the future we should engage in a reassessment of our past, which involves understanding and developing an ability to overcome the disturbances that will inevitably happen. The final mirror: a rear view mirror, designed to offer a more intense, focused, and yet wider view of the images that appear external to the self is utilised here. The rear view mirror as a metaphor offers a composite view of transition, a glimpse of something in the past, while we are looking at the present and the future at the same time. Rather than being suggestive of linearity, looking back and forward, the rear view mirror is utilised here in that it supports the postmodern philosophical tradition that there is no universal or singular sense of 'truth', only multiplicities. Herzogenarath (2001) refers to the image in the rear view mirror as a reflected image, a representation of 'reality'. Unlike Lacan's mirror stage, where the infant sees itself as whole for the first time, the rear view mirror offers only a partial view of self and so the image in it can be seen as a return to a previous fragmented self and loss of a unified selfhood. Lebow (2012) proposes that reflecting back on our pasts can result in an illusory sense of self, since our memories are (mis)representations of our past, which we alter in order to manage our present needs. As the extract from Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' above suggests, a glance in the

rear view mirror of the past may only offer a partial representation of what seemingly occurred. When we reflect back on the past, our previous transitioning, it may not be as distinctive as we remember it to be, it may only reflect a fleeting, somewhat distorted reminder of the moment, feeling or experience that now appears as a fading, distant memory. Alternatively, the image in the rear view mirror may also be viewed in the same way as the child who sees herself as complete for the first time, in that she is able to acknowledge that there are objects, or others, in the physical world, which she may come into contact with in the future, but from which she is presently physically distinct. In relation to transition, these alternate dimensions, offered by the rear view mirror, represent a composite image of transition as it accumulates a past, a present and a future life in each moment.

6.1 Transition as past, present, future

Colley (2007) and Worth (2009) have theorised that events in our lives are measured by time, but not in a straightforward chronological way, since time can encapsulate past, present and future concurrently. Reflecting on time in this way allows me to think differently about the events that occur within it. Through her 'web of contradictions', Colley (2007:438) maintains that there are no endings or beginnings in transitions since while we are in the process of resolving one conflict, another will emerge. These conflicts take us on tours and detours, which offer both stability and disorientation to our transitional experiences. My own understanding of transition has followed a similar path and glancing in the rear view mirror, I recall a past where my view of transition was more reflective of coherence than confusion. More recently, I felt compelled to contest the 'myth' of transition as a linear construct and determined, through my own experience, that transition was a phenomenon that could not be explained in such simple terms. I wanted to pursue the particulars of how such a (mis)recognition might occur. I began by engaging with the literature and what had come before.

Much of the research into transition to university considers transition from a socio-cultural perspective, such as Tinto's (1988) use of Van Gennep's (1960) rites de passage, to explore how students come to be transitioned. Similarly, in many cases, the research also focuses on students who are already experiencing difficulties with transition, often

associated with a lack of persistence (Scanlon et al., 2005). Reflecting on what seemed to be only partially considered in the literature therefore, my study set out to contribute to this field in a number of ways. Through the use of a postmodern analytic autoethnography that employs a psychoanalytical perspective, I am developing a reconceptualisation of transition as something that is past, present and future at the same time; illusionary and not quite as it seems. Familiar or disorienting at times, enabling and powerful in helping to overcome the 'strangeness' at others, but always a part of being 'betwixt and between', becoming and unbecoming.

Using the illusions of 'tour and detour', 'betwixt and between' and 'pollution' has created a conceptualisation that embodies a composite view of transition as an entangled experience of self and other, through and in time. In other literature, transition is presented as linear, as a permanent movement from the past to the future, or, as it has more recently been presented, as fluid and fragmented, constantly moving in and out of time. What has been given less emphasis and limited scope for analysis is how these transitions, whether linear or non-linear, are experienced and explained through dimensions of time as past, present and future, co-existing and equally influential.

I have conceptualised transition as being influenced by the past because some individuals draw on previous experiences, successfully or unsuccessfully, to navigate present and future transitions. These navigations take us on tours or detours and reflect notions of linear and non-linear pathways, which involve journeys merging pasts, presents and futures. Through the illusion of 'betwixt and between', I conceptualised transition as being in the present, at a threshold between the past, what is familiar and the future, what is yet unknown. As we look in the rear view mirror, we recognise places, people, selves we have already encountered and as we look ahead, we see what is yet to come, which sometimes might appear as an imagined future. Although transition has been conceptualised previously in the literature as being at a threshold, in many cases the person in transition seems to be hovering, perhaps waiting at this place for something to happen, a change to occur, to be moved by external forces or structures, rather than wanting to engage with the 'strangeness' that might be all around, all-consuming at times.

Through exploring transition as a visit to the house of mirrors and being polluted by what we see and experience, I have considered it to be an ongoing process, 'not a stage, but a continual, ever shifting process of self-realisation' (LaBelle, 1998:10), which involves a self moving amongst pasts, presents and futures, where what we thought we were prior to looking in the mirror changes as we move through and with the dimensions of time. The use of psychoanalysis, alongside the metaphors of looking glass and house of mirrors, makes a further contribution to the reconceptualisation of transition, often viewed in other research through social constructivism (e.g. Hviid and Zittoun, 2008; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007), or less frequently, if the focus is outside of education, through a feminist lens (e.g. Colley, 2007). By using a psychoanalytical lens, I have brought a paradoxical perspective to transition: it is through the unfamiliarity of what is being experienced in the present, and of what is to come in the future, that the subject seeks what is familiar from the past.

Moving to the methodological field in this study, I have experimented with a version of analytic autoethnography that has posed particular challenges along the way. There are a number of analytic autoethnographies around transition, for example, Dethloff (2005), but those that I have encountered, focus solely on the self as researcher and researched and do not therefore grapple with the added complexity of the researcher as participant in transition amongst other participants in transition. In my thesis, by employing a type of analytic autoethnography that includes participants other than self, I have been able to take data, entangle it into stories and conceptualisations of transition so that new ways of thinking can be represented. Such a structure can be seen to compliment other work that innovatively combines the self and other into a 'composite-pastiche' (Garratt, 2014:1); the multiple contributions that are spoken and unspoken in the data. Reflecting back, this complex structuring and grappling with a way to move between (my)self and others, in order to present and analyse the data, as well as dealing with different versions of (my)self and other selves in transition, was challenging. Equally demanding, was the seemingly contradictory act of entangling the data whilst maintaining a sense of individuality to avoid the homogenisation of transition. As I look in the rear view mirror, it is just prior to making a choice about the possibility of completing a manoeuvre, on making the choice I signal my intent and make the move. The decision

to follow an analytic autoethnographic methodology was in part, driven by postmodernism, which acted as the prompt or signal for the way to proceed. The philosophical orientation of postmodernism was in turn, tied in with my reconceptualisation of transition as something that perhaps cannot be defined in a singular way. This meant however, that I needed to engage with postmodern versions of self and other, which can be seen to be in conflict.

