

Exploring the university to career transitions of UK music postgraduate students

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experience of studying taught music master's degrees by observing both student and higher education perspectives. Little is currently known about the career transitions of taught postgraduate students, as until recently research has tended to focus upon undergraduates and research postgraduates. Additionally, much of the research on musicians' career transitions has considered music education and performance students. The current thesis focuses upon musicology and music psychology degrees which were non-vocational and lacked compulsory music-making course content.

A two stage study was conducted. Stage one involved longitudinal interviews with sixteen student participants who were all enrolled at three English institutions at the beginning of the study. Participants took part in four semi-structured interviews at six month intervals. The aim of these interviews was to observe the students' experiences during and after their master's study. Alongside this, stage two aimed to explore the higher education perspective by interviewing course tutors and careers advisors attached to each of the students' courses. Qualitative analytical methods were used and a social psychology perspective was taken when considering the student experience. This approach highlights the reciprocal interaction between the self and the social environment.

The career transition involved a period of personal and vocational development during which individuals were transformed through learning. Participants were motivated to realise a greater sense of personal fulfilment by pursuing their interests and achieving personal goals. The participants' confidence in their professional practice increased and they developed greater self-awareness which was beneficial when deciding upon career plans. However, students' coping methods and the extent of their exploration impacted upon their experiences of studying and the career transition. The results highlight the need for clear pre-enrolment information and flexible course structures in order to support students' developing professional identities.

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1 : Introduction

1.1 Overview

In order to ensure institutions are able to provide the most effective support to prepare their students for working life, it is important that the needs and experiences of individuals enrolled on their courses are understood. Little is currently known about the career transitions of taught postgraduate students, as until recently research has tended to focus upon undergraduates and research postgraduates. Further investigation is needed into students' transitions from taught master's degrees, in particular those studying within the arts and humanities who often continue into PhD study (Wakeling & Hampden-Thompson, 2013). The current thesis begins to address this gap in the literature by focusing upon music students enrolled on taught postgraduate degrees. The thesis aims to explore students' individual experiences during their master's degree and the year following graduation. Master's study involves a period of personal development, during which time individuals' identities and career plans develop as they learn new knowledge and skills. The ways in which personal and social factors influence students' professional identity development is explored throughout this thesis.

1.2 Theoretical underpinnings

A social psychology theoretical framework has been taken which highlights motivations as emanating from the interactive relationship between the social environment and the individual's personal and psychological attributes. This approach suggests that an individual's experiences during the career transition will be influenced by the environment in which they find themselves, and their reactions to and perceptions of this environment. The thesis therefore explores the dynamic interaction between the self and the social environment, highlighting the intertwining nature of these factors and the development of the professional identity across life spheres.

1.3 Methodological approach

Career decisions and transitions are not events, but rather processes that take place over a period of time (Hodkinson, 2008), therefore a longitudinal approach was taken in order to capture this process. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with final year master's students at six-monthly intervals. These interviews took place during the year (or final year) of the participants' master's degrees, and into the year following their completion

of the course. Additionally, single interviews were conducted with course tutors and careers advisors connected to each of the participants' master's degrees. All the interviews were semi-structured to enable an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and opinions. Similar methods have been used previously to effectively capture students' career transitions into, and out of, higher education.

1.4 Analytical approach

Two different approaches were taken to analyse the interviews. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used for the student interviews, which aims to explore participants' experiences and how they are making sense of their own world. This method of analysis was chosen in order to fit with the study's aim to explore the students' personal experiences. Thematic analysis was conducted on the staff interviews in order to focus less upon their experiences, and more upon their descriptions of the courses and outcomes. In this sense, thematic analysis allowed more freedom to concentrate more generally upon the transcripts without focusing upon the phenomenological perspective.

1.5 Reflexivity

My own experiences as a music master's student within one of the focus institutions inspired my choice of the current thesis topic. The analytical process aided my attempt to consider the students' experiences without bias. Additionally, the themes were externally verified. However, my experiences are likely to have provided me with additional insight into the potential for the master's degrees to become a transformational experience, rather than focusing upon more tangible outcomes.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter two presents a literature review of work related to the current topic. Due to the lack of research on the specific area of the current thesis I have included broader literature which helps provide an insight into transitional experiences and identity development over the life-span. The chapter begins by discussing the educational context of the study, and exploring the ways in which music students may be unique in their experiences. A number of relevant theories of motivation are then presented, with each being discussed in terms of how they may relate to research on higher education. Following this, identity and self-concept are

defined and discussed in order to clarify the ways in which each will be used within the current thesis. Literature on career transitions is considered, and the potential implications of the methodological approaches explored. Finally, literature relating to the working life of musicians is discussed in order to provide a context for the challenges and working patterns of musical careers.

Chapter three presents the method used within the current thesis. The methodological approaches taken in past research are first explored in order to evaluate the effectiveness of each method in light of the current aims. The theoretical underpinnings of the current qualitative and longitudinal approaches are discussed in order to highlight their benefit and potential effectiveness for the current study. Following this, a detailed description of the current method is presented, including the participants, materials, procedure and analysis.

Chapter four begins to discuss the findings of the current study. It considers the motivations of the participants for entering and persevering with master's study. The chapter provides a background and context for the remaining results chapters, as in order to understand the students' current experiences and career plans it was felt to be vital that their motivations were first recognised and understood.

Chapter five focuses specifically upon social factors and their role during the career transition. The chapter highlights the intertwining nature of personal and social factors, including the ways in which others validated or negated participants' behaviour and developing identities. The ways in which social factors influenced career decisions and motivations during the career transition are highlighted. The chapter also discusses the changing relationships of the non-mature students who attempted to move away from having to rely upon their parents, to become more independent and develop long-term romantic relationships.

Chapter six suggests that the master's degree enabled the individuals to achieve their motivations of gaining greater self-fulfilment by providing a space in which to develop their knowledge, skills, self-awareness and follow their interests. In this sense the master's degree enabled the participants to develop more confident professional identities and explore their fit within different career paths. For many, the master's degree provided an opportunity to challenge themselves and gain a sense of achievement.

Chapter seven explores the vocational development of the participants. Increased knowledge and confidence enabled those who were already working as teachers to develop

new approaches to their professional practice, and led to them being perceived as more able by others. The career transition is explored in terms of the transition out of master's study, the students' ability to recognise the course outcomes, and their engagement with employability support. Following this the unpredictable nature of the career transition is explored. Practical experiences are discussed in terms of their impact on the students' self-awareness and developing identities.

Chapter eight is the first of two discussion chapters and focuses upon the nature of the career transition for the students. The career transition is highlighted as being unpredictable due to the transformatory nature of the master's degree, and the external factors which were influential during the period. In order to clarify this, a diagram and two case studies are presented. The case studies clarify the unpredictable nature of the career transition, the differences between those who have entered adulthood and those who are yet to do so, and the interaction between social and personal factors. Chapter nine considers the influence of the institution upon the master's students' experiences and raises a number of factors to be considered by course designers. Finally, chapter ten evaluates the research, suggests implications of the study, and presents areas for future research.

2 : Literature Review

2.1 Context

In order to contextualise the study, this chapter will consider the following:

- An overview of the current situation of higher education within England
- The case of music
- Theories of motivation
- Identity and self-concept
- Social factors
- The career transition
- Working life for musicians

This chapter does not consider children's musical or educational development as this is discussed in detail elsewhere (e.g. Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Hallam, 2001; McPherson, 2006, 2009; Sloboda & Howe, 1991; Yoon, 1997), but rather focuses upon research relating to higher education and working life.

2.1.1 The current educational context in 2015

In English institutions, students tend to specialise within subjects at an early stage and upon entering higher education will be focused upon one or two subject areas, which they will then continue to study for the duration of their undergraduate degree (Wakeling & Hampden-Thompson, 2013). Postgraduate degrees tend to increase specialisation further, aiming to increase the students' knowledge of a particular discipline (Spittle, 2012). The early specialisation enables students to develop high levels of knowledge in a narrow field, but can be challenging for students facing uncertainty regarding the subject they wish to pursue. This early specialisation differs from the approaches of many other countries, even within the United Kingdom. For example, Scotland differs from England by allowing students more flexibility within their studies to choose a range of subjects and to enter higher education at seventeen years old (The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). Similarly, American undergraduates tend to have the opportunity to try general education classes for one to two years before settling upon a major, allowing them a great deal of flexibility (Arnett, 2000). Perhaps because of this greater flexibility, degrees in America are generally longer (with undergraduate degrees tending to last four years and master's degree two years) and include a wider range of courses in different subject areas than their English

equivalents (where undergraduate degrees tend to last three years and master's degrees one year) ('U.S. Higher Education System', n.d.).

The current study began during the year 2012, which was characterised by events which would impact upon higher education including: alterations to rules surrounding student immigration; rising costs of undergraduate tuition fees; and a global sense of economic uncertainty (Universities UK, 2013). Some felt that changes to student visa rules and news coverage of London Metropolitan University's visa license being revoked might result in the United Kingdom appearing unwelcoming to international students (HEFCE, 2013a). Alongside the potential impact these events may have upon international students, it was feared that rising undergraduate tuition fees threatened the number of home students continuing to pursue postgraduate study due to higher levels of debt being seen as unattractive. Since 2012, institutions within England have been able to charge up to £9,000 annually in undergraduate students' tuition fees, subject to meeting certain conditions (Universities UK, 2013). In 2013 HEFCE reported the average tuition fees for taught master's degrees to be £6,500, which meant they were still lower than undergraduate fees despite rising faster than inflation (HEFCE, 2013b). Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson (2013) found no direct evidence that higher undergraduate tuition fees impacted upon take-up of postgraduate study but the full extent of the fee increase is unlikely to be seen until 2015/2016.

Postgraduate students in the UK are currently required to pay their tuition fees in advance and there is a lack of consistent funding support (Universities UK, 2013). HEFCE reported that research councils funded around 1% of all taught master's degrees during 2013-2014 (Soilemetzidis, Bennett, & Leman, 2014). Research councils are not therefore a stable source of funding for taught postgraduates. In fact, the only mainstream funding for taught postgraduate students currently is the Postgraduate Career Development Loan which provides up to £10,000 to students enrolled on degrees designed to enhance their 'job skills and career prospects'¹ (Universities UK, 2013, p. 31). Those studying non-vocational master's degrees (of the kind observed within the current thesis) are unable to obtain these loans, which have also been criticised for their commercial (or even higher) interest rates (Spittle,

¹ Although the Conservative government have announced their intention to introduce a loan system for taught masters students under the age of 30 years old (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2015)

2012). Most postgraduate students are therefore self-funded (HEFCE, 2013a) which creates a barrier for those wishing to study who are unable to afford the tuition fees.

Postgraduate students are generally older than undergraduate students (most will start at the age of 21 or above) and therefore may face different financial, personal and academic pressures (HEFCE, 2013a). Postgraduate courses also differ in tending to attract higher numbers of mature and part-time students than at undergraduate level (Smith, 2010). Mature students are often overlooked in research on graduates, which tends to focus on those who study full-time and are aged 21 to 22 years old. Mature students are likely to differ in their experiences and perspectives on higher education due to being at a later stage of life and being more likely to have further career experiences which affect their expectations for studying (Yorke, 2006). Mature students are highlighted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England as a core widening participation group, which means that institutions are now required to provide the Office for Fair Access with actions and evaluations for provision for this group of learners (Butcher, 2015). In order to do so it is important that institutions first understand the needs of their mature students.

According to Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson (2013), nearly half of all postgraduate students study part-time (45%)². Those doing so are believed to be at a greater risk of dropping out from academic courses due to the demands of balancing their studies alongside other, more personal, responsibilities (Westry, 2010). However, part-time students are also more likely to obtain employment after graduating than their full-time colleagues (Artess, Ball, & Mok, 2008), perhaps due to gaining valuable work experience alongside their degrees (Smith, 2010). As the first phase of £9,000 fee payers graduate in 2015, understanding students' needs and perspectives is more important than ever before (Leman, Turner, & Bennett, 2013). Increasing our understanding of postgraduates' experiences will enable us to better understand how to face and overcome the challenges of rising tuition fees and changing visa rules most effectively whilst ensuring the support provided to students is beneficial. The experiences of music master's students are presented as a case study within the current thesis.

² Although the overall number of part-time higher education students within the UK has dropped from 36% in 2007/8 to 28% in 2012/2013 (Butcher, 2015)

2.1.2 *The case of music*

The experiences of music students may differ from those in other subject areas for a number of reasons:

High course entry requirements

Students need high levels of musical skill in order to gain entry onto higher education music courses (Dibben, 2006). These skills will have been developed through large numbers of hours spent practising and being involved with music (Bologna Working Group, 2009). For most other subjects, it is not necessary to have studied to the extent musicians do *before* entering university. Such immersion in the subject is likely to result in a close connection between their self-concept and music (Roberts, 1990). Other degrees may similarly require high levels of skill in order to fulfil entrance requirements, however, music tends to require both formal theoretical training (for the music theory exams) and musical skill (for the performance exams). Therefore, whilst other arts degrees may have similar entrance requirements, the extent to which formal theoretical training is required may differ.

Lack of boundaries between course requirements and leisure activities

Music students tend to be involved in music both within and outside of their formal studies, in the form of ensembles and groups. In this sense, music students often identify with, and commit to, music in a manner which lacks the usual boundaries found between course and leisure activities (Bologna Working Group, 2009). Pitts (2005) questions whether engagement in music can be classed as a leisure pursuit at all due to many music students expressing a compulsion to participate in it. Such patterns of musical participation can result in high levels of engagement and interaction with others within a musical setting, and prevent involvement in other activities (Dibben, 2006). Such blurred boundaries between leisure and curriculum activities have similarly been found within sport (Wright, MacDonald, & Groom, 2003), and are likely to be found more generally across the arts, especially due to the potential for communities to grow from such involvement (Aspin, 2000).

The musical personality

Music students are known to have personality characteristics which make them more prone to certain emotional and psychological problems (including being particularly sensitive to criticism) than students in other subjects may be (Atlas, Taggart, & Goodell, 2004). The tendency for sensitivity to criticism may help music students to develop strong musical self-

concepts. As music students tend to be engaged in musical activities both inside and outside of formal class time, music becomes more than just something they do, it becomes a part of who they are and who they perceive themselves to be (Roberts, 1990). Therefore criticism and negative feedback may challenge an individual's self-concept and have a significant emotional impact (Burland, 2005; Orzel, 2010).

Music students achieve significantly higher scores in measures of anxiety and depression than students on medicine (Erol, Nuran, & Nazan, 2012) psychology and sports degrees, whilst identifying more strongly with their subject (Spahn, Strukely, & Lehmann, 2004). Music students tend towards being competitive, having high levels of anxiety and high self-standards (Atlas et al., 2004). Whilst such traits may be potentially challenging, they are also likely to be beneficial for musicians in driving the behaviour required in order to excel. In fact some research has suggested that anxiety may be beneficial for musicians and facilitate higher levels of performance (Kemp, 1996). In order to succeed within music certain psychological traits are needed, including dedication, planning and commitment (MacNamara, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). Such characteristics are also likely to be beneficial within other subject areas which require persistence such as sport (Beltman, 2005). From a psychological perspective it is thought that music performance and sports performance are similar (MacNamara et al., 2006) and both require individuals to dedicate time to developing their skills both inside and outside of formal tuition time.

Transitions into careers

Non-vocational music courses (of the type observed within the current thesis) may cause particular difficulty in relation to students' career transitions (Dibben, 2006). These difficulties are likely to be found within a number of different degree programmes which are not targeted at a particular career path, as seen in research on political science students' transitions into working life (Dahlgren, Hult, Dahlgren, Segerstad, & Johansson, 2006), and physics undergraduates' experiences (Bennett, Roberts, & Creagh, 2016). Within such non-vocational degrees there is a broader and more generic sense of knowledge and skills (Nyström, Dahlgren, & Dahlgren, 2008). Due to the lack of a clear career path the students' own self-awareness and understanding of the potential job market are likely to be increasingly important as they must be able to integrate knowledge from one situation to another (Freer & Bennett, 2012).

Musical careers

Music careers often involve a number of different jobs (portfolio careers), and may not always be stable (Burland, 2005). Due to the uncertain and unpredictable nature of portfolio careers, musicians need to be versatile and may not be able to specialise (Creech et al., 2008) or make an income in their preferred manner. General employment trends are moving away from being more stable in the form of a job for life, to requiring individuals to adapt and adjust to different roles throughout their working life (Bennett & Freer, 2012). Careers in music and the arts could therefore be considered examples of new types of working seen across a number of sectors (Bennett, 2013). However, music and arts careers often involve individuals working within a number of different roles at once and may be seen as protean careers: a form of self-managed career whereby individuals are required to constantly adapt to different opportunities and to develop new skills (Bennett, 2009). Such working patterns can create challenges in terms of developing authentic professional identities. Musicians and artists may need to develop subjective professional identities as many work additional jobs in order to make a living and enable them to pursue their art (Taylor & Littleton, 2008) or music (Mills, 2004). Additionally musical careers may require individuals to adapt into new social situations and work environments in order to be successful (Gee, 2010). Such working patterns therefore have wide-reaching implications requiring individuals to be confident in negotiating different situations.

Music students, therefore, present a group which warrants further investigation in order to explore the nuances of their experiences during master's study and career transitions. Before discussing the previous literature on students' experiences and career transitions the following section discusses theories of motivation in order to clarify the theoretical standpoint taken within the current thesis.

2.2 Theories of motivation

Motivation is defined as a drive within a human being which stimulates them to act and behave in certain ways and may come from within the person, from the environment, or from their interaction with the environment (Bigge & Hunt, 1980). Motivation is often considered in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Extrinsic motivators are those external to an individual, such as financial reward or encouragement. Without these extrinsic motivators an individual may cease involvement in an activity unless they are intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivators are those which inspire an individual to act purely because of an internal interest in an activity (West, 2013). Intrinsic motivation tends to be linked to high levels of persistence and achievement (Schmidt, Zdzinski, & Ballard, 2006) and is thought to be necessary for success within education.

There are a number of theories concerning individual motivation which are relevant to the discussion surrounding career development and success within music and higher education:

- Achievement motivation theory;
- Self-efficacy;
- Attribution theory;
- Expectancy-value theory;
- Styles of Learning;
- Social cognitive theory;
- Interactive motivation theory.

Table 1 presents a brief summary of each of these theories. The theories are then discussed in more detail, including their relevance to the current study and their potential value when observing the motivations and career transitions of postgraduate students. When combining a number of theoretical perspectives, it is important to clarify the approach in order to avoid any misunderstandings, therefore this section concludes with a discussion of the social psychology approach taken within the current thesis.

Table 1: Theories of Motivation

Name of Theory	Key Points
Achievement Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals are motivated by 'the expectancy of finding satisfaction in mastering challenging and difficult performances' (Bigge & Hunt, 1980, p. 96) and by avoiding failure and the associated negative effects (Busato, Prins, Elshout, & Hamaker, 2000)
Self-efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-efficacy is defined as context-specific evaluations of one's own ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977) revolving around an individual's judgements regarding their ability to succeed within a given task at a particular time³. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy set more challenging goals and show stronger commitment to achieving them (Bandura, 1993) Low levels of self-efficacy can be detrimental to performance, leading to individuals perceiving challenges as threats and diverting attention away from developing effective methods to cope (Bandura, 1982).
Attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals are motivated to understand the causes of events and retrospectively judge their own performance to understand the cause of their success or failure (Weiner, 1992) Individuals are more (or less) likely to repeat the behaviour which led to the successful (or unsuccessful) outcomes respectively (Weiner, 1985)
Expectancy-Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent to which individuals are motivated to act, and the ways in which they do so, will depend on their perceptions regarding the expectancy that behaviour will lead to hoped-for outcomes, and the value of such outcomes (Weiner, 1992) Motivation is produced through an interaction between three main components: Value, expectancy and affect (Hallam, 2006) Value refers to the individual's perceptions regarding the importance of the task in terms of their interest in it, the value of it, and the relevance of the task in terms of future goals (Hallam, 2006) Expectancy refers to the individual's self-efficacy regarding the task (Hallam, 2006) and the perceived likelihood of certain behaviours leading to certain outcomes (Wigfield, 1994) Affective components refer to emotions relating to the individual's performance on tasks, as they strive to maintain high levels of self-esteem (Hallam, 2006)

³ Self-esteem on the other hand refers to a more general evaluation of oneself and one's value (Bandura, 1986; Gecas & Mortimer, 1987). Individuals are motivated to enhance their self-esteem and maintain a positive self-view.

Name of Theory	Key Points
Styles of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals will be motivated to pursue different tasks depending on their learning styles (Busato et al., 2000) • Those with learning goals are motivated to achieve mastery in a task (Hallam, 2002) • Those with performance goals are motivated to prove themselves to others (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003) and gain positive feedback (Hallam, 2002)
Social cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour, the environment and the individual interact reciprocally bi-directionally (Bandura, 1989), and therefore an individual's decisions cannot be considered without first taking into consideration their behaviour and the environment in which the decisions have been made • Self and identity are socially embedded (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003)
Interactive motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation is produced through interaction between the individual and the environment in which they exist (Bigge & Hunt, 1980)

The theories of motivation presented in table 1 can be used to posit ways in which individuals may be motivated to pursue certain career paths. Most of the theories highlight ways in which the social environment influences motivation.

2.2.1 *Achievement motivation*

The theory of achievement motivation proposes that individuals are motivated by an intrinsic need for achievement (Atkinson & Birch, 1978). Motivation to succeed will be highest when an individual feels in control of their own actions (including the outcome of these actions), the task is challenging, and feedback is received quickly (Bigge & Hunt, 1980). Social factors are therefore important in enabling an individual to feel supported and able to achieve. A number of behaviours are associated with individuals trying to achieve success, as Burland (2005, p. 25) outlines:

- Intense, prolonged, repeated efforts;
- Focus;
- Determination to achieve and perform tasks as well as possible;
- Stimulation by the presence of others and the enjoyment of competition;

- Willpower⁴.

Willpower is vital if individuals are to maintain the prolonged effort required to succeed within higher education, whether this success involves playing an instrument or developing effective writing styles for postgraduate study. Willpower is more likely to be maintained if an individual can imagine a future goal, believes they are capable of achieving it and is able to plan and enact the behaviours needed in order to make the goal a reality (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003). The more realistic the goal is perceived to be and the more an individual values the future goal, the more likely they will be to maintain the willpower and motivation in order to successfully achieve the goal (Atkinson & Birch, 1978). In order to develop achievement motivation individuals need to engage in a number of behaviours, including setting realistic and concrete goals whilst recording their progress in moving towards these goals. A degree of self-reflection is required in order to understand one's progress towards future goals. Additionally, it is important that one's motivations relate to real-life events so that they are perceived to be relevant. Finally, feeling supported and part of a group is likely to positively impact upon an individual's motivation (Bigge & Hunt, 1980) (see 2.4, social factors below).

Within higher education, students' relationships with their tutors and peers are important in encouraging the development of achievement motivation. When individuals feel able to approach others for help, including their peers and tutors, this is likely to facilitate success (Alderman, 2013). In contrast, if an individual feels threatened by the presence of others they are more likely to adopt forms of behaviour which may be negative to performance including reducing levels of effort in order to prevent themselves from being seen as inadequate in comparison (Robins & Pals, 2002).

2.2.2 The impact of expectations

The theories of self-efficacy, attribution and expectancy-value all propose different ways in which an individual's expectations regarding their own abilities will impact upon their motivation and behaviour. Self-efficacy beliefs influence how individuals 'feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave' (Bandura, 1993, p. 118) as well as determining the level of effort and perseverance put into a task (Bandura, 1982), as people tend to avoid situations in

⁴ Willpower is everyday language for 'the concept of effortful control in self-regulation' (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004, p. 99)

which they believe they are unable to cope (Bandura, 1977). According to the theory of self-efficacy, it can be assumed that those who are motivated to pursue postgraduate degrees will have high levels of academic self-efficacy before enrolling on the course. The higher an individual's perceived self-efficacy, the larger the number of career options they will feel able to seriously consider, and vice versa (Betz & Hackett, 1981). In turn, those with low levels of self-efficacy may avoid making career decisions or committing to career paths (Nauta & Kahn, 2007). Individuals make judgements about their own abilities and self-efficacy through four sources:

1. Their own accomplishments
2. Their own affective and physiological states
3. Modelling others and learning vicariously
4. Verbal persuasion and encouragement from others (Betz & Hackett, 2006)

As points 3 and 4 suggest, social factors play an important role in determining an individual's level of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy requires a sense of agency as an individual must feel able to produce the outcomes needed to be successful within the task (Pajares, 1996). Individuals can therefore be motivated to experience self-efficacy as they strive to feel autonomous (Gecas & Mortimer, 1987).