On reflection, these decisions have enabled me to both acknowledge and analyse my experience of transition with those of the participants and I hope to have made productive use of the tension that the self and other can be defined by. This mingling of data, while it may not have produced single stories of transition, has allowed me to acknowledge that we are individuals who operate in multiple contexts and so to present individual conceptualisations as something 'unique' would have been detrimental to the choices made. The entangling of data still makes visible the individual experiences, as I do not use them to present one final story of transition, but a conceptualisation that is open to interpretation.

6.2 Reflections in the rear view mirror

The thesis has influenced my work with students in two connecting ways. The first is the impact on my theoretical and methodological work with them. Looking behind me, the majority of my theoretical teaching about child development, although encapsulating numerous disciplines of developmental psychology, socio-cultural, postmodern and critical perspectives, has focused on the key players in such debates. While I had paid attention to the psychoanalytical ideas of Freud and Winnicott, for example, I had not made reference to the work of Lacan and Kristeva, as neither are particularly visible or accessible in undergraduate texts on child development. Perhaps a more composite picture as I look ahead, would be to draw more confidently on their theories of identity and subjectivity when exploring ideas around children's transition with the students. Methodologically, I have also extended my repertoire of research processes that I can now bring to my work in supporting students in their own research projects and feel better prepared to support them through some of the challenges they may face. The second and perhaps more defining way this thesis will influence my work with students

is both in how I view transition and how I can better support those who are transitioning to university. As I have discussed previously, the self is unstable in postmodern thinking and therefore a person in transition can never reach an end point since they themselves do not remain stable. To begin and end the same is not possible. This research has concluded that, in relation to the five participants, although the concept of transition is one that is experienced by everyone at different times, in different ways, from birth through to death, the actual experiences were individual and as a consequence, reflected different individual realities,

'It's like marching to our own music, through our own drum' (Lea).

On numerous occasions in this thesis, I have reflected that the 'ground into which we sink our feet is not neutral: it gives ground to some more than others' (Ahmed, 2006:160). Ahmed is referring to the disorientation that occurs when bodies fail to orient in spaces that they do not 'fit' into. This idea has resonated with the importance of considering the individual students who are experiencing transition, who for many reasons may feel a failure of fit at times and the equally (dis)orienting nature of transition. I reflect back on it again here as I wonder what this uneven ground means for moving forward with my thinking. What would a composite programme of support for my participants look like if I were now to return to the rear view mirror and look back at them as first years? I have concluded that transition encompasses past, present and future lives concurrently and so any programme of support needs to begin with asking 'Where have you come from, how does this influence where you are now and where do you imagine you want to go?

In a different world, a university would not just pose these questions in relation to transition, but would ask them in order to make the ground that the course applications, the structure, the organisation, the curriculum, the services, the funding is built on more even. However, for purposes of this thesis, how might I engage with the question 'what would a programme to support my conceptualisation of transition look like?' One of my roles as head of year is to talk to students who wish to withdraw from university. This meeting is framed by university policies and structures that are often intended to make withdrawing a more difficult option than remaining, as there is a pressure to encourage

students to stay with a view to maintaining the retention and progression statistics. Administrative fees for breaking accommodation contracts, complex funding regulations and worries that a return to study in the future may be affected, all need to be navigated alongside the emotional impact that not persisting often brings. While I know that I will still need to ask the same questions and highlight the same issues, and while I have always done so with consideration and sensitivity, I will do so now with more caution and will be able to respond more thoughtfully and personally to the questions that are posed.

Whittaker (2008, cited in Johnston, 2010:3) has summarised the approaches to supporting transition as being linked to improving preparedness for higher education through facilitating both academic and social assimilation into the university environment, and supporting the development of the independent learner. Preparedness should begin before the students arrive however, as indicated by McPhail (2015), in order to acknowledge their present, soon to be past experiences. The type of pre-induction induction, that McPhail (2015) alludes to, could support the transition for students prior to their first day at university where there can be so much 'strangeness' and mist to contend with. Alternatively, induction can be extended beyond the first few weeks, into the future, and opportunities such as Library Tours and introductions to the course content planned carefully and on a need to know basis.

As a result of the thinking I have done about transition, I now feel more confident to engage in the programme and faculty debates about how we support induction, and indeed, if induction is appropriate in its current format. Currently, induction has a place as its focus is on familiarising the unfamiliar in the present, in order for the student to contend with future learning. It generally follows a linear rites de passage route, where the student arrives, remains in a liminal state while being inducted and is then expected to move on and become incorporated into a one size fits all 'aboveground' world. However, little consideration is given to the 'belowground' worlds they bring with them, such as pre-existing ideas of the university experience and previous linear or zig-zag experiences of transitions. The challenge is that the unfamiliarity and 'strangeness' is not the same for each person. Individuals may feel familiar and unfamiliar with different things and have different ways of dealing with the 'strangeness' as a result of their

previous experiences and expectations in general, and of transition in particular. It is not just what we, as individuals, or as an institution, can do 'to' or 'for' them to make the ground more even or to find a way for 'above' and 'belowground' worlds to connect in a more reciprocal way, but what they can also do for themselves and how we can support them to do this. For example, in my own experience, I did not question the so called 'aboveground' simplicity of my previous transitioning and it was not until I found it problematic that I engaged with the 'strangeness' and discomfort and became more accepting of a different, 'belowground' experience. I have referred to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) view of agency as drawing on the three dimensions of time and I noted that having an opportunity to think about transition had prompted the participants to reflect and make sense of their past, present and future transitioning across multiple sites and relationships. Reflecting in this way and by acknowledging that both 'above' and 'belowground' experiences of transition can be connected in a composite view of transition, provides opportunities to analyse current practices of induction that seemingly do not account for this sense making and questioning of taken-for-granted notions or previous experiences of transition.