Attribution theory similarly highlights the need for individuals to feel a sense of control over their environment. Those who feel in control are often better able to cope with events (Burland, 2005), more likely to have higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Johnson & Johnson, 1985) and more likely to approach challenges (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Weiner (1979) states that an individual's level of motivation will be influenced by three main components: causality, stability and control. Causality refers to whether an individual believes the cause of an outcome to be internal or external. An internal cause would relate to factors such as effort expended or innate ability, whereas external causes relate to social and environmental factors.

Related to causality is the extent to which an individual feels a sense of control over the outcome and their ability to achieve it. Individuals will be less likely to repeat behaviour if they feel a lack of control over the outcomes of those actions. When an individual feels a greater sense of control over an outcome they will be more likely to act accordingly. The perceived stability of an outcome will also impact upon an individual's motivation, as a more stable outcome will be more motivating than an unstable outcome. If an outcome is

perceived to be unstable and likely to change, the outcome itself may not be expected to repeat itself, and an individual may not be motivated to repeat their behaviour due to this uncertainty (Weiner, 1985). Weiner (1979) states that success and failure are most commonly attributed to effort or ability. Effort is an internal-unstable attribute (behaviour which may not remain stable over time). Students who attribute success to effort are more likely to increase effort following failure (Weiner, 1979), maintaining high levels of persistence (O'Neill, 2002). This may be due to a higher perceived sense of agency, whereby an individual feels in control of producing an action or behaviour (Gallagher, 2000, p. 15). Ability is an internal-stable attribute (behaviour which cannot be changed). When an individual attributes failure to low ability they are displaying a lack of perceived control leading to uncertainty regarding the attainability of future success (Weiner, 1979). An individual's perceptions regarding their control over a situation will affect their coping strategies, so that:

stressful events perceived as controllable lead to direct attempts to eliminate or alter the stressful situation (i.e. problem-focused coping) while events perceived as uncontrollable lead to attempts to influence how one reacts to the stressful situation (i.e. emotion-focused coping) (David & Suls, 1999, p. 266).

A lack of perceived control leads to learned helplessness. Helpless patterns of behaviour can result in decreased motivation and depression (Weiner, 1979). Attribution theory is partly based upon expectancy-value theory (Wigfield, 1994), which posits that:

$$\textit{Motivation} = \textit{expectancy} \times \textit{value}$$

Expectancy-value theory suggests that an individual's motivation will be greatest when they have high levels of self-efficacy and moderate uncertainty about the outcome, so that they feel challenged but competent to succeed (Hallam, 2006). Both attribution and expectancy-value theory focus less upon the interaction between social factors and the individual, and more upon the individual's perceptions of their control over the environment. Linking the theories of self-efficacy, attribution and expectancy-value together suggests that an individual's motivation is influenced by their expectancy of success within a task and the level of control they feel to be able to enact the behaviour required to produce the desired outcomes. Individuals within higher education who lack a sense of control or expectations to succeed may develop ineffective learning styles.

2.2.3 *Learning styles*

Learning can be defined as 'permanent or semi-permanent changes in how individuals think and act' (Billett, 2004, p. 111). Learning incorporates beliefs, dispositions and world views, therefore impacting upon the whole person (Scott et al., 2013). The two predominant styles of learning found within achievement situations, such as higher education, are learning goals and performance goals. Individuals with learning goals are intrinsically motivated (Marsh, Craven, Hinkley, & Debus, 2003), and will persevere for longer to learn and master a task, seeing difficulties as challenges rather than threats (Komarraju, Karau, & Schmeck, 2009). Those with performance goals tend to be more extrinsically motivated, believing that ability is a relatively fixed attribute over which they have little control (Marsh et al., 2003). In turn, difficulties will be perceived as threats to their ability to prove themselves (Komarraju et al., 2009) and they will only work as hard as they need to in order to display dominance in a task. A combination of performance and learning goals can have a positive impact on levels of motivation, interest and achievement (Komarraju et al., 2009). In higher education, individuals need intrinsic motivation in order to persevere. However, intrinsic motivation by itself may lead to individuals following their own interests but never completing the course assignments, therefore students will also need to hold performance goals in terms of being motivated to complete their work in time for assignment deadlines. It is clear to see how those with performance goals are motivated by social factors as they compare themselves to others and attempt to prove their own dominance.

2.2.4 *Interactive motivation*

Social cognitive theory focuses more on the *interaction* between the environment and the individual, suggesting that an individual's behaviour must be observed within the environment in which it occurs. The theory states that the three components of person, behaviour and environment influence motivation and behaviour. The person component reflects how an individual's feelings and thoughts will directly affect their behaviour, and vice versa. Additionally, an individual's behaviour will impact upon the environment, and in turn be impacted upon and altered by the environment itself. The third interactive relationship is between the environment and the person. Others within the environment will react in certain ways to the individual depending upon the individual's status and characteristics. In observing the reaction of the environment to one's self, an individual's self-conceptions can be influenced further, potentially altering their self-concept and the way they present themselves to the environment (Bandura, 1989).

The influence of each of these three components will vary depending upon the individual and their identity and values; the circumstances in which an individual finds themselves; and the activities in which the individual is engaged (Bandura, 1986). Bandura highlights the ways in which individuals exercise personal agency by emphasising the bi-directional relationship between an individual, their behaviour and the environment (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). The theory views the individual as a perceiver of information, as they learn about themselves through their interaction with their social environment (O'Neill, 2002). Three general families of motivational constructs have been classified within social cognitive theory. The first family relates to the an individual's perceptions of their ability to complete a particular task (self-efficacy), the second family involves the reasons for engaging in the task, and the third refers to strategies and methods for completing the task (Miltiadou & Savenye, 2003). Self-efficacy in particular has been highlighted as impacting upon students' performance in education (Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010), and strategies towards learning (van Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2011; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010; Wang & Wu, 2008). Educational programmes can be developed in order to successfully enhance students' self-efficacy, especially when they are designed with social cognitive theory in mind (van Dinther et al., 2011). Linking to the theories above, social cognitive theory posits that an individual's actions are a result of their beliefs regarding their own abilities alongside their beliefs about the outcomes of possible actions (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, interests will develop in areas in which individuals feel efficacious and imagine positive outcomes (Lent et al., 1994). People will choose goals and pursue goals through self-regulation of behaviour (Maddux & Gosselin, 2003) as they strive to gain a sense of personal satisfaction, pride and self-worth (Bandura, 2001) which is best achieved through the attainment of challenging goals (Lent et al., 1994). Master's students are therefore likely to have high levels of self-efficacy in their ability to succeed within education, whilst studying a degree which is designed to be more challenging than previous levels of study. The theory suggests that subject choice is likely to be within an area in which the individual feels somewhat confident and able. Social cognitive theory has enabled researchers to capture the ways in which individuals makes sense of their world and behave through considering the ways in which people make meaning for themselves (Dweck, 2000). The theory clearly highlights the interactive relationship between the intrinsic factors of person and behaviour, and the extrinsic factor of the environment, and in this sense links to the interactive perspective on motivation taken within the current thesis.

2.2.5 *Social psychology perspective*

Within the current study a social psychology perspective has been taken which views self (intrinsic factors) and social factors (extrinsic factors) as reciprocally interacting with each other (Stets & Burke, 2003) and impacting upon an individual's sense of self, behaviour and motivations. The theoretical standpoint posits that the social context influences individuals' motivations and career choices by both shaping the experiences and interests of an individual, and providing the context (including the opportunities and obstacles) within which plans are made and implemented (Lent et al., 1994).

The exact impact of the social factors will depend upon the individual's appraisals and perceptions of their environment (Lent et al., 1994). Individuals, therefore, have a sense of agency in that they are not only impacted upon *by* their social environments, but are also *producers* of the social systems in which they exist:

Social structures are created by human activity, and sociocultural practices, and in turn, impose constraints and provide enabling resources and opportunity structures for personal development and functioning (Bandura, 2001, p. 15)

Motivations are therefore formed through a reciprocal interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors which can be combined and integrated in numerous ways (de Oliveira Pires, 2009) and may not always act simultaneously or equally (Bandura, 1989). Interaction between motivators can be complex and changing (Hallam, 2002), influenced by coping mechanisms, external demands and long-term goals (Hallam, 2006). The extent to which developmental goals (such as having children) are attainable will change during the life course, impacting upon career decisions and motivations (Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz, 2010). In this sense, motivations change over time and are dependent upon an individual's perceptions of, and reactions to, events and situations. Identity, career decisions and experiences are therefore formed through an interactive process in which individuals both impact upon, and react to, their social environment. The interaction is flexible and complex, with each component existing in relation to, and developing through, the other. It is therefore important that the individual and social factors, are discussed as they relate to motivation. For ease of discussion the individual and social factors are explored separately, however, as stated above both are actually interdependent and are not in reality divided in this manner.

Self-concept, identity and personality are discussed below as individual intrinsic factors which impact upon career choices and motivations. Career decisions involve a process of individuals attempting to find a path which suits their self-concept and needs. The following section briefly discusses theories of the self-concept as they relate to motivational career transitions.

2.3 *Self-concept and Identity*

A number of definitions regarding self-concept and identity exist within different academic disciplines (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012) and the terms are often used interchangeably (Burland, 2005). Within this thesis, the self-concept is defined as the overall image, meaning and understanding an individual has of themselves (Stets & Burke, 2003). A self-concept consists of ideas of who one is, was and will become (Oyserman et al., 2012) and is 'based on how others act toward us, our wishes and desires, and our evaluations of ourselves' (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 5). Social, environmental and internal (psychological and physiological) aspects combine to influence an individual's sense of self, motivations and behaviour. Therefore, an individual's self-concept cannot be understood unless their frames of reference are observed (Marsh & Hau, 2003). The self-concept 'has motivational consequences, providing the incentives, standards, plans, rules and scripts for behaviour' (Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 299), as individuals choose different courses of action depending on how they perceive themselves (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Individuals are motivated to perceive and react to situations in ways which feel congruent with their self-concept (as such, motivations will be context-dependent) (Gecas, 1982). Therefore, if an individual feels a sense of disequilibrium between their internal thoughts, behaviour, knowledge and beliefs, they tend to be motivated to reduce this dissonance in some way and move towards equilibrium (Festinger, 1962). A coherent self-concept enables individuals to develop clear values, goals, and self-awareness (Hall & Chandler, 2005).

The self-concept contains a number of identities for 'each of the different positions or role relationships the person holds in society' (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 8). Identities are thought to be fluid, dynamic and complex (Juuti & Littleton, 2010) with only one being salient at any one point (Hogg, 2006) depending upon the situation or context in which the person finds themselves (Gee, 2010). A number of definitions of identity exist within different theoretical backgrounds, but in general the consensus has moved from an asocial point of view (which ignores the circumstances or situation in which an individual exists), to a

more social view (Hargreaves, Marshall, & North, 2003). The social psychology perspective taken within the current thesis acknowledges that identity is formed through reciprocal interaction between the social environment and the individual.

Identities can be either personal or social. Personal identities are idiosyncratic attributes or those shared with one other individual (Hogg, 2006). Social identities are gained from membership in a group with three or more people (e.g. a peer group or demographic group) and involve 'the knowledge that one is a member of a group, one's feelings about group membership and knowledge of the group's rank or status compared to other groups' (Oyserman et al., 2012, p. 74). Social identities involve recognition of shared attributes and perceptions of who an individual is (Gee, 2010). Social and personal identities therefore combine to form an individual's self-concept. Identities are continually developing, with individuals tending to face new events and new information which can lead to disequilibrium and a need to reconstruct their identity at each life stage or transitional period (Marcia, 2002). Therefore, identity development is considered here as an ongoing process which is formed through reciprocal interactions between the person and their environment (Lemme, 2005).

Identity is 'profoundly connected to future career paths and success as a musician' (Juuti, 2012, p. 65) as it guides one's beliefs and values (Burland, 2005), which in turn affect an individual's behaviour (Hallam, 2006). Work plays a large part in defining who we are and what we do (Blustein, 2013), whilst also providing a community in which an individual belongs (Bennett, 2009), structuring lives, and giving individuals a sense of purpose (Burland, 2005; Super, 1980). It is therefore important that an individual is able to find work which enables them to be true to themselves and maintain their integrity (Super, 1957). Work can help to satisfy core human needs for survival (through livelihood), social relationships and self-determination (Blustein, 2013; Super, 1957). Livelihood is the most basic need, relating to Maslow's basic physiological and safety needs, in which individuals need to be able to make a living in order to gain a sense of security and stability whilst being able to afford to survive (Maslow, 1943). Human relationships and self-determination both relate to the realisation and recognition of an ideal identity, as individuals strive to find work which they are suited to so that they can act out their ideal self, which will in turn be recognised by others (Crain, 2015).

Due to developing identities, values and circumstances, the fit of a career for an individual is likely to change over time. In order to find a suitable career and transition into

adulthood individuals tend to undergo a period of exploration. This period relates to what Erikson termed 'Psychosocial moratorium' (1995, p. 157) during which individuals experiment with different adult roles and professional identities in order to find one suited to their self-concept (Kroger, 2005). Erikson suggested that the majority of initial identity formation took place during adolescence. However, the transition into adulthood has been extended in the majority of post-industrial societies as individuals tend to prolong their time within education and delay making the enduring life commitments which tend to characterise adulthood such as career choices, marrying, starting families and buying homes (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). Arnett (2000) terms the modern period of extended exploration between adolescence and young adulthood 'emerging adulthood'. During emerging adulthood individuals develop and clarify their identities by exploring possibilities within work, ideologies and love in order to learn more about what they want and who they are. Arnett describes emerging adulthood as being the:

- '*Age of identity exploration*'
- '*Age of instability*'
- '*Most self-focused age of life*'
- '*Age of feeling in-between, in transition*'
- '*Age of possibilities*' (Arnett, 2006, p. 8 original emphasis)

Emerging adulthood is a distinct period between adolescence and adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2005) as individuals are no longer in adolescence, having developed some independence from their parents (with many moving away to start higher education or work), but do not yet feel like adults, or have the long-term commitments typical of adulthood (Arnett, 2006). The top criteria for feeling like an adult are thought to be: making independent decisions, taking responsibility for one's self and being financially independent, all of which relate to a sense of self-sufficiency (Arnett, 2000). In order to make enduring commitments which are likely to lead to such self-sufficiency it is important that individuals have developed a firm and stable self-concept (Schwartz et al., 2005), therefore effective career planning is related to a coherent self-concept (Blustein, Devenis, & Kidney, 1989).

Arnett suggests that many individuals view the age of 30 to be the deadline by which they hope to be married and settled down, as this still allows time to achieve other life goals

such as having children (Arnett, 2006). However, due to changes within organisations and technology careers are no longer set for life, but are often turbulent. This means that individuals are now often required to adapt to a series of roles, and are therefore likely to need to return to periods of exploration and adaptation throughout their lifespan (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Exploration involves the 'appraisal of internal attributes (e.g., values, personality characteristics, interests and abilities) and exploration of external options and constraints from relevant educational, vocational and relational contexts' (Flum & Blustein, 2000, p. 381). Exploration is both a personal and relational reflective process as individuals are likely to engage in social comparisons in order to evaluate themselves (Hall, 2004). Those who are open and willing to embrace an exploratory attitude are likely to learn and better adapt to social, environmental and personal factors (Flum & Blustein, 2000). In turn, adaptation is likely to lead to higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of stress (Fisher & Hood, 1987). Decisions and judgements which have been based on reflective and exploratory thinking are more likely to be 'valid and insightful' (Burnard, 2006, p. 7), therefore this process is important when developing professional identities and career plans. By engaging in a process of exploration individuals move towards a more coherent sense of self, and may clarify their own interests and motivations, in turn leading to better self-awareness, self-esteem and psychological well-being (Flum & Blustein, 2000). A more coherent self-concept enables individuals to develop hoped-for and feared possible selves which motivate their behaviour during emerging adulthood and other life transitions (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Possible selves represent an individual's hopes, fears and fantasies as they derive from:

[...] representations of the self in the past and they include representations of the self in the future. They are different and separable from the current or now selves, yet are intimately connected to them. (Markus, & Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

Possible selves are more developed than hopes and fears, as they include an 'experience of what it would be like to be in this state' (Erikson, 2007, p. 349). As with identities, an individual may hold a number of possible selves (Burland & Magee, 2014), some of which may be more realistic or likely than others, all of which are derived from the individual's own cultural, social and historical context (Markus, & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves motivate individuals in two ways:

- By providing an individual with a clear goal to strive towards (or against)

- By stimulating an individual to undertake the behaviour and actions needed in order to successfully obtain that goal (Leondari, Syngollitou, & Kiosseoglou, 1998).

Individuals with clear career goals may be more motivated to persevere with current tasks which are perceived as being instrumental to future success (Hamman et al., 2013).

However, goals alone are not enough, as individuals need to develop effective coping mechanisms in order to persevere with the behaviour needed to succeed and achieve the goal.

Coping is defined as 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person' (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 20). Individuals' coping methods affect how they evaluate and react to a situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Two main types of coping exist, with helpless coping methods tending to be less effective than proactive coping methods. Helpless coping methods involve individuals feeling a lack of control over an outcome, for example believing they will fail a test because they lack the ability to succeed (Weiner, 1979). Individuals may in turn experience negative emotions and reduce the effort they put into tasks so as to not reveal low ability levels (Robins & Pals, 2002). By reducing their level of effort they avoid the risk of working hard and still failing. Individuals who are motivated by extrinsic factors and have high anxiety levels may be likely to develop helpless coping methods due to negative emotions restricting their ability to choose effective coping strategies (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005) and a tendency to perceive stressful situations as threats rather than challenges (David & Suls, 1999). Conversely, those who are intrinsically motivated and concerned with learning and mastering new skills may be more likely to develop proactive coping methods (Hallam, 2002). Those with proactive patterns of behaviour are more likely to persist within a task, even following failure (O'Neill, 2002). Social factors impact upon an individual's coping mechanisms (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005) as attempts to cope with stress may be undertaken with the support of others. Individuals may directly seek advice or vicariously learn about effective ways to cope within situations (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). Individuals who perceive a lack of social support may struggle to motivate themselves and find effective coping mechanisms (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005).

2.3.1 Personality

An individual's approach to social situations and their identity is in part based upon their personality, which relates to certain stable attributes and traits (O'Neill, 2002, p. 84). Traits are patterns of behaviour, thoughts or feelings that remain consistent within an individual and distinguish persons from one another (Johnson, 1997). Personality traits impact upon the way individuals interact with their surroundings, including the meaning they take from the environment (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Individuals will therefore react in a certain way within similar situations and contexts (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Personality traits influence the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of the individual, therefore impacting upon the type of person an individual perceives themselves to be. Arguments surround the number and type of prime traits (Bandura, 1986), but studies have tended to concur on a number of factors relevant to the current study:

- High levels of impulse control, including traits such as delaying gratification, prioritising tasks, following rules and thinking before acting are thought to link to academic success (John et al., 2008).
- High levels of curiosity and an openness to new experiences⁵ may lead individuals to spend longer in (John et al., 2008), and be more likely to succeed within (O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007), education.
- High levels of openness are thought to be particularly important for success within artistic jobs (John et al., 2008).
- Individuals with high levels of openness may be more likely to capitalize upon opportunities which could lead to a change in career goals, therefore allowing greater exploration of possibilities (Hirschi, 2010).
- High levels of stress and anxiety have been found to negatively correlate with both academic achievement (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003) and job satisfaction (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999).

An individual's personality provides a stable set of traits through which they view and react to the world and their surrounding social environment. Social factors produce 'instigating

⁵ Openness relates to an individual's level of originality and non-conformity, and has been associated with creativity (Barrick, Mount, & Gupta, 2003).

and inhibitory forces that influence the arousal of an individual's tendencies to engage or not to engage in certain activities' (Atkinson & Birch, 1978, p. 126).

2.4 Social Factors

A large body of research considers the impact of social factors upon individuals' self-concepts, self-efficacy, identities and possible selves. The following section provides a brief overview of the literature and considers the role of others in terms of providing:

- Feedback, support and encouragement
- A point of comparison
- A community.

During periods of transition individuals attempt to develop an identity which is appropriate to the new situation in which they find themselves. Others impact upon an individual's sense of self through 'validating (or failing to endorse) new behaviours and by providing feedback about how to improve' (Ibarra, 1999, p. 781). Often what is deemed to be an appropriate outcome of a life transition is influenced by societal expectations and pressures (Heckhausen et al., 2010) and it can be more difficult to develop and reconstruct identities as one gets older due to the pressure from others to remain consistent (Marcia, 2002). External verbal persuasion from others can impact upon an individual's perceptions of their own abilities and aid self-esteem by encouraging people to believe that they are able to overcome obstacles and succeed (Bandura, 1977). Individuals who are encouraged to succeed within a task are likely to persevere for longer and expend more effort (Bandura, 1986). However, 'the raising of unrealistic beliefs of personal competence only invites failures that will discredit the persuaders and will further undermine the recipients perceived self-efficacy' (Bandura, 1986, p. 400). False praise can therefore be detrimental, and so the encouragement must appear genuine and realistic in order to have a positive effect (Roberts, 1990). In the case of higher education, tutors impact upon students' beliefs in their ability to succeed through providing encouragement, guidance, support, and acting as a potential role model. Tutors are likely to provide the most effective source of feedback in higher education due to students trusting their evaluations after having successfully negotiated higher education themselves and being experienced in judging the capabilities of learners (Bandura, 1986).

Alongside feedback from others, an individual may also gain information regarding their own abilities and self-concept through the process of social comparison (Bong &

Skaalvik, 2003) in which individuals compare themselves to others (Gecas, 1982). Social comparison is thought to be the most powerful source of information for an individual's self-concept (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). The ability to learn vicariously by watching and modelling is important for individual growth and development (Gibson, 2004) as it allows individuals to gain a sense of the way in which to approach a task before starting, therefore helping to reduce the 'costs and pain of faulty effort' spent on tasks which may not be possible for them (Bandura, 1986, p. 47). The process of modelling is thought to be a powerful way of 'transmitting values, attitudes and patterns of thoughts and behaviour' (Bandura, 1986, p. 47). Individuals measure their own success against that of role models in order to learn, be motivated, and define their self-concept (Gibson, 2004).

Role models are individuals perceived to display examples of desired or undesired behaviour (Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2010) who act as motivators by providing an example of how future success may be achieved (and future failure may be avoided). They can inspire an individual to achieve the same level of success through making the desired future-self appear more tangible (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). However, in some cases they may have a demoralising effect (Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2010). Whether a role model is seen as motivating or demoralising depends on the relevance and attainability of their success. Relevance refers to the extent to which an individual believes themselves to be similar to their role model: the more relevant they are perceived to be, the more they will influence an individual's motivation (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Role models are most likely to be motivating when they are similar to an individual (perhaps in terms of age, personality and sex). Attainability refers to how likely the individual is to achieve the same success as their role model; the more attainable the role model's success is perceived to be, the more motivating it will be for an individual (Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2010). Difficulties can arise when an individual attempts 'wholesale imitation', whereby they model their own behaviours and approaches upon that of one individual (Ibarra, 1999, p. 776). This form of modelling can cause difficulties due to the individual acting in ways which do not fit their own natural inclinations or identities (Gibson, 2004). Modelling will be more successful when an individual takes fitting aspects of a number of different role models (Ibarra, 1999).

Further to social comparison, others can provide individuals with a community of practice within which to develop a sense of social identity, confidence and effective coping mechanisms. Communities of practice hold a common interest, share ideas and information, and help each other (Wenger, 1998). A sense of mutual engagement is required, with

individuals involved in a joint enterprise with a shared repertoire which may include methods or approaches, words, symbols, routines, and concepts (Wenger, 1998). Identifying with certain social groups or within communities of practice tends to define the relative importance of goals for an individual (Zirkel, 1992). Additionally, feeling a sense of belonging within communities of practice can raise levels of self-esteem, enabling an individual to feel able to cope with situations (Baumeister & Leary, 2000; Burland, 2005) and confident to try new activities (Burland & Pitts, 2007; Pitts, 2003). The sense of striving towards a common purpose and a shared enthusiasm for a subject can lead to friendships forming within these communities (Pitts, 2005) and higher levels of achievement within education (Papageorgi et al., 2010). Struggling individuals can gain confidence and support from others within the group who are experiencing similar difficulties (Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008).

Social factors therefore impact upon an individual's self-concept and motivations in a number of ways relevant to higher education. Individuals who feel they are supported and belong in their institution may be more likely to succeed, especially if they have relevant role model(s) to observe. Social factors are also integral to the career decision making process and can be divided into two groups:

1. Influences which precede career decisions and shape the self-control, motivations and choices made (e.g., role models, support from others, available opportunities)
2. Influences which 'come into play at critical choice junctures' (e.g., networks which lead to a job) (Lent et al., 1994, p. 107).

Social factors are therefore important influences upon long-term development and shorter-term choices during the period of study and the transition into working life. In general, social factors impact upon an individual's sense of self, behaviour, motivations and choices through a number of processes and as such are an integral part of the experiences of students during career transitions. Individuals do retain a sense of autonomy regarding their career choices as they decide how to view and react to events which could be seen as obstacles or opportunities (Lent et al., 1994). The next section considers the literature on students' career transitions and motivations to study in order to provide a context for the current thesis.

2.5 The career transition

Entering postgraduate study is a major life transition (Blair, Cline, & Wallis, 2010) which remains little researched (Wakeling & Hampden-Thompson, 2013), although some reports have recently been published in the UK (e.g. Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2013; HEFCE, 2013a, 2013c, 2013d; Scott et al., 2013).

2.5.1 Motivations to study

Past literature on students' motivations to study in higher education utilises a variety of research methods and varies in the emphasis upon extrinsic or intrinsic motivators. The main motivating factors to study in higher education appear to be:

- *Extrinsic*: career-related reasons, including working towards a certain career, enhancing employability and developing skills
- *Intrinsic*: Interest and personal fulfilment
- *A mixture of the two*: interactive motivations

These motivations will now be discussed, focusing on research surrounding postgraduate students.

Extrinsic motivation

Much research highlights the importance of extrinsic motivations for choosing to study, in particular career-related factors. O'Neill (1995) found that students were motivated to study taught postgraduate courses for the following reasons:

1. To initiate a change in career direction
2. To enhance career prospects
3. To prepare for PhD study
4. To concentrate interests towards certain careers
5. Previous lack of success within the job market

O'Neill employed a mixed-methods approach, conducting qualitative focus groups with taught master's students followed by a larger postal survey within a range of UK higher education institutions. Studies involving music subjects have corroborated points 1, 2, and 4

from O'Neill's study, suggesting that music students may be motivated to improve their skills or chances of entering desired careers. Gee (2010) found that many students going into postgraduate music performance courses were motivated to further their technical and musical skills, or professional development. The music postgraduate degree provided time for the students to either delay the next step (Roberts, 1990) or to build upon existing or new skills. Gee (2010) suggests that a postgraduate degree can enable a facilitated transition into the music profession, as students can remain within the safety of the educational institution whilst building up experience and contacts for their future career.

An individual's motivations and career plans impact upon their choice of institution. Kite (1990) suggests that students choose conservatoires to focus upon performance. This may be reflected in the conservatoires' aims to have as many as 75% of their graduates working as performers (Rogers, 2002). Those studying music at university are therefore likely to have different career aims than those studying within Music College (Burt & Mills, 2006). This appears to be supported by Gee's study (2010) in which she found that master's students planning performing careers all chose to study within a conservatoire, even if they had previously attended a university. University music students therefore provide an interesting point of comparison to previous studies which have tended to focus on conservatoires (Burland, 2005).

Intrinsic motivation

In terms of musical motivations, most past literature revolves around the decision to continue playing instruments (Hallam, 2002; Yoon, 1997) and tends to concur that for commitment to music to be continued, intrinsic motivation is vital (Hallam, 2006). Intrinsic motivation may initially arise from simply finding a task interesting, however, in order to continue to be motivated this must become internalised and a part of the individual's identity (Hallam, 2005). Intrinsic motivation to study music degrees may stem from a love of music, which is known to be highly influential for students majoring in music education (Thornton & Bergee, 2008). Love of music is used within the thesis to refer to an individual finding enjoyment and satisfaction from their musical involvement. Individuals can feel strongly connected to music through this love so that music is not only what they do, but part of who they are, becoming part of their self-concept (Roberts, 1990). However, at times a love of music can be motivation not to study it (Burland, 2005) as focusing entirely on music means it is no longer a 'treat' (Pitts, 2005, p. 132). In order to persist with the effort required to succeed in music a strong musical self is important (Pitts, 2005). The musical self

is part of the self-concept and contains the beliefs, schemas and perceptions about one's own musical abilities (Schnare, MacIntyre, & Doucette, 2012). In the context of the current thesis the musical self is considered to be a personal identity which forms part of an individual's self-concept.

To study at postgraduate level an individual is likely to be motivated to some extent by intrinsic interest, especially those enrolled on non-vocational degrees. Studying can provide individuals with a sense of achievement and the chance to do something for themselves, thus enhancing personal identity and self-confidence (Blair et al., 2010). Becoming a mature student can be seen as part of a continual process of identity formation as individuals explore areas of interest which may previously have been unavailable to them (Britton & Baxter, 1999). Postgraduate study provides an opportunity to gain personal fulfilment through exploring a topic of interest and achieving personal goals.

Interactive motivations

Some research has shown that individuals are motivated to study by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Boer, Kolster, & Vossensteyn, 2010; Donaldson & McNicholas, 2004; de Oliveira Pires, 2009; Soilemetzidis et al., 2014). The relative importance of each type of motivation has differed across studies, as some have found employability to be more important than personal satisfaction (Donaldson & McNicholas, 2004), whilst others found developing knowledge to be more motivating than employability factors (de Oliveira Pires, 2009). Differences between findings may be due to variances in the enrolled students and types of courses observed, including the extent to which courses are viewed as vocational or research preparation. The differences may also reflect the complex nature of the experiences of students, which can be hard to quantify. Recently, the Higher Education Academy [HEA] commissioned their annual survey on the experiences of postgraduate students (Soilemetzidis et al., 2014). The study reported the opinions of 67,580 taught postgraduates, of which 82.4% were studying taught master's degrees. The findings showed that motivations to study were dominated by extrinsic factors, primarily those related to employment. However, the HEA survey also highlights that over half of the 54.8% who were driven to study their postgraduate degree in order to improve employment prospects also cited being motivated by personal interest (Soilemetzidis et al., 2014). The authors suggest that the motivations are therefore complex, and less polarized between research preparation and career preparation than may often be suggested. Soilemetzidis et al. used a survey method in order to obtain a large response rate, which may mean that more complex

motivations and interactions are not shown in the analysis. An example is the motivating influence of lifestyle found within the studies by HEFCE (2013d) and Boer et al (2010) which was not given as an option within the multiple choice questions in the HEA questionnaire.

Boer et al. (2010) investigated the motivations of prospective master's degree students and reported four main motivational themes (listed in order of importance): extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, disappointments and lifestyle. Disappointments referred to students who felt their undergraduate degrees were unsatisfactory and wished to enhance their educational experiences, whilst lifestyle referred to the desire to prolong the student lifestyle. The themes seem vague as they could all be considered extrinsic or intrinsic factors, although some may span both. Lifestyle, for instance, consists of interactive motivations as it may include extrinsic factors (e.g. working hours and location) alongside intrinsic factors (e.g. a sense of control and stability). Boer et al's (2010) findings focus upon the desire to extend the *student* lifestyle as a motivating factor to study, however, a more long-term lifestyle change may also act as a motivation. I-graduate's report to HEFCE (2013d) highlights that a desire for a change in lifestyle can motivate students to study a taught postgraduate degree. The emphasis upon lifestyle is rarely mentioned within other literature; but was found to be important within the current study, particularly as the lifestyle of working musicians can be characterised as being unstable.

This section has indicated that individuals are motivated to study postgraduate degrees as a result of interactive motivation, a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, with the relative importance of each still debated. Variations in the literature may relate to the subjects observed, differences between vocational and academic programmes, and the participants' self-concepts. The results gained from grouping postgraduate students on a variety of courses together (as in the research above) may not faithfully represent the nuances of music students' motivations and experiences.

2.5.2 Experience of studying

There is currently a lack of research investigating music students' experiences within higher education and during their careers (Juuti, 2012). Currently, research has tended to focus upon performers (Gee, 2010; Juuti, 2012) and conservatoires (Kite, 1990; Musicians' Benevolent Fund, 2012), despite the fact that the majority of students will study within universities at this level (58% according to Rogers (2002)). Past literature on higher education more generally has highlighted a number of factors which can potentially impact upon students' career decisions and experiences including: socio-economic background;

gender; motivations and aspirations; and academic ability (Vossensteyn, 2005), many of which are beyond an individual's control (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Brian, 1976). Other factors which have a less significant impact include the economic situation, the characteristics of the institution, and the programme of study.

Transitions into postgraduate study

Educational transitions refer to the changes 'navigated by students in their movement within and through formal education' (Gale & Parker, 2014, p. 1). Within the current thesis the transition observed is that of entry into, and exit from, the master's degree. This transitional period was also observed within Bowman et al.'s (2005) longitudinal study on the career development of 24 full-time UK master's students on six courses across two universities. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and their significant others over the period of the master's degree and up to eighteen months after finishing. The study highlighted a number of themes which represented the types of transitions faced by the students when starting master's study:

- Staying on to do the same subject at the same university
- Moving on to change institution or subject
- Returning to study after a period of unemployment.

Those staying on felt that the master's degree was a 'natural extension' (Bowman et al., 2005, p. 14) of their first degree and showed interest in the subject, whereas those who came back were often dissatisfied with their career and wanted the master's degree to lead towards more satisfying work.

As individuals transition into a new role they must learn the skills and knowledge needed to succeed, alongside the social norms and expectations of the role. The process of adapting to a novel situation is known as socialization, whereby individuals negotiate identities in order to accommodate their new role (Ibarra, 1999). Socialization processes include developing relationships within the faculty, involvement in learning activities (such as attending lectures or engaging in private study), and becoming integrated into campus life (Weidman, DeAngelo, & Bethea, 2014). Entering a new learning environment, such as a master's degree, can be difficult due to the need to adapt to new approaches to learning, teaching styles and subjects (Christie et al., 2008). Individuals can find their lack of knowledge surrounding the rules and expectations of the new learning environment

unsettling, which in turn may result in their academic identities being threatened (Christie et al., 2008). Identities play a large part in the experiences and success of transitions during which time one undergoes 'intense identity work' (Juuti & Littleton, 2010, p. 483). Individuals' identities and attitudes develop as they expand their knowledge and learn new concepts and perspectives (Lairio, Puukari, & Kouvo, 2011). Learning transforms what an individual can do and who they are (Wenger, 1998). Postgraduate study can therefore give rise to social, emotional and intellectual challenges for an individual (Scott et al., 2013). Higher education institutions may hope to encourage a transformation within students by supporting the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and attributes (Harvey, 2000). However, the extent to which institutions should be involved in helping students to manage their transitions has been debated, particularly for part-time students and postgraduates who are often expected to be autonomous (Scott et al., 2013).

Postgraduate students can face uncertainty and anxiety regarding their ability to succeed, particularly as many are already a third of the way through the course by the time the first summative feedback is received (Slight, 2012). Universities are often less explicit in their expectations and assessment criteria than schools, which can lead to students having difficulty understanding requirements (Clerehan, 2003). In order to ensure individuals are able to smoothly transition into postgraduate study it is important that an institution understands its students' expectations, whilst also clarifying the expectations of the department (Pitts, 2013). Without feedback, students are less able to evaluate their own levels of achievement as they have nothing (except social comparisons) to use as a basis for judging their abilities at this higher level of study (Burland & Pitts, 2007). In order to persevere and maintain psychological well-being during this period of uncertainty individuals need proactive coping methods, intrinsic motivation and high levels of self-efficacy. High levels of academic self-efficacy are positively related to the use of effective learning strategies, persistence and performance for higher education music students (Nielsen, 2004). Students with high levels of self-efficacy and positive academic identities tend to set 'challenging yet attainable academic goals for themselves, feel less anxious in achievement settings, enjoy their academic work more, persist longer on difficult tasks, and, overall, feel better about themselves as a person and as a student' (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003, p. 32). Achieving challenging goals leads to a sense of personal satisfaction which is likely to further enhance intrinsic interest in a task (Bandura, 1986). An increase in levels of self-efficacy is also likely to lead to an increase in intrinsic motivation, resulting in individuals being more motivated and persistent in pursuing their goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1985). Increased levels

of motivation and persistence are likely to lead to improved academic performance, which will in turn increase the individual's academic self-efficacy in a feedback loop (Perry, DeWine, Duffy, & Vance, 2007). However, if an individual's self-efficacy is so high that they believe tasks are too easy, they are likely to expend less effort, suggesting there is an optimal level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982).

Students' attitudes and experiences are influenced by the institution in which they study as this determines the curriculum, methods of teaching, educational norms and rules regarding academic study (Olsson, 1997). Institutions influence the relative importance and value the students will place upon different aspects of the work (Juuti, 2012) and the students' constructions of academic and professional identities (Lairio et al., 2011). Papageorgi et al. suggest that students are best able to realise their potential within an institutional environment which they perceive as 'facilitating academic, professional and personal development and fostering a supportive community of learning, whilst allowing the development and pursuit of personal interests' (2010, p. 442).

Social factors

The most influential relationships within higher education appear to be:

- parents and families
- peers
- tutors.

Parents are thought to revert to more of a supportive role and have less of an influence upon students' decisions to enter higher education than is typical during earlier educational transitions (Burland, 2005). However, studies have shown that many students rely upon parents for their main source of funding due to the lack of official postgraduate funding streams available (Bowman et al., 2005). Therefore, at master's level parents again become a strong influencing and enabling factor in the decision to continue education.

Students' families and children impact upon their motivation and the experience of studying. Having children can lead individuals to re-evaluate their own life goals and values, including their approach towards education (Blair et al., 2010). During parenthood individuals can feel a sense of subordinated identity (Britton & Baxter, 1999), as much of their life becomes structured around caring for the child (Arnett, 2006). Therefore, studying a degree can enable parents to gain a sense of fulfilment through expressing their interests and sustaining a secure sense of self (Burland & Magee, 2014) However, there remains a

certain expectation within society that women should be the primary caregiver for their children, which can impact women's career choices and aspirations accordingly (Baker, 2005). Young women who hope to have families in the future are less likely to choose high-demanding and time-consuming careers in order to reduce any future pressure of balancing work and parenting roles (Arnett, 2006). Students can be unprepared to make sacrifices within their family and personal lives to become more strongly involved within the academic communities. Therefore, many who balance studying alongside raising a family are only partially connected to the student community and as such lack a strong student identity or lifestyle (Christie et al., 2008).

During the period of study, peers can provide a sense of community and point of social comparison for the students, impacting upon their self-concept. Peers are used as a point of social comparison. These social comparisons are known to play a large part in students forming their own sense of 'being a musician' (Pitts, 2003, p. 14), as individuals compare the extent of their own musical involvement with that of their peers. Roberts (1990) suggests that music students appear to focus their social lives within the music department, resulting in a strong community within music, but isolation from the rest of campus. The social environment within music departments can be tight knit and cliquy, with high numbers of hours spent in musical activities outside of formal class time (Bologna Working Group, 2009). Student peer groups are thought to enhance an individual's ability to cope with balancing their studies alongside external priorities (Blair et al., 2010) and close-knit departments provide a support network for some students who may be comforted to find others are experiencing similar difficulties (Burland, 2005). However, those who feel they do not belong to the peer groups can face an isolating experience (Dibben, 2006).

Course tutors and supervisors appear to be a particularly influential factor upon students' experiences, sense of self and self-efficacy within higher education. A personal relationship with tutors can positively impact upon students' confidence and motivation, by increasing their sense of being valued (Burland, 2005), which in turn enhances their positive academic identity (Lairio et al., 2011). An open dialogue with a tutor can encourage students to recognise their own abilities (Lairio et al., 2011). Through providing feedback the supervisor validates (or negates) the student's academic identity and ability to succeed (Christie et al., 2008). Without this feedback students lack a standard against which to judge their abilities and development (Bandura, 1986). Music students tend to have a strong

emotional attachment to music, which forms a central part of their self-concept, therefore an overly critical approach from a tutor is likely to be taken very personally (Orzel, 2010).

The above discussion highlights the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors upon students' experiences of higher education; González-Moreno (2012) supports this by suggesting that students' experiences and motivations to study are influenced by their personal values and external priorities.

The experiences of music postgraduates

González-Moreno (2012) has conducted the only piece of research of which I am aware which has considered music postgraduates beyond performing and teaching specialisms. 56 graduate students from three different music programmes took part in the study (two onsite programmes which included a range of specialisms, and one distance learning degree specialising in music education). The study explored the reasons behind high levels of attrition on music graduate programmes in Mexico and found a strong correlation between students' continuation within the degree and the extent to which they valued the programme. The results revealed a large discrepancy between male and female students, with the former much less likely to complete the first stage of the programme. González-Moreno suggests that this is because the males placed a lower value on graduate experiences. Those participants who dropped out of their studies did so because they valued their career experiences more highly than their degree. Part-time distance learners differed in their approach to their studies, because they tended to feel the cost of family and job responsibilities more than full-time site-based students. It is unclear, however, whether the distance learners' perspective of the degree was due to them lacking the campus social support network leading them to feel the burden of their external priorities more strongly than onsite learners; or whether they do in fact have greater external priorities and that this is the reason they chose to study via this method. González-Moreno states that in order to help students complete their graduate programmes, the needs and values of the students, and those portrayed by the institutions need to be matched more closely.

Postgraduate degrees enable students to take control of a process of ongoing academic and professional identity formation as they transition into working life or PhD study (Bowman et al., 2005). Undertaking postgraduate study can be a means of career self-management behaviour (behaviour aimed towards successfully attaining career goals) (Seibert, Kraimer,

Holtom, & Pierotti, 2013) and a form of career exploration which can be defined as 'purposive behaviour and cognitions that afford access to information about occupations, jobs, or organisations that was not previously in the stimulus field' (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983, p. 192). Career exploration involves enhancing knowledge about oneself and one's environment (Taveira & Moreno, 2003). A core outcome of exploration is thought to be developing a secure self-concept and professional identity (Flum & Blustein, 2000) which enables individuals to make more decisive and justified career plans (Phillips, 1982). In order to smoothly transition out of the master's degree a positive academic or professional identity is important as individuals attempt to negotiate the changes which they face, especially those leaving education.

2.5.3 Transition out of taught master's degrees

The transition from education into working life is a major change, especially for individuals who lack practical work experience (Graham & McKenzie, 1995). Students leave the more structured, supportive higher education environment to enter the career world (Juuti, 2012) and the difference in the working environments and styles can be challenging (Burland, 2005). During the transition into working life individuals can face financial and time pressures alongside uncertainty (Creech et al., 2008). In order to successfully negotiate the transition an individual must 'adjust to, cope with, and take advantage of the changing opportunities and constraints characteristic of different stages of life' (Heckhausen et al., 2010, p. 4). Success during the transition is important for both financial and psychosocial reasons (Kroger, 2005). The following section discusses research on the transition into working life.

Clear career plans and an awareness of actions and behaviour needed to achieve these plans are important for maintaining the perseverance needed to overcome obstacles and adapt to changing conditions (Seibert et al., 2013). The number of opportunities considered and the way in which individuals respond to them are determined by internal (personal) and external (social and environmental) influences (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Greater awareness of one's attributes and abilities is likely to lead to higher levels of self-confidence when searching for jobs and in turn consideration of a greater number of careers. Additionally, individuals need to be aware of available opportunities, career paths, and how their own abilities and attributes relate to jobs (Schmidt, 1982). Difficulties can arise when students fail to recognise generic and transferable skills or to make connections between their course of study and potential career paths (Greenbank, 2010). It is therefore important that students are aware of the skills developed within their courses and the relevance of

these to the wider context of careers (Brown, 2003). However, encouraging students to understand the wider relevance of the skills learnt within their courses presents a challenge for academic staff (Mason, Williams, Cranmer, & Guile, 2003).

The careers and opportunities available to an individual are influenced by social and environmental factors such as location (e.g. master's subjects may not be available in all institutions) and being accepted by gate holders into a desired position (e.g. a supervisor accepting an applicant onto the master's degree) (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Due to the range of influences upon career transitions, plans do not always run smoothly. Greenbank (2010) conducted interviews with 34 business school undergraduates and found many of the students lacked clear career objectives, and therefore struggled to engage in effective career planning. Those who are motivated to study a master's degree in order to delay their entry into working life may find career planning particularly difficult. Due to the intensity of master's degrees, which tend to involve a quick succession of assignments, students often struggle to make time to plan during their degree and as such may find themselves facing the same uncertainty after finishing as they did before starting the degree (Slight, 2012).

The potential for career plans to change is highlighted by Bowman et al's (2005) study in which only one of the 24 UK full-time master's graduates was involved in the work they had originally planned to enter at the start of their master's degree. Bowman et al. used semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth insight into the experiences of taught master's students on a range of vocational and non-vocational subjects. The authors claimed that the participants faced four types of career transition during their master's degrees:

Confirmatory and Socialising

- The largest group of students were those who reinforced their original career intentions whilst studying the master's degree. This group mainly consisted of those enrolled upon vocational degrees who tended to focus most of their interests and time on the course and activities related to the course.
- The students learnt the expectations of their career field and were able to confirm their interest in it.

Confirmatory

- The second largest group, with seven students, were those who confirmed their career path but tended to have a wider range of interests which affected career decisions and had less certain, more short-term career plans.

Contradictory/Evolving

- Five students faced contradictory or evolving transitions, completing the master's degree despite difficulties.
- This group used the negative experiences of their master's degree to drive them towards alternative areas and positive outcomes, using their other interests as a guide.

Dislocating

- The final group is perhaps the most concerning: this consisted of four students who faced a dislocated transition where a lack of career management skills meant they remained uncertain of career plans at the end of their master's degree.
- This group still enjoyed the degree itself but felt typical graduate work did not suit them and had no concrete plans for types of work they were interested in, other than a vague hope for their career to be 'enjoyable' (Bowman, Colley, & Hodkinson, 2004, p. 12) .

The categories above highlight the impact a master's degree may have upon students' career planning and the importance of life and work experience when making decisions. The individuals who entered careers similar to those they had intended before starting their master's degree relied heavily upon their postgraduate experiences to achieve their career plans. However, life and work experiences were also important when attempting to secure employment. Gaining experiences in the work field allowed the participants to develop their areas of interest and explore their career paths further, with some exploring new areas in which they previously had no experience. A lack of employment experience lead to many participants facing uncertain futures (Bowman et al., 2005). Those who entered PhDs found their previous academic experiences to be beneficial, but faced new challenges related to approaching a large-scale research project. Some of the students who entered PhD study appeared to do so because of uncertainty regarding their ability to gain employment in a

desired field, highlighting that even by this stage of study some students follow this route to gain certainty in the short-term.

2.6 Working life for musicians

Much of the previous research on working adult musicians has focused upon performers or teachers. An example of such research was conducted by Manturzevska (1990). Manturzevska conducted a longitudinal study of 165 Polish musicians to explore the factors needed for successful professional development. Family environment and intrinsic motivations were important, alongside the roles played by teachers, colleagues and socio-economic support. The longitudinal method provided an insight into the social factors influencing musicians' career development including socio-economic status, which is absent from many studies discussing transitions (although some specifically observe the impact of socio-economic status on education e.g. Dibben, 2004; Sewell & Shah, 1967). Perhaps socio-economic status is of more importance as music often requires high lesson and instrumental costs which may not be as prevalent in other subjects. However, Manturzevska's study does not reflect the current reality of what it means to be a working musician due to the interviews being conducted between 1976 and 1980 (Gee, 2010). Manturzevska focuses solely upon the lives of composers and performers, whereas the current study focuses upon individuals studying theoretical music courses, therefore the two sets of participants are likely to differ in terms of motivations and experiences. Despite this, her study is useful in providing a rare lifespan picture of musicians' careers.

Musicians' working conditions are potentially different and disadvantaged compared to workers in other sectors due to:

- The erratic nature of the employment
- Unpredictable and often poor levels of income
- The many hours spent unpaid on personal development
- The need (for some) to secure non-musical work in order to make a living

(Missingham, 2006, p. 6).

The Musicians' Benevolent Fund (2012) found that conservatoire graduates working as professional musicians worried about low fees and lack of work. Due to the general lack of stable employment opportunities for musicians, many are forced to develop a portfolio career in order to make a living (additionally some may choose to do so in order to achieve variety within their working life) (Bologna Working Group, 2009). A musical career is

therefore often a lifestyle choice (Vuust et al., 2010) and tends to be self-directed, with individuals working independently on a number of projects at different times (Gee, 2010). Continuous development and improvement of skills is needed to gain opportunities and rise to challenges in order to maintain a portfolio career (Bennett, 2009). Time spent continuing professional development and promoting themselves adds to the pressures of increasing adult responsibilities and priorities (Creech et al., 2008). A strong commitment to music is likely to be needed to persevere and maintain the motivation to succeed as a professional musician (Hallam, 2002). Additionally, self-belief, positive attitudes (effective coping mechanisms) and realistic evaluations of ability and progress are thought to be important factors for the success of professional performers (MacNamara et al., 2006). Burland (2005) found that music graduates shared a love for music but differed in the role they wished it to play in their lives. Those who went into performing careers needed to be able to cope with the potential stressors faced within the often precarious and highly competitive environment of professional performing jobs. Those who chose non-performing careers tended to lack these coping mechanisms and hoped to maintain a love of music in their lives by keeping it as a leisure pursuit.