Understanding transition through the metaphor of rear view mirror means that support for transition needs to take into account past, present and future lives, not solely support for the present situation of moving to university. When questioned about their experiences of transition and as a result of their reflections the participants, including myself, also questioned an institutional approach to transitional strategies and felt strongly that transitions, while universally experienced, should be framed by support that caters for the individual where possible and should be ongoing. Looking back, I wonder if or how these carefully considered reflections were related, in addition to contending with their multiple identities as first year undergraduates (Johnston, 2010), to their previous challenges in navigating transition and/or to the additional hurdles that being mothers, carers, employees, working class, of South Asian British heritage brought to the experience. Further research would need to be carried out to explore the link between their suggestions and requests for more drawn out induction support and the correlation of this to their multiple identities, previous experiences and status as 'non-traditional' students. However, there remains a strong argument for acknowledging and

understanding transition as a composite experience of past, present and future in order to begin to support the transitioning of an individual within a multiple and diverse student body.

I wonder though, in going back to Alice, what would such reflection and analysis mean for her experience of the excursion through the looking glass? Would she have benefited from some kind of preparation or induction strategy, or would this have changed, demystified, diminished in some way, her adventures? I have explored the importance of embracing the 'strangeness', of not trying to avoid it, since this is part of the process in grappling with our sense of self and our ability to overcome difficulty. If transition is ongoing, then perhaps such strategies are negated by the fact that we are individuals constantly in transition. This would require an equally individual programme of induction, which would not be possible. What would be possible though is a more personalised strategy related to the development of relationships where students had more opportunity to articulate the 'strangeness' and to not be afraid of acknowledging it. Personal Tutors, other students, Support Services all exist in the university, but navigating the access to these people can be complex and so this is where I believe the work is required. To do more than make ourselves available but to proactively seek the building of relationships with our undergraduates so that they may feel more able to engage with us on a more multidimensional level. This goes hand in hand with being more visible at pre-induction and induction sessions and making induction more about getting to know each other over a longer period of time and less about force feeding university and course requirements too soon. My position is that we can prepare students to apply learnt strategies to aid transition but practical organisational strategies are not sufficient on their own when transition is viewed as a multidimensional concept rather than a straightforward linear one.

Through this research I have realised that capturing 'anxiety' and 'strangeness' in a supportive and non-judgemental environment is essential in helping students to reflect on their own experiences of transition in order to have a greater understanding and empathy of the transitional experiences of young children. As a result of our encounters and reminiscences, myself and the other participants each reported a heightened sense of transition, what it is, what it means, how it feels and how to deal with it. Viewing a

child in transition as an individual against the backdrop of their own transitions had become meaningful to them.

The participants could all currently be seen as being betwixt and between strangeness. They have all recently graduated and have child related employment or postgraduate opportunities to go on to. As they reflected in their own rear view mirror of the past, they felt that as a result of delving into their own experiences they had developed a much more in depth understanding of transition and in particular, how this might help them to look forward into the future as they consider the importance of providing transitional support for the children that they may work with. They were keen to explain that having had a recent personal experience of a transition as an adult, which they then unravelled and reflected on, had helped them to see, feel and have empathy with the children they may work with in the future. Their experiences and reflections on transition and how it will influence their work with others, are enveloped in the composite narrative of self, which is entangled with others: children, parents, teachers, colleagues, peers, tutors, family members and friends from their pasts, presents and futures.

6.3 Beyond the cracks in the rear view mirror

The scope of this research is limited to the experiences of transition documented by myself and by the other participants. In acknowledging this, I understand that what I represent may only relate to those who have been willing to share their experiences with me. There is a further perceived limitation in that the data collection process did not include a composite narrative of their three years at university, did not start before they arrived, or continue as they prepared to graduate. For the purpose of completing this particular study, the last period of data collection was at the end of their second year and so the analysis and conclusions have not included further transitional experiences they may have encountered in their final year. However, as I have suggested, transitions do not have naturally occurring end points, they encompass pasts, presents and futures without a need to examine these separately. Calling a halt to the data collection when I did may have limited the quantity of data, but not the

representations of the experiences, since transition is ongoing and therefore, there is no obvious or clear point at which to end.

The reconsideration and reconceptualisation of transition has led to a line of inquiry, which I hope to pursue further in the future; the implications of such conceptualisations for those in transition, how we can support the experience for ourselves and others and how we can change attitudes around how we relate to the more unsettling, rough and abject aspects of transition. I have made some recommendations for how I might change my practice but I would hope that I can take this further, beyond my own location in the university, in terms of recommendations for on-going support for transition and what this might look like. I would also like to extend this thinking to how others in transition might be supported, for example, new employees as they navigate different and unfamiliar practices and identities. In addition, it would also be interesting to follow my participants into their work with children to explore whether they are able to maintain the views they expressed about supporting children's transitions or whether they find themselves limited by policy and institutional structures.

6.4 My past, present, future transitioning

The thesis has been like a rear view mirror, offering multiple opportunities to reflect, look back to the past and forward to the future while I am here in the present, in order to discuss and propose my ideas on the concept of transition. The writing of and the reflecting on my experience of transition, which I may not have done without the thesis, has opened up new ways of thinking and acting that I do not think I would have happened upon otherwise.

Throughout this study, and particularly as I began to develop a different way of representing it, I have tussled with how to record the word 'transition' on the page. I thought about how to represent it in different ways in written form. Would capitalising it as 'TRANSITION' make it seem more powerful and important? Would presenting it as '(trans)ition' or 'tran-si-tion' offer a visual deconstruction, making it open to interpretation, would holding it up to a mirror, or reversing the letters to reveal 'noitisnart', suggest it is a reflection of 'reality', which is in itself unreal, difficult to

understand and an illusion? I searched for a possible neologism that would better define my conceptualisation of transition but realised that a notion that is in constant flux, cannot be pinned down and concluded the best way I can represent it in a thesis that claims that to become 'transitioned' cannot be achieved, is as ~~transition~~. It exists, but it is obscured, illusionary, not as it appears.

I also believe now, looking away from the image in the rear view mirror to what lies amongst and ahead of me, that ~~transition~~ as a word, is both incorrectly and overused in many instances and once I became tangled within this study, other references to it appeared voluminous and magnified in everyday discourse. It was as if I became tuned in, sensitised and in many cases, perplexed by its (over)use. The word ~~transition~~ is often used to describe an act of movement, or adaptation from one place to the next, in order to arrive at a state, such as 'excellence' or in order to achieve an outcome; this is not how I understand ~~transition~~. What is being described here is a change or an adjustment, which can be quantified in order to be achieved. However, such varied use of ~~transition~~, as a catch-all word to describe what appears to be something more closely associated with change or adjustment, provides an opportunity to defamiliarise it. A useful process that I can take forward into my role in higher education, as it offers 'a site of potential disruption and estrangement', not in order that I see ~~transition~~ more clearly but 'to momentarily jolt people out of...frenetic paralysis' (MacLure, 2006:228).

The provocation for this thesis was my challenging and unsettling ~~transition~~ to a new place of work, which was mirrored by the experiences of some of the students. Advocates of autoethnography, such as Reed-Danahay, (1997), Holman Jones (2005) and Ellis et al. (2011), acknowledge and embrace its capacity to act as a therapeutic and cathartic experience at times of difficulty and distress. For me, the writing of the thesis has not been a replacement for some form of psychoanalysis, but I acknowledge that it has been inexplicably linked to how I have gone on to experience and understand my own ~~transition~~.

Where identity is fluid and self is in constant flux with others, it becomes difficult to separate out any one thing in terms of how it may influence our life experiences. The writing of the thesis itself has been entangled with multiple interactions, discussions,

whispers, reflections, incidental utterances, silent observations, thoughts and encounters that have influenced my experience of and my thinking about ~~transition~~. What I am able to reflect on is whether this thesis has contributed to my transitioning. Has it helped me to find that self I was hopelessly searching for three years ago? I am not certain that I will ever be able to answer that because the thesis has not been the only influence on (my)self, but it has helped me to understand that the identity that I was nostalgic for may not have existed in the first place; it was illusionary. The thesis has therefore helped me to reflect that I do not always need to seek comfort in what is familiar and safe, but to engage with what is unfamiliar and risky, in order to embrace the 'strangeness'. The sense of loss and searching for a familiar self has diminished and by reflecting on 'worksickness' and theorising it, has helped me to understand and recognise it in others. For example, I see it in those who are resistant to change and who, as a result, wish to remain or return to a self they (mis)recognise. I see it in my new colleagues as they adapt to new and unfamiliar systems and routines and as they reminisce about their past colleagues and previous places of work.

From my own perspective, the personal ~~transition~~ I encountered has become a paradox. It is both almost forgotten and distant, 'something more remembered than experienced...becoming less distinct every day' (Kafka, 1915:22). I no longer recognise the person who experienced ~~transition~~ to a new place of work, she has become unfamiliar to me and yet she is a part of me and I am thankful that the experience occurred and is still occurring, as I encounter new experiences within the ~~transition~~. As I look back in the rear view mirror, most of the memories and moments of the initial ~~transition~~ have become blurred, have faded as the distance envelopes them, as Kafka's quote alludes to. They seem insignificant to me now, a splinter removed long ago, and yet, paradoxically it continues to be hugely significant in terms of what I have learnt about what I did not 'know' before and what I am still to learn.

Through the use of metaphors I have been able to generate, not 'truths' of ~~transition~~, but a 'lifelikeness' (Dyson, 2007:46), which has the capacity to enable new ways of thinking as 'various parts of a journey are pondered and unravelled' (Ibid.). In keeping with the metaphors of mirror, what I have represented in this thesis on ~~transition~~ is limited by the perspective I have, just as the view in the mirror is limited to what it is

framed by, which may or may not reflect 'reality'. Prior to the mirror stage, or on looking at the refracted image in a house of mirrors, an incomplete or distorted image is what we have of ourselves. Therefore, I do not claim to present a complete, finished view of ~~transition~~ but rather one, like my own experience, that is ambiguous and indistinct, and through reflecting on other senses of ~~transition~~, has made it even more blurred and open to different possibilities.

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Appendices

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| Appendices 1-5 | Pen portraits of participants |
| Appendices 6-7 | Extracts from focus groups |
| Appendices 8-11 | Extracts from dyadic interviews |
| Appendix 12 | Extract from my journal |
| Appendix 13 | Email communication |

Appendix 1: Pen portrait

Ayla

I started University in 2013; I came to university straight after college with no gaps. I have four younger sisters and one older brother, but the first child of my parents and first out of all of my cousins to come to university, which was an honour for me as I am the one being a role model to all the younger ones and inspiring them to take higher education. I help out my mum with all of the house hold chores and take her out and about everywhere. I got my car straight away after passing my driving test. Because I am sensible and very responsible, my parents got me a car. My favourite hobby is doing mehndi designs (henna), I feel relaxed and tension free when I am busy doing mehndi. Whenever I feel tensed I just get a henna cone or start to draw patterns on a piece of paper, at this point my mind is relaxed and happy. My other hobbies are doing DIY projects and surfing the net. For three years at university all I have done is research the net for many different types of information to complete my assignments. Now this has become a part of me and I have to surf the net and find about post graduate courses, look for part time jobs, research about universities best known for post graduate courses, interviews, personal statements etc. I am taking this year out to gain experience and to complete the professional skills test in order to gain a place on Post graduate course. This is where my life currently stands after graduating.

Appendix 2: Pen portrait

Ann

So, I started university at the age of 26. I have never personally been bothered about my age in the sense of life itself, but for some reason when it came to my education I really struggled with it. I was the same in college, I think because before I experienced further and higher education my perception of it was you go school, go college, then go university. I was a young mum, and thought I would be the only one on my courses who was. Funnily, in both college and university, there were other people who had children, although I was always the oldest.

I felt because I was older and a mum that I had more motivation towards my education and I feel my age and family have influenced my success. I am glad of the path I have taken and all the uncertainty I felt with regards to my age is now in the past. I am ready to start my PGCE and there are people my parents' age who are studying alongside me, so I feel it is a strength and shows determination the older you are when you are studying.