Academic careers may enable individuals to gain a sense of stability whilst remaining within music. Archer (2008) conducted semi-structured interviews with eight academics who were under the age of 30. These academics saw success in terms of personal fulfilment, security and autonomy. This highlights the importance of control for these academics, perhaps indicating the type of individuals who may move towards this career path. However, in order to maintain an academic career and identity individuals are required to continue delivering in terms of research and teaching commitments (Archer, 2008). Just as for professional performers, maintaining a professional identity as an academic is likely to require a continual process of negotiation in order to maintain the behaviour and standards required to feel able to define oneself as such.

Music teaching is also considered a more stable career than performing, offering possible financial stability whilst retaining a link to music (Freer & Bennett, 2012). For this reason, the career of a teacher may be more attractive to those who find the idea of financial instability difficult. However, teaching has often been reported to be considered as a fall-back career for students (Bennett, 2009) with music education being seen as low status within the hierarchical musical culture (Freer & Bennett, 2012). Those who do enter teaching tend to find it more satisfying than expected (Bennett, 2009), however, Baker (2005) found

that music service teachers around the age of 36 to 42 years old can start to feel trapped in their careers due to the lack of opportunity for upwards mobility.

Students may decide not to follow music professionally if they hold life-goals such as having a reliable income, a family, and emotional stability (Burland, 2005), as the lifestyle of musicians is not suitable for everyone. Therefore, students' career decisions are based upon their own identities, perceptions of value and life goals. Those entering and persevering with postgraduate study must value the experience alongside, or perhaps more so than, gaining career experience. If an individual lacks positive musical possible selves then they will be unlikely to continue their interest and involvement in music (Hallam, 2006).

The most closely related research to the current thesis is a study conducted by the current author (Slight, 2012) for a master's degree dissertation which preceded the current PhD thesis.

2.7 A 2012 study on music students' motivations

The 2012 study aimed to explore the motivations, influences and experiences of music students undertaking, or planning to undertake, music master's degrees (master's degree students and final year undergraduate students). This research was conducted after recognising a gap in the literature on music postgraduates studying within universities. Whilst past research had explored undergraduates' experiences both in conservatoires (Kite, 1990; Bennett, 2007; Juuti & Littleton, 2010; Gaunt, Creech, Long & Hallam, 2012) and universities (Burland, 2005, Dibben, 2006) there appeared to be a lack of research focusing on postgraduates within universities (the pilot study began before Gonzalez-Moreno's 2012 research was published). As different institutions are likely to have different cultures and aims for their music courses (Rogers, 2002), it was felt that further research within this area was needed. Recruitment emails were sent to the heads of music departments at five northern English universities detailing the study. The head of each music department then forwarded the study details to relevant students and requested that volunteers contact me. Appointments were arranged over email and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the twenty volunteers. The participants were enrolled on a variety of music courses, including performance, musicology, music psychology and joint honours degrees. Sixteen of the participants were currently undertaking a master's degree in music and four were

planning to do so within the next two years. The sample consisted of seven males and thirteen females, and included six mature students who had a break of more than two years from education.

The majority of interviews took place in person⁶, however, due to logistical difficulties two interviews were conducted over Skype. The interview schedule consisted of three main sections: a warm up biographical section; a discussion surrounding the participants' current, or intended masters and motivations to study; and a final section on their future plans.

Warm up

The questionnaire began with some warm up questions which aimed to discover each participant's motivations to study music at university. In order to understand participants' current situations and beliefs it is important to appreciate what led them to begin studying music. This section also covered the participants' past university experiences within music, including reasons for their choices of master's institution.

Master's degree

For prospective students, the next section of the interview considered expectations for postgraduate study and motivations for continuing study. For current students, the questions focused on their master's degree, to what extent this had matched their expectations, and any skills they believed they had gained. These topics were chosen with an aim to discover the motivations for studying a master's degree, whether expectations matched the outcomes, and what participants felt they gained from the master's degree itself.

Future plans

The final section of the interview focused on participants' expectations and plans for their future, how they believed a master's degree would impact upon their career, and how well prepared they felt for leaving education. These topics were chosen in an attempt to uncover how the master's degree fit into the wider context of the participants' lives, and to explore how aware participants were of the broader impact of their studying. The interview finished with an opportunity for the participants to add any comments they felt had not been covered by the interview.

⁶ with travel costs funded by SEMPRES

Through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the interviews the following themes were developed in order to describe the data: *Self-concept*; *Role of others*; *Need for more time*; *External priorities*; and the *Transitional process*. Participants were motivated to study a master's degree by employability factors, whilst their interest in music drew them to study the particular subject. Love of music alone was not enough to motivate students to continue academic study; other factors such as interest in research, employability prospects, social factors, and a desire for more time before beginning a career also played significant roles. The students were therefore motivated by an interaction between intrinsic interest and extrinsic factors.

The theme of the *Self-concept* reflected the impact of individuals' coping mechanisms, interests, self-belief and self-concept on their motivations. Students were more likely to be motivated to study when they felt academically capable, interested in the subject area, and believed that the course would enable them to move towards positive possible selves (or at least delay the uncertainty of leaving education). The *role of others* was highlighted throughout the transcripts with many wanting to feel part of a community, and for the younger students the desire to remain in their current lifestyle with current friendship groups was a strong motivator to study. *External priorities* were a motivator in the sense that they impacted upon decisions relating to the timing, mode of study and location of institution. Such external priorities included the desire to remain near family, friends and partners and maintain commitments in each case. The theme of *Need for more time* was surprising and highlighted the importance of ensuring students are aware of skills gained during their course, possible career paths and what to expect from both undergraduate and postgraduate study. The theme highlighted the fact that for many the master's was seen as a stepping stone between university and work, either because they wanted to use it to prepare further for their chosen career or because they lacked career plans. This emphasised the importance of career advice and support during the master's degree for those students who lacked the confidence or strategies needed to develop realistic career plans.

The students' coping methods were vital in the transition into and from postgraduate study, resulting in either an unsatisfactory, dislocated transition, or in the students feeling sufficiently confident and self-aware of their own skills and experience to pursue their future careers. Those with proactive attitudes were often uncertain about their future and so used the master's degree as a starting point to give themselves more time, experience and opportunity to gain skills and plan their future careers. Participants

displaying helpless coping methods seemed to use their uncertainty over what to do next as a reason to study and viewed the master's degree as an end in itself, with the hope it would lead to job opportunities and a career path.

The 2012 study provided a greater understanding of the motivations to study postgraduate music degrees whilst also offering methodological insights, which are discussed below. However, due to time constraints, the 2012 research was narrow in its focus, therefore the current study aimed to expand upon this by using longitudinal methods to explore students' experiences of, and transitions surrounding, their master's degrees.

2.8 Summary

Within the current educational climate the need to understand students' expectations and experiences is paramount in order to develop fitting institutional provision. Past research within this area is obviously lacking, however, what research there is highlights the importance of interactive motivations for choosing what, where, when and how to study. Identities are highlighted throughout the literature as an important factor in students' transitions and experiences, as the process of learning coupled with experiences gained whilst studying can facilitate transformation and movement towards more ideal possible selves. However, as part of this process uncertainty is raised, and individuals must have appropriate coping mechanisms in order to effectively manage the transition. Social factors are highlighted throughout the literature as being important for providing support, encouragement, and enabling individuals to better understand their own abilities and interests. The literature review highlights the student experience as developing through an interactive relationship between personal and social factors. Therefore, the chosen social psychology perspective appears appropriate within the current thesis.

Whilst past research has begun to explore postgraduate students' and music students' experiences, there is currently a gap which the current thesis hopes to address by exploring the experiences of music students on university master's degrees which do not contain a formal music making element. This group of music students has previously been overlooked in the literature despite being found within many university music departments, therefore a discussion of their experiences will enable a deeper understanding of the music cohort. Whilst music students may face unique experiences in some ways (see 2.1.2), the potential implications of the current findings are likely to reach beyond music and have relevance for students studying sports and performing arts courses.

3 : Method

This chapter explains the research method used within the current thesis to observe student and higher education perspectives of taught postgraduate music degrees. The approaches taken by past studies related to the thesis topic are discussed, many of which adopted quantitative or cross-sectional methods. Studies from a range of areas have been observed to provide a context for the current thesis, including literature on musicians' career transitions and postgraduates' experiences of study. Following this, the aims of the thesis are presented alongside the benefits of using a qualitative, longitudinal method as opposed to quantitative or cross-sectional approaches. An outline of the whole study is provided, before more detail on the materials and participants involved. Finally, the procedure undertaken and the methods used for analysis are described.

3.1 Musicians' career transitions

A number of studies have observed the career transitions of musicians, of particular interest here are the longitudinal studies by Burland (2005) and Manturzewska (1990). The Burland study observed the transition out of undergraduate degrees, whilst Manturzewska considered musicians' careers over a longer time period.

Burland (2005) observed music students' experiences during the two years spanning their final year as undergraduates into the year following graduation. Interviews were conducted at three month intervals during the students' career transition in order to understand how their musical participation and career goals developed. The study utilised a mixed method approach, with qualitative semi-structured interviews being conducted in phases one, two and eight, whilst more structured interviews were conducted during phases three to seven. The final phase was semi-structured to enable an in-depth discussion of the students' perceptions of the past two years. Burland conducted the first phase of interviews in-person in order to develop a sense of rapport with participants, whilst many of the interviews in the later phases were conducted over the telephone as participants moved away from their initial locations. The study demonstrates the richness of data which can be obtained on the telephone, particularly when a sense of rapport has been established during initial in-person interviews. Burland's study offers a useful model for the current thesis by providing a method for obtaining in-depth data on students' experiences during a transitional period.

Manturzevska's (1990) use of longitudinal methods differed from the Burland study in being retrospective and including only one interview with each participant. Manturzevska analysed musicians' stories longitudinally by observing significant events and phases during each participant's life cycle, before considering how these related to their musical development. The development of the musicians was dynamic and influenced by biological and socio-cultural factors. The longitudinal method provided an insight into the evolving developmental process which may have been lost with a cross-sectional study. However, the retrospective approach may have led to difficulties regarding inaccurate recall (Halverson, 1988). Repeated interviews, as in Burland's study, enable participants' experiences to be observed more accurately with less reliance upon memory.

3.2 Postgraduate students' motivations and experiences

Past research on postgraduate students' experiences has tended to use surveys to gain the opinion of a large number of participants and has generalised subjects by grouping music within the arts and humanities. The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey [PTES] (Leman et al., 2013; Soilemetzidis et al., 2014) is an example of a large-scale study within this area. The authors arranged participants into nineteen discipline groups, meaning nuances within the experiences of different subject areas may be missed. The quantitative approach led to a large amount of data being gathered, but a lack of context surrounding the results. It is important that alongside these larger scale surveys a more detailed discussion takes place with both students and staff to understand the postgraduate experience as it relates to particular subject areas.

Bowman *et al.* (2005) explored postgraduate students' experiences in more detail using qualitative techniques, and their study acted as a model for the current thesis. The authors conducted 24 in-depth case studies of postgraduate students on six courses, ranging from vocational to non-vocational programmes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants and the significant others who were felt to impact upon their career development. The interviews took place during the first and final terms of the students' courses, and at six to nine and fifteen to eighteen months after completing the course. The longitudinal approach enabled the authors to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the students during their master's degree and transition into working life. However, the study observed Philosophy and Classics as examples of non-vocational courses,

and for the reasons stated above (see section 2.1) music students' experiences may differ in a number of ways.

3.3 Postgraduate music students' motivations and experiences

González-Moreno's study (2012) explored the motivations of taught postgraduate music students using a questionnaire. 56 students within three Mexican institutions volunteered for the study. Over half of the volunteers (30) majored in music education, thirteen were focused within musicology and ethnomusicology, and three students were concentrated within each area of performing, music cognition, composition and music theory (González-Moreno, 2012). Participants completed a questionnaire which consisted of 25 items examining students' backgrounds in terms of music, teaching and general demographic details. The following ten items used Likert scales to measure motivations and the students' perceptions of environmental factors. Motivations were measured in terms of how the master's study related to the students' personal and professional interests, how useful they felt the programme to be, and how the cost of postgraduate education impacted upon their decision to study. Three open-ended questions examined students' top three reasons for choosing to enrol and persevere upon the master's degrees. Restricting students to three reasons for entering master's education may mean other factors which impacted upon their decision to study are overlooked. The use of the predominantly quantitative method means that the students' experiences are not placed into context. A fully qualitative method would enable the intricacies of individuals' experiences to be observed alongside the context in which they occur.

The literature review highlights the need for more qualitative research to be conducted in order to place postgraduate students' experiences into context. Longitudinal qualitative studies have been shown to be effective for obtaining in-depth data regarding students' experiences during their career transitions, and therefore were felt to suit the current study's aims.

3.4 Current Aims

The current thesis aims to explore the experience of studying a taught music master's degree by observing both student and higher education perspectives. The main research question (RQ1) to be considered is:

RQ1. What is the nature of the career transition for music master's students?

To explore this question the following areas will be considered:

RQa. Why are students motivated to study academic music master's degrees?

RQb. What are the experiences of music students during their master's degree?

RQc. How does an academic music master's degree impact upon a student's transition into their career?

RQd. What are the course tutors and career advisors' perspectives regarding academic taught music master's degrees?

The final research question was developed in order to provide a broader insight from the institutions, however, due to the low number of tutors and advisors spoken to (n=10) this question explores the staff members' views regarding the degrees, which do not necessarily represent the higher education institutions' perspectives (or even other staff members' views). In order to answer the research questions a two stage qualitative interview study was designed using a longitudinal research approach.

3.5 Methodological context

3.5.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative methods allow individuals to describe their experiences in their own words, providing a more in-depth insight than that gained by using Likert scales within quantitative methods. Perry *et al.* (2007) suggest that qualitative methodology is appropriate for measuring psychological developments, which are likely to be observed during periods of transition. A qualitative methodology is appropriate to achieve the study's aim of exploring students' individual experiences during their postgraduate music degrees and the transition into careers or further study. The Current study involved qualitative research based upon interpretivism (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). Interpretivism as a paradigm focuses upon meaning, particularly 'how people make sense of the world and how they experience events' (Willig, 2008, p. 8). Core beliefs within the interpretivist paradigm include that reality is

socially constructed and understanding is contextual (Willis, 2007). Qualitative and interpretivist approaches posit that context impacts upon events and behaviour, and as such events and behaviour will change over time. It is possible for individuals to share an experience and yet hold different interpretations and perceptions of the experience (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Therefore, within the current thesis the aim will be to reflect understanding of each individual participant's experiences during their transition, before exploring any commonalities which may exist. In order to do this each participant's background is discussed in section 3.14 so that the results are presented in light of the context of those discussed, and quotations are used throughout. Such context-boundedness is an attempt to ensure validity of the results presented (Cohen et al., 2011). The analytical approach taken is inductive and grounded in the data, without attempts to make generalisations.

Two key threads of thought exist regarding the nature of reality within the interpretivist paradigm: rationalism whereby it is felt that one may know reality by thinking about it but that the senses do not allow us to experience it directly; and relativism whereby it is felt that each individual's reality is self-constructed and influenced by the culture and context in which they exist (Willis, 2007). The current thesis focuses on the latter approach, by highlighting the interaction between the social context and the individual's experiences. The relativistic approach highlights the complex nature of cause and effect relationships within social settings (Walliman, 2007) and attempts to avoid the potential danger of neglecting the importance of external factors when researching within the interpretivist paradigm (Cohen et al., 2011).

The study takes a hermeneutical phenomenological approach which involves exploring individuals' perceptions of the world and lived experiences (Cohen et al., 2011) within the context in which they exist (Willis, 2007). Consciousness is highlighted as being important for experiences and the interconnected relationship between subjects and objects is therefore central to the theory (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology explores a particular phenomenon or concept with a group of individuals who have all experienced it (Creswell, 2013), in the case of this thesis a group of participants experiencing the transitional period of master's study and beyond. Throughout the thesis I am therefore concerned with the participants' perceptions of their transition and the events which occur throughout. The analytical approach was chosen with these aims in mind (see 3.10). The discussions will focus

upon the participants' subjective experiences, alongside their objective experiences of the courses and transitional period using a longitudinal method.

3.5.2 Longitudinal research

The Slight (2012) study on music master's students' motivations involved a single cross-sectional interview with students enrolled upon music master's degrees within five English institutions. Some themes emerged from the transcripts which did not appear to have been discussed in any detail in previous studies, however, it was felt that a single interview did not enable a complete observation of the students' experiences. A longitudinal study was chosen for the current thesis to capture the students' development and the impact of events during the career transition.

Longitudinal methods enable the observation of participants' experiences over multiple points in time in order to acquire a greater depth of data than may be possible with cross-sectional methods (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Longitudinal studies enable us to trace patterns of change within an individual (Rajulton & Ravanera, 2000) and as such are often used to observe development during a period of transition. Previous studies have used longitudinal methods to observe transitions into higher education (see for example Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008; Pitts, 2005), transitions out of master's study (Bowman et al., 2005) and musical careers (Burland, 2005; Manturzewska, 1990). A longitudinal method appears to be appropriate when observing the development and evolution of the students' career decisions (Hodkinson, 2008) in order to answer RQ1 (the nature of the career transition for music master's students).

Difficulties with longitudinal studies can include issues of attrition, as students may decide to drop out or lose touch between interviews (Ruspini, 2000). A number of decisions were made in an attempt to reduce the attrition rate within the current study (see procedure below). A further difficulty is the Hawthorne effect, where the process of repeatedly interviewing each of the participants may impact upon their own views and attitudes throughout the period of study (Rajulton & Ravanera, 2000). The Hawthorne effect is discussed in more detail in the conclusion as it was perceived to relate to the current study.

The semi-structured interview format allows participants flexibility to talk in their own words and from their own perspective. A qualitative approach should allow a deeper insight into the experiences and feelings of the participants (Burland, 2005) in a way that

structured interviews may impede (Schnare et al., 2012). However, in order to ensure the success of the interview a sense of rapport needs to be established so that the interviewee feels able to discuss the topics they perceive to be relevant. It is important that the interviewer shows a genuine interest in the participant, is not judgemental and assures the participant of confidentiality (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Whilst taking into consideration the potential difficulties of the chosen method, a longitudinal study involving semi-structured interviews was designed to answer the research questions above. Whilst the research is presented as a case study in terms of looking at a particular group of students on specific courses, I use the term loosely. In this sense I take my meaning from Stake who states that “case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied” (1994, p. 236). The thesis focuses upon data gained through interviews and therefore does not involve multiple sources of data as is typical of case studies (Willis, 2007). Rather the thesis presents a qualitative study using longitudinal interviews to explore the career transitions of music master’s students.

3.6 Scope of the study

A two stage study was designed, as outlined in table 2 below.

Table 2 Stages of the study

Stage	Participants	Method
One Student Perspective	Students	Longitudinal approach. Four semi-structured interviews
Two Staff Perspective	Course tutors	A single semi-structured interview
	Careers advisors	

Stage one aimed to explore the student perspective regarding master’s study and their career transition. Stage two aimed to explore the higher education perspective through interviews with course tutors and careers advisors. Results from stage one and two were used to answer RQ1 and RQd (the nature of the career transition for music master’s students; the staff perspective) in order to gain a more holistic insight into the experiences of the students during their career transitions. Brown (2007) states such a consideration of

both student and staff views can provide us with important insights into employability issues which may be overlooked by only observing one perspective.

3.7 Participants

An online search of taught music master's degrees was conducted in order to choose a target group of participants. The study aimed to observe students on non-vocational degrees, therefore courses with an academic focus were sought, where a research project acted as a main component (counting for a large number of overall course credits). The course syllabi focused upon developing students' knowledge of music or issues related to music. The degrees short-listed for the study lacked emphasis upon practical or creative musical output, such as performing, composing, or music technology skills. The three final institutions were chosen as they all provided both music psychology and musicology taught master's degrees, and as such allowed a point of comparison between the two. However, due to the low number of volunteers enrolled upon musicology courses, such a comparison was not considered to be viable (in fact, no musicology students volunteered from Institution C and as such the course was not included in the study). All the institutions observed have global standing and attract international students, with institutions A and B being Russell group universities.

Table 3 below describes the courses observed at each of the three English institutions, with the number of participants related to each of the courses displayed in the three right hand columns.

Table 3 Courses observed and numbers of participants

Institution	Courses observed	Department	Stage one: Students n=	Stage two: tutors n=	Stage two: advisors n=
A	Music Psychology	Music	9	2	1
	Musicology	Music	1	1	
B	Music Psychology	Music	1 (+1 discounted)	2	1
	Musicology	Music	2	1	
C	Music Psychology	Psychology	3	1	1

The actual course and institution names have not been provided to maintain the anonymity of the participants involved. Course names in tables 3 and 4 have been chosen to describe the core content of the degree. ‘Musicology’ has been used to label both musicology and ethnomusicology courses due to the small number of participants on each (one studying ethnomusicology and two studying musicology).

Stage One: Student perspective

In total, seventeen students volunteered to take part in the study, however, only fourteen took part in all four phases of interviews. I was unable to get in contact with Annabel after phase two, and Janet and Samantha after phase three. Samantha had completed her master’s degree by this point of the study, however, Annabel and Janet had both been given extensions for personal reasons. I am therefore unaware of whether they completed the master’s degree. I have included Samantha and Janet’s interview data for the three phases they were involved with. I have not included Annabel’s data due to feeling her personal difficulties during the study may have impacted negatively upon the validity of the results. In total 62 student interviews were collated and analysed for stage one. Table 4 briefly describes the students (including their age at the point of phase one). More detailed

participant summaries and references to sections in which their experiences are discussed further can be found at the end of this chapter in section 3.14.

Table 4 Student participant details

Participant pseudonym	Age	Sex (M/F)	Distance learner?	Part-time/Full-time	Course Name	Home/ EU/ International student
Ben	24	M	No	Full-time	Musicology	Home
Amy	23	F	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	Home
Janet	53	F	No	Part-time	Music Psychology	Home
Chloe	29	F	Yes	Part-time	Music Psychology	International
Tom	24	M	Yes	Part-time	Music Psychology	Home
Ruth	21	F	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	Home
Phoebe	23	F	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	EU
Lisa	27	F	Yes	Part-time	Music Psychology	International
Hannah	23	F	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	Home
Matt	25	M	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	International
Jodie	38	F	Yes	Part-time	Music Psychology	Home
Laura	23	F	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	International
Annabel	22	F	No	Full-time	Music Psychology	Home
Tina	22	F	No	Full-time	Musicology	Home
Samantha	25	F	No	Full-time	Musicology	International
Steph	42	F	No	Part-time	Music Psychology	Home
Fiona	36	F	Yes	Part-time	Music Psychology	Home

The participants included distance learners, mature, and international students alongside onsite learners, non-mature and home students.

Stage Two: Staff Perspective

One advisor and at least one tutor attached to each of the degrees took part in the study (see table 3 for a breakdown of numbers). All the tutors (from this point course tutors will be referred to as tutors) had experience supervising students' dissertations on the courses observed. All the advisors (from this point careers advisors will be referred to as advisors) had experience of providing individual and group careers support with students in the target departments. Within two of the three institutions I had previous contact with a course tutor on one of the two courses within the institution, whilst within the third institution my supervisor had contact with a course leader. Using information found upon each institutional website (and my own knowledge of course contacts) key course contacts were emailed about the study (for each of the courses upon which the student participants were enrolled). The email explained the rationale for the study and asked for volunteers to take part in an interview. At least one course tutor from each course responded to this email, in some cases suggesting other tutors who may also be interested in the research. Interviews were then arranged in-person with as many tutors as possible related to each course. Interviews took place within each tutor's office. Course tutors' job titles included course leader, course director, course founder, and lecturers. In order to maintain anonymity further details are not included here.

Contact was also made with careers advisors. Within my own institution I was aware of the advisor attached to the music department and directly emailed the individual. Within the other institutions I used website material to find contact details for the careers service and emailed the department asking for details of the individual responsible for each department. After this the three careers advisors were contacted with personalised emails detailing the study and their proposed role within it. All three showed interest in the study and interviews were arranged. Whilst two of these took place in-person, one involved a Skype call due to logistical issues. Of the three advisors, two were responsible for providing advice and support for the music department, whilst one was responsible for doing the same for the psychology department. All had a number of different departments they were responsible for providing advice for, with the music/psychology department being one amongst a few. However, each advisor was the key careers contact for the music/psychology department within which the course observed within the current thesis sat. All the advisors had a number of years' experience working as advisors and tended to have been responsible for different departments during that time. Neither of the music careers advisors had musical backgrounds. All were involved in providing a mixture of one to one consultations

and support for students, alongside developing workshops for specific departments. All were also responsible for providing support to students across all levels within the institution, although one in particular stated that they were mostly involved with undergraduate students due to lack of take up from postgraduate students.

3.8 Materials

Both stages one and two consisted of semi-structured interviews with the participants. The interview schedules can be found in appendices 1 and 2, however, the semi-structured approach meant that questions were added and adjusted accordingly to fit each participant's situation.

Ethical considerations

Full ethical approval (reference number LTMUSC-017) (see appendix 3) for the research was gained from the University of Leeds before commencing the study. The interview schedule was designed so that it did not touch upon sensitive areas for participants. Participants were reminded that they were under no obligation to answer all the questions, and could drop out from the research at any time. Participants were given full details of their rights, including anonymity in any reports resulting from the research. All the students provided their written consent before the study began.

Stage One: Student Perspective

Table 5 shows the time period in which each of the phases were conducted. Each phase consisted of a single interview with the participants.

Table 5 Stage one timeline

Phase	Time period	Stage of transition
One	November 2012-February 2013	All have at least one semester's experience of degree
Two	May 2013-August 2013	Working on or finishing the dissertation
Three	November 2013-March 2014	Two working with extension, all others completed degree
Four	June 2014-July 2014	All remaining participants completed degree

Phase One

The interview consisted of three main sections: a warm up biographical section; a discussion surrounding the participants' master's degree and motivations to study; and a final section on future plans. Many of the interview questions were taken from the Slight (2012) study.

The interview began with warm up questions which aimed to uncover information about each participant's decision to study music at university. It was important to recognise what led participants to begin studying music in order to understand their current situations.

The next section focused on RQs a and b (motivations to study; experiences of the master's) by exploring the participants' motivations for pursuing a master's degree, experiences of their degree, comparison between actual experience and initial expectations, and perceived course outcomes. These topics were chosen to observe the decision-making process regarding postgraduate study, and what participants felt they had gained from the master's degree.

The final section of the interview focused on participants' expectations and plans, how they believed a master's degree would impact upon their future, and how prepared they felt for leaving master's study. These topics were chosen in an attempt to uncover how the master's degree and career decisions fit into the wider context of the participants' lives, and to answer RQs a and c (motivations to study; the impact of the master's degree upon career transitions) by exploring the extent to which participants expected the master's to impact upon their future. Looking at future career goals of students can help deduce motivations of current study (Breen & Lindsay, 1999) which will be vital in answering RQ1 (the nature of the career transition for music master's students).

Phase Two

The second phase explored developments since the first interview, students' experiences of their master's, and future aims and plans. This phase (and the two subsequent phases) provided an opportunity to follow up on discussions and seek clarification of comments made previously.

Students were first asked to describe and evaluate their experiences of the master's degree to date, including any activities they had been involved in, either as part of the course or as extra-curricular activities. This section was designed to answer RQb (experiences of the master's degree) and acted as a warm up to ensure developments were highlighted and could be touched upon within the rest of the interview.

The next section focused in more detail on the participants' studies, including: comparing actual experiences to expectations; evaluating enjoyment of the course and the outcomes so far; their perceptions of the department and their place within it; and coping mechanisms for balancing the course alongside other priorities. This section aimed to delve into the students' experiences of the master's degree, including how it fit into their lives more generally. Many of these questions were similar to those in the initial phase of interviews, and were designed as a point of comparison now that students had an additional six months experience of the course.

The final section looked ahead towards students' careers, including sources of advice and information, plans for the future, and how the degree had impacted upon these plans. The last few questions asked the students to evaluate the most and least enjoyable factors about studying the degree, and how the course had impacted upon their relationship with music. Finally, there was an opportunity for students to add anything else they felt was relevant. These questions allowed another point of comparison to phase one when exploring the impact of the master's degree upon career plans and development in order to answer RQc (the impact of the master's degree upon career transitions).

Phase Three

As in phase two, the interview began with questions on the students' experiences during the past six months, including their evaluations of the success of the master's degree and their reaction to feedback and marks gained (although not all the students had received their final marks at this point). Any plans or upcoming events mentioned during phase two were revisited to explore further developments.

The middle section focused upon participants' perceptions of their master's degrees in order to answer RQb (the experiences of the master's degree). As most of the students had now finished studying they were able to provide a retrospective opinion. Questions revolved around their perceptions of how the programme impacted upon them as individuals, their evaluations of the degree, and skills and knowledge they felt they had developed during the course.

Questions then moved on to the participants' experiences of the transition out of master's study, advice for others considering the same course, plans for the future and the place of music in their lives. This final section aimed to answer RQc (the impact of the master's degree upon career transitions) and allowed a point of comparison to previous

interview questions which asked students how prepared they felt for the transition out of their degree. Asking students what advice they would give to others who were considering the same course allowed them to succinctly state the ways in which they felt their own experiences could be enhanced, and provided an opportunity for students to recommend the course.

Phase Four

The final interview focused on participants' experiences of their current career or further study, how the master's degree affected their career, their retrospective view of the master's, and their future plans. This interview provided a final opportunity to explore the participants' career transition and their views on the master's degree after they had been out of study for between nine months and a year. The interview began with questions on the participants' experiences during the past six months, and explored any developments since phase three. The middle section of the interview focused on the master's degrees. Participants were asked to summarise their experiences of the master's degree and the transition from it. This section aimed to explore the participants' retrospective views of their degrees.

The next section explored participants' careers including current work/study experiences, the process of gaining their current position, their motivations for accepting their current position, and their longer term plans. The questions aimed to further explore ways in which the master's degree impacted upon their current, and future, work motivations and experiences in order to answer RQc (the impact of the master's degree upon career transitions).

The final section explored the role of music within the participant's life, including any changes to the place or importance it held and the role they expected it to play within their future career. These questions were included in order to observe how music influenced their career decisions and overall experiences of the degree. Finally, the interview concluded with a discussion on whether they felt that taking part in the current study had impacted upon their career transition.

Stage Two: Staff perspective

Stage two ran concurrently alongside the third phase of the stage one interviews between November 2013 and March 2014. This stage aimed to answer RQd (career advisors and course tutors' perspectives of the master's degree), in order to gain a more in-depth insight into master's study to answer RQ1 (the nature of the career transition for music master's students). Staff members connected to each of the courses were targeted and approached via email. The emails included an information sheet detailing the study, and a call for volunteers to take part in the research.

Course tutors

The aim of the interviews with tutors was to uncover more detail on how courses were run, the role of staff, and the outcomes of the degrees. The interviews lasted between 57 minutes and one hour 40 minutes, with most being around an hour long. Questions revolved around:

- the attraction of the courses and institution;
- aims and learning outcomes of the degrees;
- the place of the master's course within the department;
- support available to students;
- the role of the tutor.

Careers advisors

The interviews with advisors focused upon their views of postgraduate degrees and the possible outcomes of studying music master's courses. These interviews lasted between 35 minutes and one hour. The interview aimed to capitalise on the advisors' experiences of dealing with music master's students and the type of problems they present. Questions with the advisors revolved around:

- approaches for dealing with music master's students;
- perceived outcomes of the non-vocational master's degrees and motivations for studying them;
- the institutional approach to careers support and employability;
- the onus of responsibility for career preparation.

3.9 Procedure

Stage One: Student Perspective

The stage one participants took part in four semi-structured interviews conducted at intervals of six months during their programme, and the first year after leaving their master's degree. The frequency of interviews was chosen with the schedules of the participants in mind, as it was felt an interview every six months would allow the participants to accurately recall events, whilst not becoming a burden. During hand in dates and other busy periods (such as school holidays) some interviews had to be delayed to accommodate the participants' other commitments. It was felt that any greater time requirement for the study may have led to increased drop outs by those who felt unable to commit. In order to further reduce the likelihood of attrition a variety of details were taken from the participants, including home and mobile telephone numbers, and personal and work emails. The number of interviews in the current thesis is less than in Burland's (2005) longitudinal study. However, interviews three to seven within Burland's study were conducted in a predominantly structured manner. Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews producing high yields of data and being time intensive in terms of analysis and transcription, it was felt that four phases was sufficient within the current study.

Participants were recruited in two ways: where possible I approached individuals within classes to describe the study and ask for volunteers. However, at times this was not viable due to students being distance learners, and therefore emails were also sent out asking for volunteers. Interviews were then arranged over email. Where possible interviews took place in person, and in this case a spare room within the students' department of study was used which provided a quiet and private place within which the student could talk freely. Funding was obtained through SEMPRES Gerry Farrell Travel Scholarship in order to finance travel costs to each of the three institutions. The remaining interviews were conducted over Skype (five during phase one) and telephone (one during phase one). These remaining interviews were still felt to be effective in gaining a rich amount of data, and a sense of rapport appeared to develop with each participant.

Participants were shown the information sheet and asked to sign the consent form during phase one. During each phase the interview began after giving participants a chance to ask questions. Interviews ended with a further opportunity for the students to ask questions or add comments they felt had not been covered by the interview schedule. The

duration of interviews ranged between 25 minutes and three hours, with the majority lasting around an hour. Subsequent interviews were arranged over email and a similar procedure was followed. All interviews were recorded for transcription.

Stage Two: Staff perspective

The stage two participants each took part in one semi-structured interview which lasted between 35 minutes and one hour. Staff were approached via an email detailing the study and requesting volunteers. In many cases the tutors had knowledge of the study from a previous email which had requested information to be sent to their students. Interview dates were arranged via email. Wherever possible, interviews were conducted in person, facilitated through more funding from SEMPRES for travel costs. In total nine of the ten stage two interviews were conducted in person, whilst one took place over Skype. All in-person interviews were conducted in the office of the staff member, which provided a quiet and private space. Before the interview began, participants were given the information sheet and asked to sign a consent form, either electronically or by hand. After allowing individuals an opportunity to ask questions the interview began and was recorded. Interviews ended with a chance to ask further questions, and add anything they felt was missed by the interview schedule.

All interviews from stage one and two were transcribed verbatim using Express Scribe, an audio software programme designed to assist the transcription process.

3.10 Analysis

Two types of analysis were conducted:

- Stage one: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [IPA]
- Stage two: Thematic Analysis.

Stage One: Student perspective

Stage one was analysed using IPA which has its roots in phenomenology ('the study of conscious experiences'), hermeneutics ('the discipline devoted to interpretation') and symbolic interactionism ('the importance of the meanings that individuals give to situations') (Howitt & Cramer, 2011, p. 385). IPA was chosen to fit the study's aims to 'explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world' and consider individuals' perceptions of events rather than necessarily focusing upon the events

themselves (Smith & Osborn, 2004, p. 53). Participants may face similar circumstances but react differently, therefore it is important to observe their own perceptions of their own worlds. IPA is an inductive approach and so does not aim to prove or disprove previous hypotheses, but assumes an individual to be an expert in their own situation, and observes their perceptions of their own experiences (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). IPA is one of the most popular methods of phenomenological analysis (Lawthom & Tindall, 2011) and is particularly suited to small-scale research as it allows in-depth exploration of data (Denscombe, 2010). The labour-intensive approach and potential for large amounts of data has led to many phenomenological studies using between one and ten participants (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). IPA was previously used within the Slight (2012) study and facilitated an in-depth discussion of the students' motivations to study their master's degree.

IPA was chosen for analysis over discourse, narrative and grounded theory methods due to a closer fit with the study's aims. The aim of using IPA was to explore the ways individuals' perceive their experiences, and although participants' language is observed as part of this in order to understand their meaning (as in discourse analysis), it will not be the focus of the analysis (Frost, 2011). Narrative analysis focuses upon events, the ways in which an individual causes events to happen, and temporal features in order to create a story (Neuman, 2009). The focus upon the events themselves rather than the individual's perceptions of events, was not deemed to be appropriate for the aims of the current study. Grounded theory was also disbanded due to the small number of participants. In order to achieve grounded theory a higher number of participants may have been needed (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), which did not feel achievable or desirable within the current focus on non-vocational music postgraduate students. The current study did not attempt to make generalisations, but aimed to explore each individual's unique experience and perceptions of their career transition.

IPA prescribes a number of stages in which to analyse data. First the transcripts were read through whilst listening to the interview recordings a number of times in order to gain familiarity with the interviews. Key notes were written down in the left margin of each interview, followed by a list of ideas and themes in the right margin of the page. Connections between these themes were then sought, and themes clustered together to make subordinate codes which were grouped underneath a superordinate code (Smith & Eatough, 2007). After this process was completed in the first interview it was then repeated in the next, before finally comparing all the interviews and their codes together to create the

superordinate and subordinate codes found in the study. The codes were then checked alongside the original transcripts in an attempt to ensure the results of the research were as faithful to the original meanings of the participant as possible (Denscombe, 2010). Existing literature was used to explain the results, however, the themes presented are ones which emerged from the interview transcripts themselves.

Stage Two: Staff perspective

Stage two aimed to uncover more detail on how the courses were run, staff roles, and the outcomes of the master's degrees. The focus in these interviews was upon facts, although at times the staff did contribute their own beliefs and opinions, and these will be discussed where appropriate. Thematic analysis was chosen for this set of interviews as it aims to describe the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has been criticised for previously having no single identifiable approach (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) have outlined a number of phases as guidelines on how to conduct thematic analysis, the majority of which are similar to the process of conducting IPA which is outlined above. However, thematic analysis is flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as it is not associated with any particular theoretical orientation (Howitt & Cramer, 2011) and therefore can be used to focus more generally upon the interview data rather than being attached to the phenomenological theoretical perspective.

After analysing the transcripts from stage one for emerging themes, these themes were combined and compared with those from stage two. This was done by taking the themes from the thematic analysis and comparing them to related codes within the stage one data. For instance, the themes and subthemes of 'perceived roles of tutors' from the stage two interviews were compared to the themes and subthemes of 'social factors' and 'institutional factors' within stage one. In this way, references on a topic could be compared in order to explore any differences between the student and staff perceptions regarding the role of the tutor during the career transition.

3.11 Software

The process of analysis was supported by the use of the qualitative data analysis software tool Atlas.ti 7.1. The software enables the user to load in word documents and code segments of text on screen. Codes can be quickly generated and changed as the process of analysis continues, and lists of codes can be quickly retrieved with their associated quotes (O'Callaghan & Hiscock, 2007). Networks can be managed, creating visual representation of

the codes and the links between them. Using a software package enables the researcher to 'improve the rigour of analysis' (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000, para. 8) and was found to be especially useful with the large amount of data within the study. Atlas.ti has been used to aid analysis in previous studies related to music psychology (O'Callaghan & Hiscock, 2007).

3.12 Ethics

When conducting interviews there are three main ethical issues which need to be addressed, those of informed consent, anonymity and the consequences of taking part in the interviews (Cohen et al., 2011). Anonymity and consent were very much intertwined throughout the study. The participants' rights to anonymity were laid out within the consent form which each had signed, alongside their right to withdraw at any time and refuse to answer questions. Through this process an attempt was made to ensure that the interviews were not a negative experience for participants, and that they felt able to withdraw or skip questions which they were uncomfortable with. Additionally, at the end of each interview participants were asked whether they wished to see the transcript of their interview in order to check whether there were any discussions which they didn't want to be part of the analysis. This was important as some discussions did border upon sensitive and emotive subjects, for example conflict within marriages, and loneliness during the degree. The majority of participants said no, however, three of the staff members asked to view the quotes used within the thesis report in order to ensure they were not compromising in any way. After completing the report, the quotes and introductory text were emailed to each staff member and all provided written consent to use them within the thesis. When quoting and referencing the staff participants a distinct lack of description has been used throughout in order to maintain their anonymity. Additionally all the student participants are referred to as pseudonyms, and descriptions have been removed wherever it was felt these could lead to identification, an issue which appeared particularly pertinent due to the limited number of courses which exist within music psychology. These actions were taken in an attempt to ensure there were no negative consequences of taking part in the interview study.

At times students and staff participants spoke directly of each other which meant as the interviewer, I had more knowledge of the participant's actions than they had disclosed. For example, Ben's supervisor spoke of Ben highly and discussed some research activities which they had been working on which Ben had discussed during the interviews. Upon returning for the next interview with Ben an attempt was made to delve deeper into his

research experiences without disclosing the conversation which had taken place with his supervisor. Ben went on to discuss a number of different research projects he had been involved in, including the one discussed by his supervisor. If his supervisor had not disclosed this information, then the next interview with Ben may not have explored this particular area. This resulted in some interesting power relationships, where at times I was more aware of the participant than they knew. At all times an attempt was made to remain unbiased, and to explore particular relevant topics in a sensitive manner in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

Power relationships are significant within interview situations, where often the interviewer is considered to have the most power as they are able to structure the session through questioning and are trained to do so (Rafferty, 2004). However, this can result in participants feeling guarded and can thereby compromise the interview (Cohen et al., 2011). Through allowing participants control over the timing of the interview, and the semi-structured nature of each enabling individuals to talk about topics they felt were relevant, an attempt was made to limit the impact of power within the interviews. All participants were informed that the research would contribute towards a PhD thesis, and that any answers they gave would not be passed around internally, or impact upon their studying. By doing so I hoped to put participants at ease, and reduce the power relationship so that participants felt able to discuss both positive and negative aspects of their transition.

I was very aware of my indebtedness to my participants and wanted to ensure that I showed respect for their feelings and for their willingness to give up their time to take part in the study. In an attempt to repay their kindness I thanked them after each interview, allowed them time to ask any questions they had of me and talk, all of which are suggested as enabling participants to feel valued (Cohen et al., 2011). This resulted in some participants taking the time at the end of each interview to discuss my experiences of PhD study, which they seemed to value.

3.13 Reflexivity

During the analytical process the researcher plays an active role as they attempt to interpret the transcripts. Whilst trying to remain faithful to participants' original meanings, the interpretations formed by the researcher are thought to be influenced by their own experiences and preconceptions (Smith & Eatough, 2007). Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm suggests there are multiple perspectives on reality and highlights the interaction of the researcher upon the research outcomes (Willis, 2007). As such the thesis is socially co-constructed in a number of ways between the researcher, the participants and their individual experiences (Creswell, 2013).

There has been a growing acceptance that qualitative research should include some of the author's biographical details within the analysis to ensure readers are able to understand how the researcher's own experiences may have influenced their interpretations of the data (Denscombe, 2010). Therefore, having studied a music psychology master's degree myself, and studying at one of the target institutions within the study, it is important that I am aware of how my own experiences may impact upon my interpretations. Where appropriate, my own reflections will be included within the discussion. After deciding to focus upon academic research within my own studying and finding this suited me much more than performing I focused upon this within my career. I therefore became frustrated at realising that much of the literature on music focused upon performers and teachers, as I felt I fit into neither of these categories and knew that I was not alone. My own experiences therefore inspired me to pursue the current research questions, especially after having valued my own time studying music. Additionally these experiences impacted upon the questions I asked during the interviews themselves. At the start of this study I had two years' experience as a qualitative researcher, and my interview technique developed during the course of the study. Conducting longitudinal interviews allowed me to return to questions I had not fully probed within previous interviews, although this issue lessened as my technique improved throughout the study.

There was evidence of my active presence as a researcher within the interviews when participants asked me questions about my own experience, an example of which was when Laura discussed her experiences of her dissertation, and asked how my own dissertation had worked; and when Lisa was discussing going for drinks with her undergraduate lecturers and asked whether the same thing would be likely to take place in

the UK. All the participants were aware of my own knowledge (after I explained to them my background and PhD aims at the start of the interviews) and this was highlighted when the interviewees began asking questions of me, to confirm my own understanding and knowledge of certain aspects of studying. As Keenan (2012) states, when the interviewer is asked questions about their own experiences the roles within the interview are momentarily changed. At all times I attempted to be honest and open about my own experiences.

The methodical and rigorous approach of IPA helped me to feel confident that I was reflecting the participants' experiences within the themes. There were some themes which resonated personally with my own experiences, including the influence of partners, as I lived with my own throughout my time studying and this influenced my decisions regarding living away from campus, and ultimately my experiences of studying. When hearing about the desire to settle down and build a future I could empathise, as this resonated with my own aims at the time. I was interested in the concept of delaying studying until children were grown up, after my mother studied and worked whilst I was a young girl. Whilst acknowledging the difficult of balancing these roles, I found these stories to have a sadness about them. In my analysis and discussion I focused upon the participants' own words about their experiences, again using the rigorous analytical method in order to explore their own life experiences and values, whilst acknowledging that this differed from my own background. Additionally, the chapter on personal development was interesting as I felt that my own confidence and identity had developed throughout my period of studying. I also found I was inspired by my participants to gain more experience throughout my PhD study in order to prepare for my transition out of PhD study. By using quotations throughout and embedding the discussion within the context of each participant I've attempted to ensure that the following discussion is a faithful representation of the perceptions of the participants.

In order to control for any bias that may have arisen from my own experiences, an independent experienced qualitative researcher validated the themes obtained from the interviews (discussed further in 10.3). This form of peer review aimed to ensure that the developed themes were an accurate representation of the original transcripts. The researcher was external to the project, and has a number of years of experience conducting qualitative research. The validator's area of expertise is related to the current topic, being focused upon music education in schools. The validator was provided with background of the study, and a number of pages of transcripts for two different participants for each interview

phase. Blank copies of the transcripts and annotated versions were given to the validator who then considered the transcripts and the coding. We then discussed the analysis and the validator concluded that the themes were felt to accurately represent the content of the transcripts. This form of validation has been used previously whereby an experienced researcher external to the project has peer reviewed themes emerging from transcripts in order to maximise the reliability of the analysis, for example by Burland (2005). Other qualitative research has relied solely upon the methodical analytical methods when developing themes, without gaining external validation (Gee, 2010; Juuti, 2012).

Respondent validation was not used within the current study for a number of reasons. Whilst the process of conducting repeated interviews with participants may impact upon their thought processes or behaviour, the methodological design of the study attempted to keep this effect to a minimum. The likelihood of impacting upon participants' decision making process was felt to be a greater risk if they were asked to validate the analysis conducted on their transcripts. Additionally, it was felt that aspects of the analysis may be upsetting or distressing for the participants, particularly where terms from the literature such as 'helpless coping mechanisms' were used. By presenting themes back to each participant for validation the risk of causing distress or upset seemed possible, a risk which conflicts with ethical responsibilities as a researcher (Social Research Association, 2003). Instead, the staff interviews helped corroborate the structure and requirements of the courses, and the methodical analytical approach and peer review were used in an attempt to ensure this report maintains its validity.

Brief summaries of each participant are presented below in order to present the cultural, social and educational background needed to frame the discussion of their experiences of the master's degree.

3.14 Participant summaries

Key sections in which findings are addressed are included in brackets within each participant's summary, e.g. (4.4). The number in brackets refer to the section numbers which can be located in the table of contents.

Ben

Ben held a joint music honours degree. He was motivated to return to education after feeling a lack of direction whilst working as an instrumental teacher and fearing that he would end up miserable like many of his teacher colleagues (see 4.4). Ben was attracted to the degree due to being unsure what it entailed, and wanting to learn a new area of interest within music. Ben studied as a full-time student, onsite at the institution, and this suited his desire to get involved within the department in a number of different ways. Ben was self-motivated, and enjoyed challenging himself to learn new things. He found a renewed sense of self-fulfilment during the degree and felt the course content suited his musical beliefs and values (6.1.1; 6.1.2; 6.4.2). Ben tended to go beyond the course requirements by attending conferences, chairing discussions and volunteering as a research assistant. He maintained a good relationship with his supervisor throughout the study, who he saw as a role model and was supportive and encouraging towards him staying in academia (5.4.2). Ben hoped to continue into PhD study but was unsuccessful in applying for funding (4.1.2; 7.2.2). He was therefore working as a teacher and continuing to research in the hope he would successfully gain PhD funding in the future. Ben maintained a strong musical identity throughout the study (6.1.2).

Amy

Amy held an undergraduate degree in music. She began her music psychology master's degree after a year out in which she lived at her parents' home and gained some work experience within customer service in the public sector. She studied full-time whilst working part-time. She was motivated to study for personal interest, and did not feel the degree was related to her future career (4.2.1). She had moved to the city of her master's institution in order to begin the master's degree and struggled to motivate herself until her course community became more developed (5.3.2; 6.4.1). Amy held wide ranging interests, and lacked strategies for narrowing them down which caused difficulties when choosing dissertation topics, and when considering possible future job options. She was uncertain of her abilities and lacked the confidence to approach her tutors for advice (5.4.3). Additionally, Amy struggled to understand the outcomes of her period of study and how it may be

beneficial to her future (7.1.2). She struggled with the non-vocational focus of the master's degree and hoped to continue onto a vocational degree in order to gain a sense of direction and a prescribed career path (7.1.2). Amy hoped to gain experience which would allow her to enter a vocational degree but did not appear to have any strategies for finding or gaining such experience, or developing more coherent career plans (7.1.2; 7.2.1; 7.2.3). Towards the end of the study Amy's decisions became intertwined with her partner's goals (5.2.1). Amy no longer felt that she fit others' perceptions of what it is to be a musician as she wasn't musically active (6.1.2).