I have never fully grasped why some people who study have never worked. I have a really strong work ethic and had my first job before I left school, so maybe that is a factor. I know people who view education as an alternative to working, but I value it so much more, and I am fortunate enough to have strong family support, which allows me to do both.

My reasons for participating in your research were to hopefully ease my mind about the age thing and to see if there were others who experienced the same as I. I know it was your research, which allowed me to explore my issues and overcome them, in a positive and supportive environment. I am eternally grateful for this because I know I would have continued to have the same fears. I remember thinking at the beginning of 2nd year, oh my god, I am going to be over 30 before I am a qualified teacher, and all the others are so young, but then I realised it didn't matter. What matters is how I am as a professional,

and I feel I have an advantage over younger peers because I will not need to take a break to start a family because I am already raising mine.

After my graduation my dad said he was so proud and it has inspired him to go back to get his degree. So, I think the moral to my story is, age is just a number, not something to be feared, each individual will experience transition in a completely different way, but it is the strengths and characteristics of them, and the support from tutors, which makes the experience worthwhile.

Appendix 3: Pen portrait

Lea

I decided to return to education at the age of 26 after having my daughter. I first attended University straight after finishing college at 18, but after a year and a half my mental health caused me to drop out and I set myself to working in retail instead. The decision to return to University was to provide something more for my daughter and to find something that I was passionate about to pursue as a career. The road back to University was not an easy one, I initially had to pay my first year's tuition until I had provided sufficient evidence to Student Finance for the reason I dropped out originally. This meant that we were living off the bare essentials as I worked at least 16 hours to ensure that we had enough money to live off. Once this was finalised I was able to reduce my hours at work, but I still needed to work to make sure that we were in a comfortable situation. Furthermore, as I had decided to participate in an Erasmus Exchange, flying both myself and my daughter to another country for five months, I knew that I would need to save up as much money as I possibly could. After our return to the UK, I went back to working whilst I also worked on my dissertation. I chose to participate in this research as I was curious, I had never been involved in research processes before and knowing what was ahead of me at University I felt this a good opportunity to get a sneak peak. Also, I felt that the topic of the research was something that spoke to me. I have been aware for sometime that I find it difficult to cope with change, something that was a major contributor to me leaving University in the first place, and felt that participating in the research may bring up interesting information that I could look at in relation to myself.

Appendix 4: Pen portrait

Minnie

I am 21 years old now and started at university in September 2013. I was the only one out of my siblings born in Peterborough and lived there until I was 6 and then moved to Oldham and started in year 1 at my primary school. I think a lot of the time in Early Years people view transition on a small scale but because of this transition I experienced I was always interested in life transitions. I felt that this transition shaped me in many ways and sometimes I actually feel like I left some of my childhood behind.

My mum developed diabetes when she got pregnant with me so because of this long history she started to lose her vision. Through the end of second year of my degree and the third year, I had to do all the household chores such as cooking, cleaning, ironing etc. But then also had to look after my mum who was bed bound after her operation. Also, because of the decrease in her vision I had to take over her class of the children in the community where I was teaching them Quranic studies. So considering the responsibilities, I'm really proud I pulled through! I decided to participate in the research because it related really well to the transitions I had to make from college to university but then also moving from ■■■ to ■■■ I think the things that we discussed have really enforced the importance of transitions for myself and what impact they can have on lives. I already had an interest in transitions anyways because of my own experiences so it enriched my understanding.

Appendix 5: Pen portrait

JM

In the late 1980's and early 1990's I went to university to train as a primary school teacher after leaving school at 18. I lived away whilst I completed my degree and came back home to work during the holidays.

On graduating in 1992, I taught early years and primary aged children for eight years in schools in the North West of England. In my final year of teaching, I mentored a student on the Graduate Teacher Programme and it was here that my interest in the training of teachers began. I had decided that I wanted to teach in higher education and so in 2000 I left my full time job and completed a Master of Education postgraduate degree full time, whilst continuing to teach on a part time basis.

I went on to teach at a higher education institution for thirteen years, moving between Primary Teacher Education and Childhood Studies programmes. During my time there, I travelled to Sri Lanka with SOS Children's Villages UK on a number of occasions and taught with the local teachers in kindergartens and primary schools. I enrolled on the Doctor of Education degree programme in 2010 and then secured a new job as a Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at a new institution in 2013.

The provocation for the research undertaken in this study was not in the original plot of my doctoral story. I had anticipated my research focus to take a different course as I had spent the majority of Phase A researching my own practice with undergraduate teacher trainees and more specifically, the value of a subject specialism in primary education pedagogy. My interest in transition came about as a result of my own experience of it through the move to a new place of work. My interest was further aroused when I noticed that some of the first year undergraduates' experiences of transition seemed to reflect what I had started to feel. I realised that a study of transition would be helpful in order to gain a more informed and considered view so that I might help to support future transitions more effectively.

Appendix 6: Extract from focus group

November 2014

JM: The title for a research presentation I'm doing is called a stranger in my own land, an exploration of transition and I've drawn a line through transition because I actually don't think transition is the right word for this thing that I went through last year. The stranger in my own land was that I felt like a very experienced lecturer but when I came here, I couldn't use my own field, my own area of expertise that I had used in the past.

Lea: I have a feeling that you never feel 100% transitioned in a place that there is always something that somebody else handles better than you and I think that is quite a natural feeling anyway that you feel you're always moving, and I don't think you should feel like you're 100% good at everything. I don't feel that even though I've got this idea in my head of what a student should be I think if I hit that point I'll probably have a new idea of what a student might be

Ayla: I think it is just going to continue until we finish as long as we stay in education.

JM: Ayla, do you feel different to what Lea has said about having previous experience of university, because you haven't got any thing to measure any previous experiences of coming to university against, so do you think you've transitioned to the idea of student or do you think that is still ongoing?

Ayla: This environment does make you feel more academic, more professional , you do feel like you are in a more academic study zone but I don't know, it lacks somewhere this building

JM: Is it more serious here?

Lea: It's heart it lacks.

JM: Soul?

Ayla & Lea: Yes

Lea: it doesn't feel like a nice warm snuggly blanket to wrap round you and keep you cosy. It feels like you come in, you do your thing, you go, yeah. It's different as well coming to see you last year you could come in you could knock on the door you could sit in their room and feel comfortable with them and you feel like you are in their space. These meeting rooms I don't feel like you are in a lecturer's space.