Janet

Janet held an undergraduate degree in a music subject. She was a mature student who was returning to education after working and touring as a professional performer. She had been motivated to pursue the music psychology master's degree due to wanting to improve herself and follow her interests (4.5). She hoped to gain a stable income but stressed the importance of a career she enjoyed over money. After some years out of education Janet struggled with the transition into studying and had low levels of academic self-efficacy, especially when she compared herself to others on the course (6.3.4). She felt disconnected from the degree due to living away from the department, studying part-time, being older than her course mates and having childcare responsibilities. Her experiences of studying were impacted by the death of a parent and her subsequent illness (5.1.2). During this period she reevaluated her plans and decided to gain more work as a musician (7.2.2). I was unable to contact Janet for our final interview but by phase 3 Janet was working with an extension on her dissertation and had gained more performing work. Janet had a strong musical identity, and felt the master's degree helped her truly understand the benefits of music (6.1.2).

Chloe

Chloe held an undergraduate degree in performance. She was an international distance learner student. Chloe had originally planned a performing career but found the job auditions to be stressful. She was now focused upon teaching as a career (4.6.2; 4.7.2). Chloe was motivated to study in order to increase her understanding of performance anxiety and improve her teaching practice (4.6). She studied as a distance learner due to the lack of music psychology courses in her home country (4.1.1). Chloe struggled with the isolation of studying (5.3.1; 5.4.3; 5.4.4) and the English marking schemes during her degree (5.4.5), both of which were exacerbated by her low academic self-efficacy (6.3.3). However, Chloe was

motivated to continue studying as she felt the degree had impacted positively upon her teaching style and introduced her to a new teaching style (7.3.2). She gained more work during the study, and by phase 4 had gained more pupils and was financially supporting her partner (4.7.2; 5.2.1). Chloe felt more confident and assertive within her teaching practice. She described herself as a musician (6.1.2).

Tom

Tom held an undergraduate degree in music. He was studying as a distance learner whilst working as a musician. Tom was naturally curious and wanted to test his ability to succeed within academia. He lacked a sense of personal identity and achievement within his job (4.4; 6.1.1). He felt strongly enthused by the course itself (especially after a previously disappointing undergraduate degree), enjoyed learning new things (4.5) and being part of the online course community (5.3.1). In particular he found his dissertation fulfilling as he felt ownership over the design and implementation of the project (4.4). After finishing the master's degree Tom struggled with feeling a lack of progression or achievement (7.1.1), and found himself searching for things to learn to keep him stimulated. Tom had initially hoped to continue into PhD study, however, had decided against this by phase 4 due to wanting to maintain a stable income in order to support himself and his partner (4.1.2; 4.7.2; 5.2.1). He felt that music would always be a part of his life and after developing a broader understanding of music during his master's degree Tom felt that he was more of an all-round musician.

Ruth

Ruth was one of only two participants in the study to continue from an undergraduate degree into full-time postgraduate study within the same institution and without any break. She had first considered master's study after wanting to prolong her student lifestyle, and wanting to continue working with her supervisor (5.4.1). She enjoyed the course, but especially valued the opportunity to remain attached to the university, her supervisor and her friends (4.2.1). She had originally hoped to continue into PhD study but felt less certain of this career path as the degree progressed. Ruth was able to recognise the outcomes of her studying and perceive the range of careers in which they would be beneficial, despite not having a clear career path by the end of the study (7.1.2). Ruth was compromising with her partner in order to find a place to live in which they could both find work they enjoyed. She looked forward to moving away from the university city and settling down (4.7.1). She identified herself as a musician and her social life was strongly related to musical activities.

Phoebe

Phoebe held an undergraduate degree in music. Phoebe was a full-time European student studying onsite, who had moved to the city of the institution in order to study. She was motivated to study in order to move towards an academic career and pursue her interest in music psychology (4.2; 4.2.1). She had been motivated to study in England due to her home country lacking music psychology courses and her desire to develop her English language skills (4.1.1). The master's degree enabled Phoebe to develop a greater knowledge of her topic, gain independence and make contacts. Phoebe had clear career plans and was proactive in making the most of relevant opportunities outside of the core course content (4.3). Phoebe did gain a PhD position, however, was unsuccessful in gaining funding which meant she was working full-time in order to support her part-time study. This led to a crisis of identity for Phoebe who had hoped to focus upon her PhD (7.1.1). Phoebe originally maintained a strong musical identity, however, by the end of the study this was threatened as she no longer had time to participate in music and was now studying in a different department. She hoped that music would continue to be a part of her life and research in some way in the future.

Lisa

Lisa held an undergraduate degree in music from a Conservatoire. She was an international distance learner who studied whilst working full-time as a teacher. She was motivated to study a master's degree by feeling that as a teacher she was expected to hold a postgraduate qualification. However, once on the course she realised an interest in the subject area, and her career aspirations drastically changed to wanting to stay within academia (4.5; 6.1.1; 7.2.1). Lisa's academic identity and confidence developed during the period of study (6.4.1; 6.4.2). She felt well connected to her peers and her supervisors via social media (5.3.1). Alongside studying Lisa attempted to take on more teaching work than usual in order to financially prepare for PhD study. She chose a PhD position within her home country as she felt this would enable her to get more involved in the department. However, she struggled with the transition into PhD study and felt she did not belong in the department or get on with her supervisor (6.4.2; 6.5.2). Lisa hoped that her confidence and enjoyment of studying would return soon. Lisa described herself as a musician due to being classically trained and making a living through teaching (6.1.2).

Hannah

Hannah held an undergraduate degree in psychology. Hannah was a full-time home student. After a couple of years out working as a research assistant, Hannah had decided to pursue her master's degree in order to bridge into PhD study. Hannah struggled to maintain her motivation during the course, and found the content dry. Her hopes to continue into PhD study were challenged by her difficulties during the master's degree (6.5.2). Whilst studying Hannah worked in retail but found this lacked intellectual stimulation. After completing the master's degree Hannah felt dissatisfied as she lacked a clear career path. She had expected to find the course more vocationally applicable and useful. By the final interview Hannah had accepted a position in a retail company. Despite feeling regretful that this job would not use her degree skills she decided to accept and was enjoying working with friends in a more positive retail environment than she was previously used to (4.6.2). She left the option of PhD study open for the long-term future, but was currently focused on her work. Hannah did not call herself a musician, and part of her reason for choosing the course was that she hoped to better understand the effect music had on others (8.3).

Matt

Matt held an undergraduate degree majoring in music. Matt was an international full-time student who moved to the city of his institution to study onsite. He had been motivated to study a master's degree as he hoped to do a PhD and go into research. Matt lacked interest in some of the course content due to already being knowledgeable in many of the areas covered after his undergraduate degree (6.2.1). Matt valued the dissertation, as he enjoyed working on his own topic and being able to present his findings at a conference (6.4.2; 6.5.1). He had a good relationship with his supervisor, whom he felt showed a general interest in his topic and persuaded him to publish and continue into PhD study. Matt was uncertain of the skills he had gained from the master's degree, but after successfully passing his course he felt more confident in approaching PhD study. However, due to being unsuccessful in gaining PhD funding Matt had been forced to return home to his parents' house and find a job. He did not see this as a long-term solution, but still appeared uncertain of his long-term plans. He had begun to feel less certain about trying again for a PhD position and funding as he wanted to progress with his life, which for him involved earning money and a sense of stability (4.7.1; 5.1.1). Matt still identified as a musician despite being unable to participate as much as he would like (6.1.2).

Jodie

Jodie held an undergraduate degree in music. She was a mature distance learner who studied whilst working as a professional musician and caring for her children. She hoped the master's degree would help her to improve her writing skills, and develop knowledge in order to be able to focus on more enjoyable work (5.1.2), and gain a more stable income (4.7.2). She struggled with the course content during the first term of study as it lacked relevance to her life, however, was more motivated during the second term as she was directly able to use the knowledge she learnt in the course to benefit her own professional practice (6.2.2; 7.3.2). Jodie struggled with the isolation of distance learning and felt the Facebook group was no replacement for in-person contact (5.3.1). This appeared to be particularly difficult due to the lack of support from her partner, family and friends. Despite this struggle she completed the master's, and felt it provided her with a sense of achievement, more confidence and a challenge that she no longer found within her teaching work (4.6). Jodie planned to continue with her teaching in the long-term, with an aim to take things at a more relaxed pace for a while after the high stress period of the degree. She hoped to study a PhD, however, she was put off by the lack of support she had received during the master's degree (5.1.2). She decided that at this stage in her life she needed to focus on her children. Jodie worked and identified as a musician.

Laura

Laura held an undergraduate degree in psychology. After working for a year to save up for her master's degree, Laura was a full-time international student who had moved to the city of the institution in order to study onsite. She needed a master's degree in order to pursue her plans to work as a research assistant and pursue PhD study. She had chosen the course due to having an English passport, and wanting to undertake a one year master's degree (4.1.1). Laura became disillusioned with her course, feeling that it did not lead to the employment opportunities she had hoped for (7.2.3). However, she did manage to gain a paid position as a research assistant by actively approaching research projects to ask for work. The research assistant work was not consistent and she could not rely upon it for money. She struggled with money during the transition out of her full-time master's degree and became disheartened at applying to a wide range of jobs and hearing nothing back (7.1.1). However, she eventually gained a job which provided her with a stable income despite being unrelated to the research assistant jobs she would have ideally preferred. By the final interview, she had gained a place on a PhD research project in her home country

(7.2.2). She looked forward to using her research practically in the future, settling down and gaining a sense of stability for herself (4.7.1). Music was important to Laura and a large part of her social life. However, she did not feel as musical as many of her course mates.

Fiona

Fiona held an undergraduate degree in music. After a number of years out of education, Fiona returned as a distance learner who balanced studying alongside running her business. She had previously hoped to become a performer, however, had a negative experience which led to her having high levels of performance anxiety ever since (4.5; 7.3.2). Despite this difficulty with performing she saw herself as a musician, although had started to doubt this in comparison to others on her course due to her day job being unrelated to music. Fiona was studying in order to continue her professional development, learn about performance anxiety, maintain her connection to music (6.1.2) and eventually continue onto PhD study. The course exceeded her expectations, especially due to the online Facebook community which she found useful. She felt this community was important in allowing her to feel that others could relate to her experiences and there was a sense of comradeship. However, she struggled to manage her study alongside her work, as she tended to work more than full-time hours even before starting the course, and therefore lacked a social life during the master's degree. Fiona's deeper understanding of performance anxiety meant she was beginning to conquer her own issues (7.3.2). She developed a new sense of confidence after managing to successfully pass her master's degree and this led her to feel more able to approach other challenges. After finishing the degree she was working on setting up her business so that she could keep it running smoothly whilst she pursued her PhD study.

Tina

Tina remained in her undergraduate institution to study her full-time master's degree straight after completing her first degree. Originally she hoped to continue into PhD study, however, early on in the master's degree she decided against this career path and became interested in arts administration. She found that a single module negatively impacted upon her enjoyment of the whole course, as she found it very stressful and lacked the support she desired. However, retrospectively she found that many jobs were asking for skills she had gained during the module. She took an optional module in performance and valued the chance to concentrate and focus upon her instrument for another year. Her confidence in playing increased and she gained opportunities which eventually led to her accepting a teaching job after she finished her master's degree. Tina realised her enjoyment of teaching

and decided to remain within this area (4.6.2; 7.2.3). She hoped to move in with her partner within a year. She felt that the town in which they planned to live was full of talented musicians working as teachers, and as such although she hoped to be able to work full-time as an instrumental teacher she expected to also have to work within education in another manner, possibly within an arts organisation.

Samantha

Samantha held an undergraduate music degree. Samantha was a full-time international student who moved to the city of the institution in order to study onsite. She had been motivated to study in order to learn, as she felt restless. She hoped that the master's degree would enable her to fulfil her dream of PhD study (7.2.3), and chose the institution because the course tutors' interests closely matched her own. She spent much of her time involved in music in a variety of ways. During the master's degree Samantha's confidence in her ability as a performer increased, and she began to believe that this could be a possibility for a future career. Samantha found feedback from her supervisor valuable in developing her academic skills (6.3.3). She was proactive during the degree and made the most of opportunities, including taking part in organising a conference, and developing contacts. The contacts she gained during her degree led to her gaining work as a reviewer for her national newspaper once she finished her degree. She found that the master's degree allowed her the time to get involved in all these activities which were beneficial for her future. After leaving the course Samantha began teaching in a college and university (which required her to hold a master's degree qualification) (7.2.4). She enjoyed teaching and working with individuals who showed an enthusiasm and interest in music.

Steph

Steph held an undergraduate music degree. After a number of years out of education, Steph studied her part-time master's degree onsite whilst working as a teacher and performer. Steph hoped that the master's degree would enable her to gain more work once her child started school. She hoped to better understand her teaching methods, and how they could be beneficial to students' learning (4.6). The master's degree had a positive impact upon Steph's general sense of self, leaving her feeling more fulfilled and allowing her to be more than just a 'mum' (8.6.2). Steph began to consider PhD study after a suggestion from her supervisor (5.4.2). However, her ability to do a PhD depended upon gaining funding and her family circumstances. She enjoyed her teaching job as she felt she was an integral part to the students' education, which increased her sense of self-worth. Her students were enthusiastic

and she was able to use the skills and knowledge she had developed over the years within the role. In particular, she felt more confident in being able to justify her teaching methods to others and felt she was gaining audible results with her students.

The following chapters discuss the findings from the study, with each focusing upon a separate, but interrelating area:

Chapter 4: The motivations and life goals of the participants leading them to study and persevere with the master's degree

Chapter 5: The broader social and environmental factors which impacted upon the students' experiences during their career transitions

Chapter 6: The personal development of the students during their master's degree and beyond

Chapter 7: The impact of the degree upon the participants' vocational development

Within each chapter subthemes are introduced and elaborated in an attempt to explore the nature of the career transition for the students. Staff and student quotes are used concurrently, with each identified in brackets.

The following chapter focuses upon the motivations and life goals of the participants in order to provide a context within which their career decisions were taking place. Due to the participants' motivations changing over time, this theme is also touched upon within chapter 7.

4 : Motivations and life goals

The following chapter aims to develop an understanding of participants' motivations in order to facilitate later consideration of their personal and vocational development, and influential social factors. The interactive motivation of the participants is highlighted, with personal and social factors impacting upon participants' decisions of where, when, what and how to study. Participants were generally motivated to gain a greater sense of fulfilment within their lives and were using the master's degree to find a career and position which fit their professional (actual or ideal) identity and enabled them to achieve their life goals.

4.1 *Choice of institution*

A number of factors were important when choosing an institution in which to study, including: location, financial issues and the course content.

4.1.1 *Course location and structure*

Participants' choices of institution were limited by personal commitments (including work and family) and a lack of suitable courses. Those with dependent families tended to restrict the locations in which they considered master's study. Steph and Janet both studied as part-time onsite students whilst caring for their children. Both of these participants lived near institutions which provided master's degrees in an area of interest to them and therefore enrolled on these courses. The results are similar to those found within the 2013 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey [PTES] (Leman et al., 2013), where location factors were most strongly considered by part-time onsite students. Those with external commitments who did not live as close to a suitable institution tended to rely upon distance learning degrees in order to pursue master's study, which reduced their options radically. Chloe, Tom, Lisa, Jodie, and Fiona had priorities which prevented them from feeling able to move and so enrolled upon the same part-time distance learning degree. Chloe, Tom, Lisa and Fiona's external priorities revolved around work commitments, whilst Jodie's related to her family and children. All the part-time students sought to find a master's degree which suited their interests and fit alongside their other commitments. Perceived opportunities and barriers within students' lives impacted upon their decisions about whether, and how, to study, and therefore impacted upon their experiences of the degree.

Those who lacked external commitments tended to be more focused upon course content and the academic staff when deciding where to study. A lack of external commitments within her home country and a desire to develop her academic English

motivated Phoebe to study in England. This corroborates past research which suggests that opportunities to gain experience within a different country and further develop language skills can act as motivators for international students (HEFCE, 2013d). Phoebe was able to take the year to study in England as she had no commitments within her home country. The master's degree was a period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) for Phoebe as she lacked the commitments typical of adulthood (such as a career, mortgage, family or romantic partner) and therefore felt free to explore an emerging professional identity.

Differences in the length and requirements of master's degrees across countries led Laura to study in England as it shortened the period of time she needed to wait before being able to start her PhD study. In Australia Laura would have been required to complete an additional year of study to gain an honours degree (making the undergraduate degree four years in total) before completing her two year master's degree. By studying in an English institution Laura was able to start her one year master's degree straight after the three years of her undergraduate degree. In this way Laura reduced the time she was studying by two years, an important factor due to her desire to start a family within the future.

4.1.2 Financial issues

Financial factors influenced the timing of enrolment and choice of institution for master's and subsequent PhD study. The fear of rising tuition fees impacted upon the timing of Jodie's master's degree as she felt that increases in postgraduate course costs would be likely to follow the rising undergraduate tuition fees (from 2012). She therefore decided to study whilst her children were still young, a period which she would normally have avoided due to the detrimental impact this had upon her ability to focus on her course work. Jodie worried that a rise in fees would prevent her from being able to afford to study, therefore her decision to start earlier than she had previously planned was deemed necessary. Additionally Jodie chose to study as a distance learner due to the relatively low annual course fees (compared to those at a closer alternative institution).

The availability of scholarships was an important factor when choosing PhD institutions with some participants suggesting that their final location was dependent upon where they could gain funding:

What would make your final decision about where you went? What would you be looking for?

Erm, funding, I have zero money left for school, other than that I don't really care where I go, I'm very flexible in terms of what country I live in. (Matt, phase 2)

Matt focused on gaining the funding which would allow him to study (wherever this may be). Ben was more motivated to remain within his master's institution, however, he lacked awareness of sources of funding which led to him missing application deadlines. During his second attempt to gain PhD funding Ben applied for the one source he thought existed, and felt optimistic at his chances. However, after being unsuccessful he was made aware of other potential sources of funding he had missed out on:

it became quickly clear that there had been other funding, no one had mentioned this to me, no one at any point had made this clear [...] apparently it would have been as simple as emailing the head of the department and saying 'put me in for the funding' (Ben, phase 4)

Ben was frustrated by the lack of clarity regarding potential sources of funding available to him, especially as he had been encouraged by a range of people within the department to continue within academia. Due to an initial reliance upon his tutor for information and a lack of clarity regarding scholarship information from the department, Ben's plans to continue into PhD study were delayed. Ben began considering other institutions:

I'd want to know by this time next year that I was going to get on with it in September, October. Erm, and I would even contemplate, like I say, a more radical approach or whatever, because [...] in northern Europe there are universities which are free, and you think, well you could probably strike some kind of deal there (Ben, phase 4)

Ben wanted funding so that he could study full-time and immerse himself into the academic lifestyle. Ben hoped to pursue an academic career and therefore felt it was important that he focused on developing his academic knowledge, making contacts and forming a positive professional identity. For Ben, gaining PhD funding was a lifestyle choice which would enable him to move towards his future ideal career. Tom needed funding in order to enter PhD study due to having financial responsibilities, including a mortgage and a partner whom he felt he needed to support. Like Ben, he found the lack of information on funding sources difficult as it meant he did not understand his potential to gain financial backing, which reduced his confidence in feeling able to leave his secure job. Finance is thought to be one of the toughest barriers to PhD study generally (González-Moreno, 2012), therefore it is clear to see the impact that unclear funding information may have upon students' ability to study. Previous reports have suggested that cohesive impartial information for postgraduates is scarce and difficult to find (Bowman et al., 2004), with many relying upon information from tutors or institutional websites (HEFCE, 2013d). Lacking awareness of PhD funding

opportunities created difficulties and obstacles to participants' continuation within higher education. Financial factors are discussed further in section 5.1.

4.1.3 Course content

When considering institutions, many participants felt a sense of fit within certain departments, either in terms of specific interests or more generally. The perceived congruence between individuals and their institutions influenced their overall enjoyment and motivations during the degree. Institutions determined the content of courses which influenced students' developing academic and professional identities (Lairio et al., 2011), therefore it was important that individuals chose institutions whose values were congruent with their own. Generally, individuals were attracted to courses which allowed a degree of flexibility regarding free modules or topic assignments and in which they felt they could follow their interests. Students and tutors tended to agree on the potential attractiveness of flexibility within courses. A tutor at institution B discussed the reason for allowing a free-choice module within the master's degree:

it allows for students to study an extra module in performance, composition or aesthetics or musicology or something like that, so that they can continue with other aspects of their musical engagement whilst also studying [music psychology], and we felt that some students would find that quite attractive, just for sort of carrying on other aspects of their musical studies that they might have developed during undergraduate studies, or to develop new skills that they might want to use later on, or just that they're interested in. (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

The chance to study an optional module enabled students to maintain a broad range of interests, whilst also focusing upon content relevant to them. In the case of Tina, this allowed her to study a course which she felt might be viewed positively by potential employers, whilst also continuing to perform and study a subject she enjoyed. Tina originally considered a master's degree in performance, however, she felt this may be viewed less favourably by potential employers than an academic subject. She therefore decided to continue performing whilst studying film music and found a musicology course which allowed her to focus on both these interests at once. She continued at her undergraduate institution because of the flexible course content and her desire to continue working with her supervisor. Her continuation of performance led to increased confidence in her playing and a job offer as a peripatetic teacher. Without the flexibility of the course Tina might not

have been able to continue the musicology *and* performance modules which led to her feeling more confident and able to accept the job offer.

Many of the course tutors described interest as an important motivator for students. A music psychology tutor felt that, due to the niche nature of the course and the lack of a vocational focus, individuals were intrinsically motivated to study the degree. This comment seems to contradict the institution's approach to dissertations, in which students were asked to choose from a list of prescribed topics. However, the tutor felt that students could be motivated by seeing further potential within their work:

the best thing is if students can be persuaded or convinced that this is a really interesting topic, that we can get a publication out of it and it's really worth doing and then that intrinsic motivation, if that sets in, that would help with most obstacles that come along the way (Institution C, music psychology tutor)

Contrasting with the tutor's comments, the literature suggests that those who feel a lack of autonomy may be less motivated to succeed (Bigge & Hunt, 1980). The negative comments regarding the dissertation from two of the three participants at institution C suggest that students struggled to maintain motivation without this sense of autonomy. It seemed that students were more able to view the potential benefits of work they themselves were interested in. Tutors at institutions A and B felt free-choice dissertations were attractive to potential students who entered the course with specific interests or agendas. Whilst the rest of the course aimed to broaden these interests, the dissertation allowed students to focus on a topic they felt would be beneficial and relevant to their own lives. When students have a choice over topic areas they tend to develop greater interest in the work, engage on a deeper level and feel more self-determined (West, 2013). Such choice may enable individuals to feel their own experiences and interests are valued, therefore influencing the development of a positive academic identity. The differences in the approaches between the institutions suggest a difference in attitude between the psychology departments and music departments which impacted upon the course content and students' experiences, as discussed further in chapter 9.

Tutors discussed the unique selling points of their courses and the way in which they may attract students:

Some people are attracted by the scientific route which you wouldn't necessarily focus upon that much in a music department (Institution C, music psychology tutor)

Students have said to me they look at the course and think 'okay that' (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

Contrastingly, a musicology tutor felt that students may be more attracted towards the *institution* than the course. He felt this was due to the broad nature of his musicology master's degree, meaning that the course was not specific enough in itself to attract people towards it. The institution was in the process of rebranding and focusing their degree in order to differentiate themselves from the market. Building a course with a unique focus or mode of study did appear to be beneficial when attracting students. However, confusion arose when students were unsure of the differences between courses, this was particularly the case between two of the music psychology degrees. Amy described her uncertainty regarding the degree titles:

I just didn't really understand what was different about it to this one. They didn't make that entirely clear [...] I went with my gut reaction, which I often do and it seems to work out most of the time (Amy, phase 1)

Amy decided upon the music psychology course which she felt to be more clearly described within the pre-enrolment literature. Past studies have found course content to be a key factor when deciding upon an institution for taught postgraduate study (HEFCE, 2013d), therefore it is not surprising that Amy decided upon the course which she understood better from the pre-enrolment literature.

Fiona chose her master's institution because it felt 'relevant' (Fiona, phase 1) to her. Fiona had ruled out other institutions due to finding their websites difficult to navigate. This ultimately led to uncertainty about the relevance of the course for her, and highlights the need for institutions to provide accurate and accessible course information for potential students. Information relating to assessments, course dates, timetables, staff members and entry requirements are influential when deciding upon taught postgraduate study (HEFCE, 2013d). Struggling to navigate a website is likely to mean that students lack vital information within one or more of these areas, restricting their ability to feel confident that a course matches their expectations, needs and interests.

A number of social and personal factors impacted upon the students' choice of institution. Participants' external commitments and values influenced their initial perceptions regarding the feasibility of study. Flexible courses enabled individuals with external commitments to fit the degree within their lives. Course content appeared to be one of the most influential factors for the participants, and degrees which allowed flexibility to follow interests were viewed positively. The current results corroborate a HEFCE study in which 94-99% of participants stated course content to be the most important factor when choosing a degree (HEFCE, 2013d). Although location, financial factors and modes of study provided opportunities and obstacles for the participants, all chose courses which matched their interests. Providing adequate information to students before their enrolment will enable them to better understand the differences between the courses and in turn make informed decisions. This highlights the importance of branding and clear information for potential master's students and will be discussed further in chapter 9.

4.2 *Desire to Learn*

Intrinsic interests and a desire to learn are known to be important motivators for postgraduate students (O'Neill, 1995; Smith, 2010) and music students (Hallam, 2006). Within the current study, intrinsic interests and a desire to learn were important for driving the initial decision to study and the perseverance throughout the degree. Some participants felt that academia suited their natural curiosity:

I really like to explore my own ideas, and not just my own ideas, but ideas in general, my favourite question is why? And yes there's just so much to find out about (Phoebe, phase 1)

I love books and you know, literature and reading all the arts stuff as well, so I think I just always had a curiosity in all sorts of things (Jodie, phase 1)

I guess I'm just one of those sorts of people that just finds everything interesting to an extent. I just get interested in so many different things and kind of get carried away with it (Tina, phase 1)

The main reason I'm here [doing the master's degree] and the main thing I like doing is just I like learning a lot (Ben, phase 2)

The quotes above are examples of discussions revolving around an intrinsic desire to learn. The desire to learn and develop an interest are types of learning goals (Marsh et al., 2003).

They are intrinsic motivations revolving around a desire to learn more, and gain mastery through knowledge. Such learning styles are likely to be beneficial for students' levels of perseverance throughout the degrees. Although students might have had personality traits which meant they were more predisposed to being curious, the ways in which their curiosity had been piqued in the subject area differed.

4.2.1 Developing an interest

The mature and non-mature students tended to differ in the ways in which their interests in the subject areas had developed. The mature students generally became interested in an area related to their professional practice whilst the non-mature participants tended to have developed an interest during their undergraduate studies. Generally, the non-mature musicologists continued the subject of their undergraduate music degree, whilst the music psychologists were introduced to the topic during their undergraduate dissertation or lectures. Phoebe had attended a lecture on music psychology during her undergraduate degree and found it interesting due to the academic conversations it facilitated. After receiving only one lecture on the topic she searched for master's degrees relating to this area. A limited knowledge in the broad subject area of music psychology motivated Phoebe to explore it further, whilst others were motivated to continue studying a particular topic within the area of music psychology. Ruth was exposed to music psychology through a course module which introduced a new topic area and new research methods. Ruth became interested in interviewing others about their musical participation. This research method suited Ruth's social orientation, as she consistently described her enjoyment of socialising with her peers and tutors during her master's degree. She was motivated to follow a topic which suited her desire for social interaction, enabling congruency between her academic and personal identities. Ruth's undergraduate experience of music psychology provided her with the solid background knowledge which allowed her to smoothly transition into master's study whilst remaining at the same institution (although she did find the transition more difficult than expected). On the other hand, Amy had no taught experience of the subject, but had pursued a dissertation in an area which her supervisor suggested might relate to the music psychology master's degree at institution A. As Amy lacked career plans, the desire to learn an interesting topic was a prominent motivating factor:

this [music psychology master's degree] was really for interest rather than to lead me into something, or to lead me into a PhD, [...] but I am thinking more, if I was to ever to

do this other master's then it would give me specific skills that I could actually go in and do a job, like a very specific job (Amy, phase 3)

Amy prolonged her time within education, ultimately delaying her full-time entry into working life (she had a year out, however, in order to save up between her undergraduate and master's degree). Amy's decisions may be the result of her avoiding exploration (Flum & Blustein, 2000), whereby instead of attempting to find a career which would suit her, she decided upon a master's degree which would at least provide her with stability and a plan for a year. Amy's career postponement links to the findings of the 2012 study's findings (Slight, 2012) in which some who lacked career plans were motivated to continue studying to delay working life (Slight, 2012).

4.3 Career postponement

Past research has suggested that career postponement can be driven by a desire to: develop skills further before entering working life (Gee, 2010); extend undergraduate training; bide time; or study due to a lack of other career plans (Roberts, 1990; Slight, 2012). A postgraduate degree can facilitate students' career transitions by enabling individuals to develop professional identities and contacts whilst remaining in a safe place. However, the degree may be most beneficial for proactive students who have career plans and are using the time to better prepare for their future (Gee, 2010). Those without career plans, like Amy, might find the master's degree becomes a hindrance to their future careers. After commencing her studies, Amy began to consider the possibility of a vocational master's degree in an area of therapy, however, she could no longer afford the course fees due to spending all her money on her first master's degree. Although her master's degree developed her interest within therapy it might also have restricted her ability to transition smoothly into this career path. A careers advisor highlighted the potential difficulties caused when students enter a master's degree without career plans:

people wander into a master's sometimes without thinking it through, and that was one of the things I was saying you know, be clear why you're doing it. If you're doing it because 'I haven't got a clue what I'm going to do next' then fine own up to that, but bear in mind you might still be in the same position twelve months down the road (Institution B, advisor)

Having a goal provided individuals with a sense of purpose and focus, motivating them to act in ways which were likely to lead to success in achieving their aims (Hamman et al., 2013).

For example, those who planned subsequent PhD study were more motivated to attend conferences due to a desire to integrate into the academic community, whilst those who lacked plans were unlikely to do the same due to the time and cost of attending such events. The master's degree allowed Phoebe to progress towards PhD study. In turn, the goal to continue in education helped her to focus her efforts and attention during the master's degree:

[...] it also helped when you know what you're going to do with it, like, that's helped me focus on getting to know people and going to conferences and talks and stuff and getting involved with stuff. So basically to do something that is erm related to what you want to do afterwards and get some practice in an informal context (Phoebe, phase 4)

Phoebe was motivated to gain experience and contacts which would be beneficial for her academic career, therefore making the most of her time within education. Past research has shown that individuals with clear career plans can target their efforts towards achieving these goals and in turn progress more effectively than those who lack plans (Stumpf & Lockhart, 1987). This links to possible selves theory (Markus, & Nurius, 1986) which suggests that individuals are motivated to act in ways which make desired futures more likely. However, difficulties may still arise if an individual changes career plans or focuses too narrowly upon a certain career without exploring alternate options. Perhaps students need to be encouraged to consider their motivations for continuing to study. Although this may lead to some students deciding against continuing straight into master's study, it may also result in students being more motivated and focused, ultimately increasing the academic and practical experience gained from the courses themselves. The difficulty caused by a lack of career plans suggests the potential benefits of highlighting the master's degree as being one part of a developmental process.

4.4 Desire for sense of focus, progression and direction

Many participants strove to feel a sense of direction and purpose during the career transition. For some, the master's degree itself provided a sense of direction and focus which increased the general well-being of the participants. Ben felt directionless whilst working as an instrumental teacher during a year out between his undergraduate and master's degrees. Upon observing his peers turn to drink to deal with the lack of progression within their own instrumental teaching careers, he decided to return to education in order to avoid this feared-self. Education provided a sense of direction and focus because it offered a clear goal:

to complete the course assignments and graduate successfully. Additionally the intrinsic desire to develop personally provided a sense of progression and fulfilment as Ben learnt new skills and knowledge. Studying provided him with a potential career in which he could progress and avoid the feared-self who turned to drink. Ben felt a new sense of purpose:

I now have purpose in life and I really care about this [degree] and I met some great people and I loved it and it's really changed how I think about everything, and I want to pursue it (Ben, phase 4)

Ben's master's degree was a period of self-realisation as he discovered a subject area in which he felt he belonged. Additionally, he realised his potential to pursue academia further. Upon completion of the master's degree Ben stated that he missed this sense of progression and developed career plans which provided him with a sense of purpose and direction, adding:

it's like right now I just keep getting out text[book]s [...] because it's what I need, I need to feel like I'm progressing and understanding something better, and that's what I miss really. (Ben, phase 3)

Ben continued researching after finishing his degree in order to maintain the sense of fulfilment he had gained during his master's study. Similarly, Tom found a sense of focus and purpose whilst studying the master's degree which he felt he lacked within his working life. Performing in the military did not suit Tom's musical self as it prevented him from making artistic decisions. Tom felt constrained by being unable to make his own musical decisions, and having to play as he was told. Whilst this may be the case for all orchestral musicians, Tom felt it was enhanced further by the command structure within the military where the conductor failed to listen to any suggestions and subordinates were expected to obey their superiors' orders without question. Tom hoped to move towards a career in which he would feel more able to use his initiative rather than simply obeying orders:

being outside of the military I think I could have more of an impact than I can in the military because at the end of the day if you try to make something you think is wrong right in the military, if the person above you doesn't agree then you're soon reminded of your number and rank and that's the end of the discussion. (Tom, phase 4)

Feeling that he lacked control in his career negatively impacted upon Tom's personal fulfilment and identity. When his military band were praised he did not feel able to accept this approval for himself as he did not identify with the role or group. Tom felt he was a

naturally inquisitive person, therefore his military role presented a disequilibrium: his behaviour as a military musician did not fit with his knowledge and beliefs about himself and he was therefore motivated to gain a greater sense of equilibrium (Festinger, 1962). Within his dissertation Tom felt greater autonomy as he designed and implemented his own study:

I found that very self-gratifying to go this was my idea and I've designed the study, run the study and talked about it, analysed it and given the limitations, I think that's a really rewarding process to do. (Tom, phase 2)

Feeling in control of the dissertation motivated Tom as he valued the purpose of the task and adopted the behaviour required to achieve success. Individuals who feel in control of their behaviour are more likely to display optimal engagement with a task and have higher levels of psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Studying opened up potential careers for Tom and he developed more positive and authentic possible selves within academia and higher education. He therefore gained a new sense of purpose and direction as he focused upon the master's degree and hoped that in the future this may lead to a change of career. Upon completion of the master's degree, however, the sense of progression was lost as he remained within the same military career.

4.4.1 Changing direction through studying

Whilst the students highlighted the potential of the degree to allow them to progress *within* their career (either current or future), tutors also highlighted the potential for the degree to facilitate *changes* of direction. Staff on the music psychology courses felt the degrees enabled students to come from a single disciplinary background, either music or psychology, and gain knowledge in a new area:

I think it's a nice kind of study because it's broad, so also if you have a purely musical background then people often think it's, well it's a way of widening out to other careers, or a range of skills that they want to shift a bit of direction (Institution A, music psychology tutor)

The tutor added that students wishing to change career were often required to take an additional course of study after the master's degree, but stated that the degree did allow them to meet the entry requirements for this. However, after the experiences of Amy and Tina who found that they were unable to afford additional courses of study after completing their master's degrees, it is clear that although the master's degree does allow individuals to explore new areas of interest and develop new career plans, it may not always facilitate

smooth entry into these careers. Students need to have clear and realistic plans in order for it to do so. Course tutors may need to exercise care when suggesting to potential students that the course will allow them to change direction within their careers.

The student participants viewed the music psychology courses as enhancing their knowledge of music and effective musical practices, rather than changing direction. The emphasis on music may be related to a general disgruntlement from many students within Institutions A and B regarding the quantitative aspect of the courses, which were more statistically-focused. Incorporating statistics into the short period of the master's degree presented challenges for the staff when designing and implementing these modules:

The whole thing of yeh especially statistics, it's very difficult to accommodate that. People in psychology get it for years and now we are trying to get it in a couple of weeks, so there's a bit of a problem that we have to sort of address, how to do it in the most effective way (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

Qualitative aspects of the degree presented a smoother learning curve for the students, as they involved less of a change of direction and were (generally) felt to be more enjoyable. This suggests a difficulty caused by interdisciplinary courses such as music psychology for students from music backgrounds (see chapter 9).

The master's degree enabled individuals to take control of their future in order to feel a sense of focus, progression and direction as individuals had a goal to strive towards. Goals and possible selves motivated individuals to behave in ways which enabled them to achieve success within their degree and move towards their future career plans. The failure to achieve possible selves and goals impacted directly upon the participants' identities and caused feelings of dissonance. This dissonance negatively impacted upon their psychological well-being, a point which supports Festinger's (1962) theory that individuals attempt to avoid such dissonance due to the psychological discomfort it causes. A desire to feel one is progressing links to a desire held by many of the participants to fulfil their potential and become competent within their studies and working lives.

4.5 Desire to fulfil potential within academia

Participants differed in the extent to which they were aware of their potential and ability to contribute within academia. The desire to succeed and achieve stemmed from interactive

motivations, as individuals hoped to learn (learning goals and intrinsic motivations) and prove to both themselves, and to others that they were capable of gaining high marks (performance goals and extrinsic motivations).

The period of the master's degree helped to satisfy students' desire to feel they were fulfilling their potential. Some participants described a sense of fulfilment at becoming more knowledgeable within their subject area. Both Chloe and Tom enjoyed speaking with more authority on their topic. The enjoyment appeared to be particularly prevalent for Tom as he felt a sense of authority within an area of interest, which contrasted with his lack of identification within his working life (see 4.4); whilst Chloe was able to more confidently claim her teacher identity:

I feel [...] able to actually mention specific books and sources, and even talk about my study that I did and the results, erm, and that's kind of influenced my teaching already. [...] feeling more informed, I enjoyed that part of it. (Chloe, phase 2)

I think I've learnt a lot about myself, definitely learnt a lot about the subject, I feel I'm a bit of a fountain of knowledge and I throw little things into conversations which I think really annoys people. That's definitely an ego thing, talking about an area I know of, 'oh did you know 82% of people said this?' very annoying for them, but quite cool for me. (Tom, phase 2)

The satisfaction of the participants above links to the theory of achievement motivation and participants' learning styles. Achievement motivation theory suggests that individuals may have a need to achieve (Atkinson & Birch, 1978). The theory suggests that successfully accumulating greater knowledge and gaining higher levels of academic self-efficacy can lead to a sense of achievement which enhances interest within an area (Bandura, 1986). Through developing their knowledge both these participants felt a sense of achievement which led to high levels of positive affect. As both the participants enjoyed feeling knowledgeable and being able to convey this knowledge to others they appear to be intrinsically (wanting to master a task) and extrinsically motivated (wanting to prove themselves to others). The interactive motivation may be beneficial in enabling the students to persevere towards career goals, rather than simply following areas of interest (Komarraju et al., 2009).

Whilst some found the process of studying fulfilling in itself, others were motivated to complete the degree. Successfully negotiating the challenge of completing the master's degree provided a sense of self-fulfilment for many:

[The master's degree is] a lot of work looking back on it and how I managed to do that and keep working and erm yeh I'm definitely proud that I finished it. It's a sense of pride and accomplishment (Chloe, phase 3)

Chloe's sense of achievement was enhanced due to her original uncertainty regarding her ability to succeed, which was exacerbated by others questioning the value of the degree. Chloe had to develop effective coping mechanisms in order to succeed whilst she balanced work, study and a long distance relationship. Chloe may have struggled to maintain her emotional well-being and persevere without these coping mechanisms and her drive to continue what she had started. Success after a task involving a great deal of effort is most likely to result in positive emotional affect, especially if the task is perceived as challenging (Bigge & Hunt, 1980). The challenge of the degree, alongside the amount of effort Chloe expended and the personal nature of the goal (exacerbated by others' negative attitudes towards it) are likely to have increased the personal satisfaction when she graduated. Upon completion, Chloe felt a sense of relief:

I felt a lot of relief to be done [...] the last few weeks I just kept saying I cannot wait to be done, I cannot wait to be done, I'm going to do all these fun things when I'm done (Chloe, phase 2)

The master's degree was a goal which participants were motivated to complete and therefore could be labelled as a performance goal (Hallam, 2002). Gaining a qualification and a mark is quantitative and perhaps an easy way to justify the effort required to succeed within the degree. A qualification provides students with a tangible return on their investment. Therefore, once students successfully graduate they may feel as though they have achieved their goal which in turn leads to a sense of relief, even if initial motivations to study were simply to increase their knowledge. Chloe felt pressured by others to have concrete outcomes from her degree (such as gaining a new job, promotion or pay rise). The knowledge and skills developed as part of the course are perhaps qualitative and less tangible which makes them hard to present to others.

Master's study provided an opportunity for those with previously disappointing experiences in education (Fiona and Tom), to explore their academic potential. Fiona was disappointed with her undergraduate degree marks and wanted to prove to herself that she was academically capable. Fiona had a difficult performing experience which impacted negatively upon her confidence and led to her achieving lower undergraduate marks than she had hoped and expected. Fiona described herself as 'cocky' and having always been able

to gain high marks with minimal effort. Receiving these low marks therefore contrasted with her perceptions of being academically and musically capable. Such cognitive dissonance impacted negatively upon her psychological well-being and she was motivated to reduce this by returning to study. By studying the master's degree, Fiona proved to herself that she was academically capable, whilst also exploring research on performance anxiety in order to better understand how to overcome her own challenges as a musician. Fiona held both performance and learning goals as the master's degree provided an opportunity to confirm her academic (and musical) identity. Tom similarly wanted to pursue master's study in order to challenge himself after completing what he found to be a badly organised and unfulfilling undergraduate degree. The master's degree required more input from him as a student, and provided a more prominent online community. This allowed him to feel more integrated and satisfied with the degree, develop a stronger student identity, and fulfil his desire to be challenged. Tom's learning goals meant that his previous unchallenging course was not satisfying for him, as although it provided him with a qualification he did not feel he had developed personally. His master's degree challenged him to develop his academic and musical knowledge, and Tom found this to be more fulfilling. Tom and Fiona's motivations to fulfil their potential after previously disappointing educational experiences links to a theme found within a previous study for those with more than one degree (Boer et al., 2010). However, within the current study the disappointment was related to the course content and *experience* during the courses, whereas Boer et al found individuals were disappointed with the *value* of their initial degree. The differences in the findings may relate to students different motivations for studying, with the current participants tending to focus more upon the overall learning experience rather than extrinsic outcomes.

For some students the master's degree provided an opportunity to challenge themselves to continue as far as possible within education:

[It was] because I was led to believe that I could do a master's that I wanted to do it because it was there. It's like, you know, why did you climb the mountain? Because it's there. (Janet, phase 1)

The master's degree was partly a way for Janet to explore possible new careers within music, but also an opportunity to fulfil her potential within academia, as she had previously dropped out from higher education as a young adult. By continuing within education as far as possible, students were exploring possible futures and identities within academia in order to understand their potential. This links to the concepts of possible and provisional selves, as

individuals attempted to try out their 'fit' within education and academia (Ibarra, 1999). Some participants aimed to continue into subsequent PhD study, even if it was unlikely to lead to a change of career. Lisa enjoyed her work as a teacher, but chose to continue into PhD study, explaining that 'I do want to explore my potential in that sort of circle, or that sort of direction as far as possible' (Lisa, phase 1). Similarly, Fiona described continuing as far as possible within education as an 'achievement' (Fiona, phase 1). The desire to fulfil his potential meant that Tom struggled with the idea that if he were unable to pursue PhD study he may never know whether he could have succeeded:

I think the biggest thing that worries me is not achieving what I can achieve, you know, it's always a waste to not work to your full potential (Tom, phase 4)

The desire to continue as far as possible was related to self-exploration as students were increasing their self-awareness of their interests, in order to develop more coherent and authentic identities. Well-developed interests are important components of a coherent self-concept (Flum & Kaplan, 2006) therefore by developing their interests participants were working towards defining themselves.

Whilst the majority of students viewed PhD study as a challenge, Amy felt that remaining in education might be an easy option:

you could just spend your life doing PhDs, [...] because you're familiar with it, and you understand it and I mean the first year is probably quite scary for PhD students and it's all very new and it's very much "I'm not sure what I'm doing, what do I tell my supervisor? When am I supposed to have meetings with her?" and things like that, but once they get into it then it's familiar and they can do it [...] and if you know you can do something then it's easier in a way to carry on doing that, than to brave that and do something new and something exciting and something you don't know yet how good you'll be at it, or if you have the skills to do it, or if you have the experience to be able to do it (Amy, phase 2)

For students who had spent the majority of their lives within education and were confident in their academic abilities it may be that studying provided a safety net which prevented them from having to move into the 'real world'. This is not to say that individuals do not enjoy their time in academia, or that academia is not the career for them, but it may be that they have not explored alternative options. Education provides a series of goals (in the form of assessment deadlines) and a social structure (surrounded by many others with similar

goals and interests) which may be lacking elsewhere. This links to Bowman et al's (2005) suggestion that young people are well socialised into academic study by master's level, but may lack knowledge about the working world and be naïve about how to gain a good job.

4.5.1 Contribution through academia

Individuals differed in the extent to which they felt able to contribute to others by remaining within academia. Ben realised the potential to contribute to academia during his master's degree. He felt enthused about the idea of facilitating academic discussions with others, rather than remaining focused upon his own development as a performer (as he had previously done as a teenager). Ben felt academia had greater potential for helping others and valued it as a potential career path. Others felt that higher education lacked relevance to their lives and did not allow them to contribute in any way to others. Laura struggled with course topics she felt did not have any practical application, viewing them as providing 'knowledge for knowledge's sake'. Feeling the topics were 'irrelevant' (Laura, phase 2) led to decreases in motivation. By phase 4 Laura had gained funding for a PhD project which aimed to explore the use of music in therapy. Laura was interested in this area of study due to its potential practical benefits, feeling it was relevant to real life and people. Laura therefore was motivated to remain within education after being successful in applying for a PhD topic which she hoped would have real practical benefit to others. The individuals who struggled to see the value of the course content and its relevance to real life tended to feel dissatisfied with their study. Research suggests that feeling able to contribute to others provides a greater sense of significance to an individual's behaviour and effort (Johnson & Johnson, 1985) and when participants felt they were not valued, their levels of motivation and self-fulfilment fell.

Amy struggled with the prospect of remaining in higher education to pursue PhD study due to a number of factors, including the feeling that by doing so she would not be contributing to others in any way. Throughout the study, Amy viewed academia and the 'real world' as separate contrasting entities, highlighted by her difficulty to recognise transferable skills and attributes. During phases 3 and 4 of the study, Amy began to consider a PhD project on the mental well-being of elderly patients. Amy saw the project as being potentially beneficial to others through providing practical advice and support on how to care for patients with communication difficulties. However, the idea of PhD study did not match the fulfilment Amy gained from working in her current people-facing role. As a permanent staff member Amy felt able to build relationships with others and positively

contribute to the customers' experiences. Amy gained a sense of achievement by helping others, with the role in which she did this being, to some extent, a means to an end (Nyström et al., 2008). Perhaps this added to her difficulty in deciding upon a particular career path.

4.6 Desire to gain fulfilment within working life

Throughout the career transition individuals attempted to find career paths which they personally valued, and felt contributed in some way to others. The perceived value of a career path was influenced by the students' own beliefs, and the perceptions of others. Participants were driven to achieve their potential within their chosen career path in order to feel competent, valuable and valued. The idea of wasting an attribute or talent was discussed by participants, as many felt that to not pursue something they enjoyed was a waste of their abilities.

Those working alongside their degree tended to be motivated to feel competent and fulfil their potential as teachers. O'Neill (1995) suggests that these students are the career changers, as they strive for further development within their careers, often working towards a slight change. For many within the current study this change involved being able to gain more work, or developing knowledge to carry out current work more effectively and confidently. Steph decided to study the master's degree in order to gain the knowledge needed to validate her teaching methods as she had previously relied upon her intuitions and lacked the scientific proof to support her approach. The master's degree provided her with the support and the motivation to justify spending time on the research. Additionally, (as Steph had not studied an academic course at higher education level before) the master's degree enabled her to develop the skills required to undertake the research exploring the value of her teaching methods. Whilst Steph was motivated to study in order to validate her current teaching methods, Chloe was motivated by a desire to explore different, more effective teaching methods for her students. Chloe struggled to find techniques to help her students overcome their performance anxiety, especially as she also suffered in this area. In order to find ideas to help others overcome their performance anxiety she began to research. Whilst researching she came across the master's degree and felt it was a way in which to gain an extra qualification which may add to her credibility as a teacher whilst also developing the knowledge needed to better support her students. Gaining a formal music qualification is likely to lead to a stronger musical self and validate individual's musical

experience. Additionally the enhanced knowledge gained through studying may enable individuals to feel more confident in their teaching, thereby enhancing their professional identity.