Ayla: I don't feel that engaged. I have no idea what it is. Last year I felt really engaged, it was the environment. Here it is like come in, getting it done thinking when is this lecture gonna finish I want to get out of here, it's just that. It's just when you sit there, last year I could make so many notes, what the lecturer said, the presentation, putting in my own notes, now literally the page in my book is blank, just the date and the title. Which is frustrating me, I'm thinking what's happening here?

JM: You've become a bit robotic have you?

Ayla: Yeah

JM: Mechanic, clinical?

Lea: Yeah – to match the environment

Appendix 7: Extract from focus group

November 2014

JM: Looking back at some images from last time, do you recall when you were worried about your age? Is that still there?

Ann: I don't really reflect on that now, although I did the other week because someone made a comment about graduation and we were talking about goals and I said I am going to be 29 when I graduate and that sounds dead weird. And then I thought back and I thought I don't actually care 'cos I just wasn't bothered then. As long as I've done it before then, that's my mindset, I want to finish my education before I am 30 and someone was asking did I want more kids and I was like no because I don't want kids after I'm 30 and I feel I've done that part of my life and my education is my next step cos I've done it in reverse to other people.

JM: So what happens at 30 then, what stage of your life do you go into then?

Ann: Developing a career

JM: A year isn't a very long time in terms of a person's life development so what is different now in terms of the age thing not bothering you anymore in terms of what people think?

Ann: I've got to know the people and they are not judgemental and I think it was me thinking people were going to be judgemental. Getting to know people and knowing it is not an issue and thinking well am I making it an issue? So I just stopped doing that.

JM: Early on in September, I felt uncertain, I wasn't sure if it was the right thing. I'd left behind a lot of friends that I used to work with, a nice, safe environment that I was used to. You've got rid of not being bothered about your age anymore and you've got over not being with [REDACTED] but is there any new things now? Are there any new uncertainties now we have come here?

Minne: I think with me it is more of the professional development now, obviously I have been through all the social side but right now my priority is to do the Early Years Teacher, so it is more about my professional concerns rather than social.

Minnie: Now that we know that it counts it has made us more committed and with me I am a lot more motivated and committed so it is a positive change rather than thinking yes I miss first year.

Ann: I am glad of the way I felt because it has brought me to where I am now and there was a lot I wanted to do and that person got me here, and it's really helped and I feel more relaxed.

JM: that's change isn't it. We don't stay the same. I was at a reading group yesterday and we were talking about gender. Someone said when we look at gender, our gender isn't stable. The women we were yesterday are not the same as the women we are today because all of these things around us are interacting with us and even if we don't know it, they are having a different impact on the way we are.

Ann: I can really relate to that 'cos even sat here I don't feel any anxiety like I felt last year 'cos I had a lot of pressure and I had a lot of work and answering these questions I was like "oh and I've got to do this and I've got to do that", but I feel physically relaxed. The learning is a different transition because you are learning something different or you are adapting to a different routine, so that is completely different, I'd give a completely different opinion on that but my physical sense of coming here, I've passed that phase.

Minnie: I've transitioned in the sense of travelling and the social side to it but in terms of learning and the student you are I think you are always transitioning through that process. I did have a big wake up call as well (reference back to last image). This EYT has given me a really big wake up call.

Appendix 8: Extract from dyadic interview with Minnie

June 2015

Minnie: I got a bit confused when all the work got piled up and obviously I had done nothing to do with children all the way through my education so I was like wait a minute what am I supposed to do? A lot of people had done qualifications like children's development and I only did one unit on sociology of education and that was it. The books in college you do read but not as much, you don't do the whole referencing thing so it was like getting deeper into the academic side but it's about becoming more reflective and critical and stuff.

JM: So you're seeing that as something that was quite good, you could see yourself developing.

Minnie: yes and not just academically, my personality even changed! It's really changed coming to uni.

JM: So what's changed? Have you become more confident?

Minnie: It really makes you so independent it is unreal. It's been more of a challenge coming here because this is a smaller building, less people, got to know more tutors. There it is so much more people, different timetable.

JM: That was a bit like me, but here, I feel at home here. I was also very excited about planning for the future and teaching in a first class classroom, the technology. But I can also see how you thought it will be just like starting again.

JM: Has anything helped your transition this year?

Minnie: All the induction activities that we had in that first week, getting to know people, tutorials with our Personal Tutor

JM: Do you think we should have more of those?

Minnie: Yes. At end of each half term.

JM: Can you look at your pictures that are left and hang onto them and now and pick something that reflects how you are feeling at this point? Where you are at now in your story of transition? If there isn't an image here that isn't right ... you might have an idea in your head you can just describe it 'cos the story doesn't have to be visual.

Minnie: Because I think I've got to where I am, I've got the pieces like my EYT, like my normal sessions, placement, but at the moment it seems like things are not fitting together, like what I have told you about placement. At one point I wanted to drop out of the EYT.

JM: Because dropping out would do what do you think? If you dropped out you think you could start to do something more proactive in terms of putting the pieces together?

Minnie: Yes. I mean I am going to stick to it and I'm going to end up there.

JM: We haven't got the image with the jigsaw completed have we?

Minnie: Even though the transition from [redacted] to [redacted] is done with, from college to uni is done with, there are other transitions like going from uni student to EYT student – it is a continuous cycle.

JM: Can you put yours in a story then? So there is a big jump from what you said there about relaxing and sleeping and an awareness about how you need to use every day wisely.

Minnie: Yes it is like a wake up call so now even though I have woken up I'm still in a bit of a muddle

JM: Is this useful thinking back?

Minnie: Yes it is

JM: What are you expecting to be the next image – in 6 months time. Or what do you hope for?

Minnie: All the pieces put together, not all of them as it is a transition, but starting to piece things together, starting to work things out like more long term.

Appendix 9: Extract from dyadic interview with Ayla

June 2015

JM: Do you still feel the same about travel or have you adjusted in terms of how you get here?

Ayla: To be honest with you because, I bring my own car, I am adjusted in terms of that. I am alright with road traffic and even accidents and... and delays, they don't bother me anymore 'cos I know I am in my car, I am secure, I'll get there no matter how long it takes me. But if that was public transport I would probably panic like "Oh my god how long is it going to take me to get there?" – public transport, "How long is it going to take?" and things like that, that would get to me.

JM: And last time you talked about anxiety even in your car because you were saying about when you were driving you were getting stressed, there's traffic, you mentioned about "Am I gonna find a parking space?" Have you overcome that now? Have you got a place where you know you can go where you are going to be able to park your car?

Ayla: Yes. There are 2 places. One near uni and one behind the Asda. It's been much more relaxed parking around here, I guess because we've come towards the end of the year, not a lot of students, everyone's gone home so it's easier to find parking round here but even around Nov/Dec time I did find parking around these areas which I found a bit more helpful and easier for me as well.

JM: So has that helped your overall view of this campus now 'cos you're very much, last time you were wishing we were still in [REDACTED]. You were very positive about [REDACTED] and you were quite, well not negative, but you were finding lots of challenges with moving to [REDACTED] Has that eased off a bit?

Ayla: It has actually, it has actually eased off. I would say the technology and the facilities here are much more better, so I think in terms of that, doing your work and settling down, that has eased off a lot. There's a lot more work space here than there was in [REDACTED], like these tiny classrooms we can find them anywhere in the building, you just go and get yourself in thereso it is easier to work around here.

JM: So you found that even though there are some challenges there are other good things so it balances out the challenges with the good points.

Ayla: I think the only challenge that we faced was in terms of the people and the buildings structure 'cos it's very Foucault because of the glass and everything. You can see the offices and all the staff, you can see what they are doing. If you are sat opposite them and you are doing your work you can get easily distracted. I get fascinated by the kitchen over there and when you see someone in there start doing something you start staring at them and looking at them and sometimes they look back as if to say "what the hell are you looking at get on with your work!" It is really distracting. Lifts, yes they are really distracting. There was a tutor and she was trying to put her bag in the lift and it got stuck and she starting pulling it and it wasn't coming out!

JM: in November you said you felt like you didn't belong here.

Do you still feel like that?

Ayla: I would say I am somewhere down the line, like I am in the middle now 'cos I am much more involved. I am a course rep so I am involved in a lot of things so in those terms, I do feel like I am a part of this place. Becoming a course rep, it was just really different, other students will come to you and so being a course rep I feel like I am a part of this uni because I am involved in so many things, even over the summer there is so much going on and I want to be a part of it because I want to stay connected here. Last year when we left in May and came back in September there was a massive gap and I felt like I had no life by the end of August 'cos I felt so disconnected and everyone was doing something, like [REDACTED]. had a part time job and she was really going for it, I felt like I had no life. I said "Mum I've got no life" and my mum said "you are starting uni in September what are you talking about?" but I want to get involved in a lot more this year, feeling connected so it is easier to come back in September

JM: Is that why you became a rep?

Ayla: Yes, plus I wanted to do more uni stuff, I like looking around for stuff, helping out, I like things like that and being a course rep really helps to put yourself out there plus I

know that next year course reps will get to organise the graduation party so I am looking forward to that one!

JM: Let's go back through the story so far then.

(I place cards down in sequence and I read the transcript back).

Can you find one that represents how you are feeling now? You are at the end of second year, you are thinking about your research for third year, your skills tests, thinking about taking a year out.

Ayla: I got in touch with the MP as well! Actually my cousin called her over to our house 'cos she had met her once and elections were coming up so she called her over and she called the family over and we said we are going to vote for you and we cooked for her and she came over! So we spoke to her and I was telling her about the skills test and she was like "I have no idea about this" and "it is so fascinating, so interesting, when did this arrive? Tell me more about it" and I was like really, seriously, she doesn't know what is going on. And then, she left her contact numbers with me and she was like ring me if I am elected, get in touch again and make an appointment and we will sort out what we can sort out.

She is the MP now and I've got her contact details so I am soon to make an appointment with her. When I was speaking with her, she did say there was not much she would be able to do and she said we do need candidates that are outstanding. I said "I am not asking you to change things but if you can take this thing off that says you have got to do it in three times, only 3 goes, if you can take that off, or even higher the number a little bit, that will be more helpful".

I am thinking I need to have a good debate ready to be honest. If she asks me something unexpected I don't want to think what do I say back to that? Because I argue good as well in order to do something about it. Not just sit there and think, oh god what am I doing here I don't know what to say.

JM: Would you have done that in first year, contacted your MP?

Ayla: No

JM: Would you say you are more confident now?

Ayla: Yes. I wouldn't have done that. My confidence levels were quite low from the beginning, especially from seeing and meeting so many people, when we would get marks and the others would say "Oh I got 60 I got 65" And I was like, really, I didn't even get 55 on that one. I see students that are here that just about hit pass marks and they are like over the moon. They are people as well aren't they.

JM: Can you try and summarise how you are feeling now, all those things you've just said by one of these images, or even an image from your head. Where do you think you are now?

Ayla: There is one that I saw, where's it gone?

JM: What does that represent to you?

Ayla: There was one with umbrellas. I would say that one. The umbrellas, the greenery and I would say the top represents a clear start ahead and the shape of the umbrellas I would say that they represent that I am protecting myself with everything that is heading on me, before, it would just land on my head now I am going "no, you are not landing on top of me go that way, you are going that side".

JM: So you have got strategies to deal with challenges.

Ayla: Yes and I've got a clear focus set ahead, a clear goal set ahead for my future

JM: We've got a story which starts with somebody who was feeling like everything was on top of them and they couldn't control it to somebody who now knows there are going to be challenges ahead but that thinks they've got the capacity to deal with those challenges.

Ayla: Willing to deal with them and ready to face them.

Appendix 10: Extract from dyadic interview with Ann

July 2015

JM: Can you talk me through your images?

Ann: I feel relief from where I've come from and relaxed in what I'm doing but I also know there is a lot of pressure This guy sat on the chair relaxed, I just feel so relaxed. "Ahh I'm here!"

JM: And that's a result is it of the relief of that pressure you had on yourself to get through those exams , skills test? So your relief, that was here (pointing at images) has come a bit later on for you.

Ann: So yes, I feel relief from where I've come from and relaxed in what I'm doing but I also know that there is a lot of pressures to continue like with the timetable and the work load and we had an assignment due so I knew I had to find time with a 4 week placement to fit an assignment in also. So it was that balance as well and I was thinking how am I going to continue with this for the year? Everyone else is on reading week while here I am 9-4pm, while my kids are off, apart from me. I felt how am I going to do this for two years, where am I going to get that break? That's my working side but my sense of getting to this point, even though it a different feeling I feel relaxed because I got here but also know it is a growth so he's pouring the water over this love heart and the love heart represents my life and every aspect is still growing so no matter the struggles it is still going to continue as long as I nurture it.

JM: So that is quite strong in terms of transition isn't it? You need to keep adding something to it.

Ann: Yes, it's not finished, even though I've just sat in our lesson, someone made a toy car with a graduate cap on it and we said "ooh we are graduating in a year" and we were like, you know, and it bought a new set of emotions which I thought I'll think about that next time, I need to push that down.

JM: Do you compartmentalise things?

Ann: Yes I do, I have to it's the way my brain works. Everything I do has to be fitted in neatly. I don't take my work home and if I do I do it when my children are in bed, I don't do it in front of them.

Appendix 11: Extract from dyadic interview with Lea

July 2015

JM: So that leads me quite well onto the next question which is me asking you if there is anything that you miss or are nostalgic about from the previous campus?

Lea: Everything. It was just such a nice campus and I know it was old and they didn't want to update it but I felt more academic there. It felt more of an academic atmosphere, whereas here I feel it is very clinical and I can tell that is was designed with medical students in mind as well because it is all so clean cut and crisp. I sort of like the idea that [REDACTED] had a history and that lots of people had studied there.

JM: Although do you know that this area is very historical...but I think because there are no obvious physical signs of history, you don't sense it do you.

Lea: I feel like we are being watched more here. The rooms were closed off and you could see out of the windows but even the door had that glass that you couldn't really see into so you felt like you were in there together like it was your bubble while you were learning whereas now you see people walking past and you get distracted. Or when people are waiting outside you can see them looking in and you are hiding with your hands, it just doesn't feel as comfortable as last year.

JM: Do you think that the way you are feeling now about this transition to [REDACTED], because you were so attached to [REDACTED], you've actually forgotten that really, last September, when you came to [REDACTED] you were thinking, I wish I was back in that other place? Because sometimes when we've got fondness for something, we forget about all the negativity and it is only when we have another experience that we think we wish we were back there and we forget that it was probably quite bad there as well.

Lea: I think that is it because we developed so many memories of that year 'cos it was a time that we won't forget our first year at university.

Lea: I've been trying to use more humour this year than last year because I think it is because no one else is talking and I've been trying to break the ice a bit more with humour.

JM: In November you talked about how you thought people saw you in a different way. You said "People are not seeing me in the same way". I was interested about whether you felt you were back to your old self now? Or are you not that self anymore?

Lea: I think I've learnt that I don't have to be 100% always academic. I don't have to be "I'm going home. I'm doing uni work". I can still feel like I want to do the best I can possibly do but I am no longer worried about being defined by my work here at uni as I am by the person that I am. I know that the uni work will sort itself out, well the work that I put in and it doesn't matter if people see me or care or not, it doesn't matter what they see me as and I am actually less concerned with what people think about me than what I do myself now. That is something that has been an ongoing thing with me throughout my life I've always been more concerned with what other people's opinions of me rather than what I achieve and it is like I did great at GCSE's but I was more concerned with what my family thought about how I did than with my actual grades, whereas now I'm more concerned with my own achievements and how I feel about them.

Appendix 12: Extract from my journal

January 2014

I started a new job and I was excited and fearful at the same time. Had I made the right decision to leave a place that I was so settled, was it a risk too far? Did I miss the alarm bells? I was experienced, confident in myself though and I thought it felt right but after a few weeks, days probably, the excitement subsided and I started to think I had chosen the wrong hand. Something wasn't right.

I describe my feelings as 'worksickness'.

'Worksickness' makes you sick but has the capacity to make you stronger once you have experienced it.

This is 'worksickness':

I'm Wistful,

Sad,

A stranger.

I feel Butterflies,

Panic,

Lost,

Unfamiliar.

Nervous

Anxious

Sick.

Stomach ache

Dreading Monday.

Appendix 13: Most recent email communication with participants regarding the use of data

Joanne McNulty

Sent Items

16 June 2016 21:58

Hello [REDACTED], I've attached the full transcript of all the times we met to talk about transition.

I will not be using it in this complete format for my thesis. I am just taking snippets, like a sentence or even just a few words and added them in alongside my snippets and snippets from the others. If you make reference to '[REDACTED]' or to '[REDACTED]' or '[REDACTED]' or [REDACTED] these are not used.

Please let me know if you are happy for me to use the data and if there is anything that you would not want me to use please let me know also and I will make sure I do not include it - just highlight it on the attached and send it back. Your images are also included at the end.

Thank you very much,
Jo

Email response from Ann

<[REDACTED]@stu.mmu.ac.uk>

To:

Joanne McNulty

Inbox

06 July 2016 22:21

Hi Jo

I am really sorry I thought I had replied to this email. I was just thinking about it and checked and realised I hadn't. I am happy for you to use all the information you have collected on me.

It was strange reading back through the transcript. I am looking forward to reading your finished piece.

Hope all is well.

[REDACTED]

Email response from Ayla

██████████@stu.mmu.ac.uk

To:

Joanne McNulty
Inbox

06 August 2016 14:20

Hi Jo,

Hope you are well, I have read the full transcript. I must say I have enjoyed reading it and have relived all three years of my university life through it. I have added the additional information you asked for at the bottom of this document. I enjoyed being a participant in your this project, because this transcript is a memory of uni life for me now. Also I want you to use the name 'Ayla', I really like this name. If you want any more information then please do let me know.

Best wishes for your PhD

██████████

Email response from Lea

██████████@stu.mmu.ac.uk

To:

Joanne McNulty
Inbox

21 June 2016 14:57

Hi Jo,

That has brought back a lot of memories. I am happy for you to use any of what is transcribed for your thesis.

Kind Regards,

██████████

Email response from Minnie

██████████@hotmail.com

To:

Joanne McNulty

Inbox

29 July 2016 12:48

Hi Jo,

sorry I didn't get back to your last email, forgot to reply.

Yes of course, that's fine by me.

hope to see you soon

take care

██████████