Some teachers felt a renewed sense of interest and enthusiasm within their lives and work whilst studying. Jodie worked as a teacher but felt that it was no longer challenging to her. The master's degree presented a challenge in a new area so that she could explore her potential within academia. Jodie felt a sense of achievement whilst studying and was able to develop more effective teaching methods. As individuals progress in their careers they tend to become more knowledgeable and competent through increased experience, therefore their work can feel less challenging. Work which is seen to be less challenging will become less intrinsically motivating for an individual (Atkinson & Birch, 1978), which can result in lower levels of personal fulfilment. The master's degree provided an opportunity for students to further develop their knowledge and teaching techniques, and renew their interest. The potential for teaching to become less challenging was a factor which put off Fiona from pursuing it as a career:

Where I was [teacher] training it was very much 'right these are our programmes and this is what we do, year in and year out', and [...] it was just a bit too boring for me.
(Fiona, phase 1)

There was a need for teachers to continue developing their methods and advancing in order to maintain interest within their career. This might link to the fact that instrumental teachers are often restricted in terms of upwards mobility (Baker, 2005), which could negatively impact upon the ability to feel one is progressing. Chloe feared the potential for monotony as a teacher. She felt that she would always need to be adapting and improving in order to feel challenged and motivated. If individuals feel a task is unchallenging they are likely to expend less effort and time on it, including less preparatory time (Bandura, 1982). By aiming to adapt and make challenges for herself, it is likely that Chloe will motivate herself more to continue expending the effort required to be an effective teacher.

4.6.1 Desire to utilise skills and knowledge

Participants hoped to use their skills and knowledge within their future careers. Amy described her hopes for her career:

feeling confident that you're going into work and that you're going to be able to do the job you're doing, and that doesn't mean lowering yourself to do something that you think is menial [...], but just doing something that you know you have the skills that you can do it (Amy, phase 2)

Amy remained uncertain of her career choices but hoped to gain employment within a field in which she could use some of her skills. Amy's quote shows that individuals can still feel competent in challenging careers, as long as they have the necessary skills, attributes (including coping mechanisms) and knowledge to cope. The desire to feel challenged within a career may link to participants' motivation to learn; as through being challenged individuals may need to adapt and respond to their environment which is likely to require learning. Additionally, achievement motivation theory suggests that satisfaction will be found in mastering challenges (Bigge & Hunt, 1980), therefore entering a challenging career may be expected to be a fulfilling experience. Ryan et al. (1985) proposed that when perceived competence is enhanced, intrinsic motivation will also increase. Whilst studying the degree individuals developed knowledge within the topic area, allowing them to feel more competent within their subject, leading to enhanced motivation and interest for those who wished to continue within the field (Bandura, 1982). The master's degree allowed individuals to move towards hoped-for selves and develop competent professional and academic identities (Bowman et al., 2005). Although the degrees observed within the study were not vocational, students used the knowledge gained to develop their professional practice (discussed further in chapter 7).

4.6.2 Feeling valuable and valued

Participants' fulfilment was increased when their job was valued by others. Steph gained fulfilment working within a college in which she was involved with the students' curriculum, making her feel a more valuable part of their education, as she describes:

[I] really enjoyed that [teaching] because for the first time really in my career I've been very much an integral part of people's education, whereas before when I've taught singing it's been, I've been an extra [...] but working with the BTEC means that if they don't come to my lessons and do what I suggest it will severely impact the equivalent of an A level so that's been really really enjoyable because I've felt that they've been very interested in what I have to say so I've really enjoyed it. (Steph, phase 4)

The shift in dynamics with the students increased Steph's self-fulfilment and motivation to teach. Jodie felt that the master's degree had positively impacted upon the way she was treated at work, with individuals showing a 'quiet level of respect' (phase 4) for her and gradually allowing her more influence within her schools. The subtle shifts in how she was treated contributed to her increased self-confidence as a musician. This finding relates to Callender and Little's study (2015) on part-time undergraduates who were working alongside studying. They found that students began to be viewed differently by their colleagues whilst studying, which often led to them being approached for advice and guidance. Such shifts in social dynamics will validate the students' developing identities and competency. These degree outcomes are less tangible but impact upon the participants' general confidence, fulfilment and well-being, therefore remain important (see chapter 10).

Being paid to do an activity, either through an educational scholarship or a wage, increased some participants' perceptions of the value of their work. One reason for Amy's preference to work rather than study was due to money:

when I was studying I didn't feel like I was sort of working or contributing as much, [...], getting up to go to work every day for something you're paid for [...] it makes me feel like what I'm doing is actually worthwhile. (Amy, phase 4)

Being paid became a symbol of doing work which was valued and beneficial to others. This feeling was one echoed by other students discussing PhD funding. Individuals felt that gaining funding would provide confirmation that others valued their work and felt they were capable of success. Without being paid students felt less confident about whether their projects would be valued by others.

At times it took experience within a role before individuals realised the fulfilment they could gain from contributing to others. Upon finishing her master's degree Tina had been uncertain of her career path. After being offered work as a peripatetic teacher in her home town she realised a love for teaching:

I really care about them and I really want them to do well and yeh I definitely want to be involved with children and helping, you know, helping them with music and getting them involved (Tina, phase 4)

Tina gained fulfilment from seeing others succeed within music, and empathised with her students as she described feeling 'nervous' 'excited' and 'proud' of watching them perform

(see also 7.2.3). Many of the teachers spoke of vicarious fulfilment gained through observing the impact they had on others, and from seeing others succeed:

You kind of guide them and then you get them through the exam and their achievement, I find I get more out of their achievement and happiness or elation from doing it than I would myself, for some bizarre reason. (Tom, phase 4)

Previously Tom felt fulfilled by his own success within music, but whilst being part of the military he became disillusioned with his own playing. By guiding others towards musical success he felt he was making a difference, and was able to fulfil his artistic temperament in a way other than playing. The sense of fulfilment gained from helping others is likely to be another factor which attracted him towards teaching as a career. Chloe described a similar satisfaction from seeing her pupils enjoy their lessons:

I think when they get excited about playing or they kind of, they're learning, I can see they're learning and improving and that's making them happy and that's making me happy (Chloe, phase 4)

Initially, Chloe had hoped to work as a performer, however, after a number of failed auditions she began to focus on her teaching. As she shifted her attention she began to realise a greater enjoyment in her teaching than she had in performing. Chloe felt that this greater satisfaction emanated from being able to impact others to a greater extent through teaching than through performing in a large orchestra. Working in a large orchestra may lead to feelings of anonymity and a lack of personal influence, whereas being able to impact others individually as a teacher meant Chloe felt more able to contribute. By studying the master's degree, Chloe gained more confidence, and an extra qualification with which to advertise. She subsequently gained more pupils:

when I first started teaching I needed every student that I could get and even if they were, even if the parents were terrible I just, I needed all of them so I would accommodate them, whatever it took, now I'm essentially full and so I can, I think I can be more assertive in setting those boundaries and if people don't like it they can find another teacher, I mean I'm okay with that, I'd rather have fewer students that are, I mean, just respectful. That's really all I want, it's just for them to be respectful of me (Chloe, phase 3)

By phase 3 Chloe had completed two master's degrees, an undergraduate degree and some teacher training courses alongside years of experience as a teacher and performer. With this

experience came increased confidence in feeling justified to demand respect from others. When students and parents were respectful and engaged in the lessons Chloe felt as though she was making a difference and contributing to their development. Feeling more valued helped her to develop a stronger professional identity, as students became more engaged, validating her skills as a teacher. Perhaps Chloe had reached a stage of disequilibrium before the master's degree where she felt her teaching practice did not reflect her years of experience and studying was a way to take control of how she was perceived by others.

Those who felt they were not valued within their career tended to struggle with motivation and job fulfilment. Hannah felt that customers were rude and disrespectful when she worked in retail. The lack of respect from customers, coupled with the negative attitudes of other staff members, reduced Hannah's confidence and well-being. She therefore accepted an offer from her friends to work in their start-up company, and compares the two work environments below:

[in the supermarket chain] the customer is always right, the managers are god, and you are nobody, and I just can't really take that to be honest, you kind of get shouted at from all sides and it's minimum wage and no one thanks you or respects you or anything. Whereas here [in the friend's start-up company] it's completely different, I'm not sure why, but the customers here are all polite, they're nice, they're willing to listen, erm, and obviously working with my friends is great. It's not much of a pay rise but it's so good for my sanity it's unbelievable (Hannah, phase 4)

Hannah developed a greater sense of personal well-being after feeling valued in her role. Although the career had not been planned, she felt happy with her decision to move jobs and throughout our final interview appeared more optimistic and relaxed than previously.

Generally the participants were motivated to study or work towards careers in which they felt valued by others and able to contribute. When an individual felt that their own development would lead to them being able to contribute to others' well-being or learning they gained an enhanced sense of significance, which helped to increase their intrinsic motivation to succeed (Johnson & Johnson, 1985). Additionally, others validated the participants' developing identities and behaviour by showing they were valued (Ibarra, 1999). Feeling that one's actions were beneficial to others was a motivating factor as individuals were able to benefit not only themselves but others, placing more value on their

work and increasing their motivation to succeed. Such motivations are related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which he suggests that in order to gratify esteem needs (before one is able to satisfy self-actualisation needs) one must have both self-esteem and the esteem of others (Maslow, 1943). The validation and approval of others enabled individuals to develop more positive identities and a greater sense of worth. Those who felt as though their current actions would lead to positive future outcomes were more motivated to succeed, as the value of their current behaviour was heightened (Hamman et al., 2013). When individuals felt their own self-concept and the perceptions of others were mismatched a state of disequilibrium caused them to move towards future goals which would enable a greater sense of congruence (Festinger, 1962).

4.7 Creating a desired lifestyle and identity

Participants described their motivations to move towards future desired lifestyles. Career decisions were related to lifestyle choices, as individuals discussed the two interchangeably. Participants discussed their life goals, desire for stability, commitments, finances and the role of music within their future. This theme of striving for a certain lifestyle differs to previous studies on master's students as it mainly refers to a future self and lifestyle. Previous studies have tended to find the desire to stay within the *student lifestyle* to be a motivating factor to study (Boer et al., 2010; Bowman et al., 2005; O'Neill, 1995), but have focused less upon the desire to strive towards a *future lifestyle*.

4.7.1 Life goals

For the majority of participants a steady '9 to 5' job was attractive due to the assumption it would provide a stable income and a clear distinction between work and leisure time. Amy wanted to leave academia in order to gain structure in her life and more time to pursue her musical interests, she felt: 'you're just, sort of, a servant to it, you're a slave to [studying]' (Amy, phase 2). Her love for music meant she wished to leave academia (Burland, 2005), as she felt:

You get so bogged down on like doing the work and doing the academic stuff like you forget why you loved it in the first place (Amy, phase 2)

Postgraduate courses tend to lack formal structured class time, meaning individuals are largely required to self-motivate themselves. This lack of structure was challenging for some, resulting in feelings of guilt when participants were not working. The concept of a 9 to 5 job provided freedom for Amy by structuring the day with a clear cut-off point, dividing her work

and leisure time in a way which meant she felt able to fully engage with both.

For the younger participants many of the life goals revolved around growing up and settling down. Ruth looked forward to settling down with her partner in a location in which they could both find jobs they enjoyed. She described this as giving 'being a grown-up a go' (Ruth, phase 4). Ruth's life goals had gradually shifted from continuing her student lifestyle in her university city with her friends, to moving away to start a new life with her partner as an adult. Ruth was beginning to consider making longer-term commitments and by planning to move away was consciously distancing herself from her student lifestyle. Laura had also begun to look towards settling down in her life. Laura had moved to England to pursue her master's degree but by phase 4 had accepted PhD funding in her home country. She hoped that this would be a long-term location move and looked forward to building a 'nest' (Laura, phase 4) and settling down. Laura even spoke of the possibility of getting a puppy, showing her desire to commit to a long-term caring role which she previously would have been unable to do. Laura was still in a period of emerging adulthood, but hoped to soon make the enduring life commitments typical of adulthood by settling within a location and starting a family (Schwartz et al., 2005). Many of the participants held plans for the ages at which they hoped to be settled within a career or with a family. Not being settled in a career by a certain age was felt to go against social norms, reduce the amount of time they would be able to contribute to a pension, and delay their ability to have children and buy a house. Amy hoped to start her long-term career by the age of 30 but felt this age was still restrictive:

You're only starting a career sort of half way through the time that a lot of other people might be, erm and you might not have as much time to progress and to get higher up into a more specialised role. [...] The pension is a worry because I always look further ahead than I need to and I think well by the time I'm getting to retirement age which I know is going up and up and up all the time, but by then I won't have accumulated what other people starting their career around the age of 20 or 25 would have, I just want to make sure that I'm comfortable when I'm old. (Amy, phase 4)

This finding corroborates past literature which has similarly found that many individuals hope to be settled down by the age of 30 in order to be able to fulfil other life goals, such as having children (Arnett, 2006). Matt had similar worries about his hope to continue into PhD study, feeling that if he were to do so he would not be settling into a career until his mid-30s which he felt could potentially threaten his (and his family's, see 5.1.1) long-term security. In order to support a family many of the participants highlighted the importance of stability.

4.7.2 Stability

Stability tended to be discussed in terms of a regular income and secure job. Generally, working as a classical music performer has been described and accepted as precarious in nature (Burland, 2005). As in previous studies, participants tended to view teaching as a stable job which could be used as a fall-back in order to remain within music without the stresses of a performing career (Freer & Bennett, 2012). Chloe hoped her increased knowledge would enable her to support her students effectively whilst also achieving a sense of: 'stability [...] both personally and professionally' (phase 1) within her life. She had built a steady client base as a teacher which contrasted with her previously sporadic performing work. Although Chloe still enjoyed performing and hoped for it to remain part of her career she did not feel willing to make the lifestyle changes needed to maintain a full-time performing career:

If I wanted to go for that it would mean a lot of changes that I don't know that I really want to make. You know, such as making sure to practice, you know, four or five hours a day, and doing that on top of working, and now studying and everything else that's going on, trying to have a personal life, I think that that wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't be able to do everything (Chloe, phase 1)

Chloe's desire to reduce her stress levels impacted upon her career choices, meaning she found performing to be a less desirable option, and hoped to gain a single 9 to 5 teaching job so that her own leisure time and that of her partner and friends were more matched. A full-time career would also provide her with attractive perks including health insurance (as she was based in America). Tom was also motivated to gain stability:

I think it's very much a young man's job. [...] the sacrifice you pay is that there's a man in an office that can ring you up and go 'next month you're moving to Scotland' [...] So if I ever want to settle down and have a serious relationship, or you know, build a home if you see what I mean, then I think it's very difficult to do that in a military environment. So it's definitely a lifestyle choice. (Tom, phase 1)

The military career provided Tom with a sense of financial stability but threatened his personal stability in other areas. Whilst the concept of travel was attractive to him as a teenager and part of his initial motivation to join the military, he had now reached a stage in life at which he was considering not only himself but his partner's hopes and needs. In doing so he began to prioritise stability and felt that these needs could not be suitably met by a military career. After discussions with his supervisors, Tom felt that he might still need to

move to find work for an academic career but that he would be able to make the final decision over whether he took the work or not. The academic career therefore provided an attractive alternative to the military. However, as the study progressed Tom began to struggle with the instability which would be caused by studying a PhD in order to reach an academic career, feeling that he would be placing a heavy burden on others to support him during this period. Tom therefore began to compromise by considering a paid college teacher training programme in order to gain academic stimulation and financial stability both in the short- and long-term. Part of the reluctance to give up full-time employment for PhD study might have been due to having a mortgage and being in a period of economic recession (HEFCE, 2013d). The financial commitment of a mortgage can make it difficult for individuals to take risks and leave stable careers (Super, 1957). Tom repeatedly suggested that if he were to have a firm job offer at the end of his PhD he would follow this path, however, he did not feel able to take the risk of a pay cut for three years followed by a period of uncertainty about whether he would be able to gain an academic job. The career path therefore was a compromise which ensured long-term stability without jeopardising it in the short-term.

The difficulty of gaining employment within music, and cuts within the music sector were mentioned by a number of participants as being motivations to study the master's degree. Chloe and Jodie witnessed cuts within the music industry and felt that the master's degree would open more options for them (Jodie), and help them to improve their teaching skills (Chloe). Chloe and Jodie both felt that the master's degree could potentially increase their employability, with Jodie feeling she might also be able to diversify after achieving the degree in order to ensure she retained a stable income. The majority of the participants described a desire to have enough money to survive, emphasising enjoyment of work over financial rewards. Those working as freelancers tended to adjust the type and amount of work taken according to their need for money. During the start of the study Chloe felt she needed to accept all prospective pupils due to needing money, however, towards the end of the study after gaining more students and becoming more financially stable she was able to pick and choose her work. Only one participant, Laura, described an expectation and hope that the master's would lead to higher earnings (Fiona did hope to maintain a high income, but through maintaining her current accounting business). This finding contrasts with Boer et al.'s study (2010) which found that 69.6% of their master's students expected higher salaries after graduation. Perhaps this contrast is due to Boer et al.'s inclusion of both academic and vocational degrees.

4.8 Summary

In summary, participants' motivations and goals impacted upon their decisions and experiences during the career transition. The motivations discussed here are primarily intrinsic, the impact of social factors is discussed elsewhere (see chapter 5). However, personal and social factors were intertwined. When intrinsic motivation was threatened the extrinsic factors (such as having come this far and wanting to finish in order to achieve the qualification) became increasingly important to success during the master's degree. Generally the motivations discussed related to self-improvement and self-worth, as individuals strove to develop their knowledge and experiences in order to move closer to their ideal self-concept (Banaji & Prentice, 1994). Individuals were driven to act in ways they valued and felt were valued by others, in order to validate their own professional and academic identities. Participants used a number of methods to self-evaluate and develop a sense of worth, including: social comparisons; achieving personal goals; and gaining approval from important and significant others (Banks et al., 1991).

Many of the participants desired control over their future, which involved feeling as though they had a sense of direction and were able to progress. Taking control of their career paths by studying a master's degree enabled individuals to feel a sense of autonomy in order to develop a more congruent and effective fit between their personal and professional identities. The participants tended to be actively using the master's degree to achieve a greater sense of control over their future, which led to fulfilment in the short- and, presumably, long-term. Without the sense of control, self-fulfilment and motivations were detrimentally impacted. The desire for control and mastery are often viewed as fundamental human needs and motivations for well-being (Heckhausen et al., 2010). Studying the master's degree allowed students to feel more competent both academically and professionally. Participants were striving towards a professional identity which enabled them to develop a positive self-concept. Motivations changed during the course of the degree, as individuals developed, therefore it is important that the courses develop both personal and academic attributes which may benefit students' careers more broadly.

Within this study the focus for participants was more upon interest and development within current careers rather than increasing job prospects or employability. These motivations suggest that for many of the students career ambitions and intellectual goals were matched, as in the Postgraduate Taught Experiences Survey 2013 (Leman et al.,

2013). However, this focus upon development within current careers rather than increasing employability contrasts with much past research on postgraduates' motivations (HEFCE, 2013d; O'Neill, 1995; Smith, 2010), and may be due to the focus on non-vocational degrees and the high number of mature participants. This finding highlights the importance of research which observes the less tangible motivations and outcomes of postgraduate study for both part-time (Callender & Little, 2015), and full-time students.

The current results differ from the findings of the 2012 study on music master's students' motivations (Slight, 2012) as students placed less emphasis upon the desire for more time. Only one participant was motivated to study due to an uncertainty about her career plans (Amy), whilst one was also motivated by a desire to delay her exit from the university (Ruth). However, in general the students tended to be motivated to study for reasons relating to interests and developing their current career, or moving towards an academic career. The discrepancy here is likely to be caused by the current study including distance learner students who were all working alongside the degree, whilst the earlier study (Slight, 2012) focused upon onsite courses only.

5 : Social Factors

The previous chapter predominantly focused upon the intrinsic motivations of the participants to begin, and persevere, with master's study. The chapter suggested that the students' decisions related to their desire to increase their self-fulfilment as they strove towards finding a career and manner of working which fit their interests, (actual or ideal) identities, attributes and life goals. The importance of others in validating individuals' developing identities and behaviour was highlighted. This chapter will elaborate on the role played by others which differed according to their relationship with, and the coping mechanisms of, the participant. Partners, family, tutors and peers are all discussed separately below. Alongside these specific relationships, general societal and cultural expectations impacted upon the students' choices.

5.1 Influence of family

5.1.1 Financial support

Contrasting with earlier educational transitions, by the point of higher education parents are thought to have less of an influence upon students' decisions, reverting to more of a supportive role (Burland, 2005). However, studies have shown that due to the lack of official postgraduate funding streams available (according to the report by Smith, 2010, research councils award less than 5% of their funding to taught master's students), many non-mature students currently rely upon parents as their main source of funding for master's study (Bowman et al., 2005)⁷. Therefore, at this stage parents again become an influential factor in the decision to continue within higher education. This was highlighted in the current study with some parents financially contributing to the costs of master's study. Relying upon parents for money led to the participants feeling a sense of obligation. Matt struggled with feeling that his financial dependence on his parents delayed their retirement:

if I don't get into a PhD programme that's another year or two that my timeline gets pushed back and my dad's timeline gets pushed back and my mums, you know, and so that's just like the big stressor at the moment because it's not just me (Matt, phase 1)

⁷ This may soon change, as the government have announced their intention to introduce a loan system for taught masters students under the age of 30 years old (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2015).

Matt's parents supported him financially during the master's degree by paying for his tuition fees which enabled him to study within the UK. However, his reluctance to rely upon his parents for financial support influenced Matt's decision to gain a job unrelated to academia after graduation. By phase 4 Matt was no longer confident about pursuing PhD study, as he felt he may be jeopardising a secure future by continuing to delay his career. Instead, he appeared to focus upon becoming socially integrated into his job and gaining an income in order to develop his financial independence. In an attempt to avoid being unable to support himself during retirement, Matt began working in an area he had not previously considered. Matt's life goals to move towards adulthood and secure his future therefore directly impacted upon his career decisions.

A similar sense of obligation was felt by Tina, whose parents paid for her tuition fees. Tina feared disappointing her parents and wasting their money, therefore she persevered with her master's degree despite feeling it was not right for her. Tina and Matt's experiences show that parental financial support is not without its difficulties. By this stage in their lives it appeared that the majority of individuals strived for independence:

I'm living off my parents' money and [...] I just feel so guilty all the time, and I never go out or spend any money or anything because I'm just so financially destroyed (Tina, phase 1)

The master's degree occurs during a transitional period when non-mature students are attempting to move towards adulthood (Zirkel, 1992). A major characteristic of adulthood is thought to be independence (Arnett, 2000), therefore relying upon parents for financial support stifled attempts to move towards an adult identity. Parents did influence the ability of the non-mature students to study at the start of the career transition. However, the participants attempted to gain independence in order to move towards adulthood, therefore by the end of the study none of the participants were still reliant upon their parents for financial support (although some had moved back home).

5.1.2 *The impact of children*

Participants with childcare responsibilities faced unique challenges during their careers and the period of studying. Starting families led some participants to reappraise their goals. Jodie decided that in order to make the cost of childcare worthwhile she wanted to focus upon enjoyable work. This decision led to her enrolling on the master's degree:

I think having children does make you really evaluate your career and your life, and what you do. And that was the point in which I thought you know, I never did this academic thing and it was something I always regretted [...] and maybe it would help open some more doors work-wise in this current climate if I thought about doing erm a master's (Jodie, phase 1)

Jodie's decision to study was both personal and centred around her children. Jodie wanted to focus upon more enjoyable work and pursue academic study for personal fulfilment. The motivation for focusing on enjoyable work, came from wanting the time to care for her children, which also contributed to her decision not to do a PhD as: 'I don't want to have my head always thinking about something else' (Jodie, phase 1). Jodie struggled with the way in which she felt others viewed her decision to study whilst having two young children. Women with dependent children are known to face challenges relating to balancing their studies alongside caring responsibilities when they lack support from family members (Christie et al., 2008). In part, this may be due to the cultural discourses surrounding what it means to be a good mother, with parenting ideology generally placing the mother as the 'sole source of emotional sustenance' (Johnston & Swanson, 2007, p. 448): a role which is intensive in terms of work, money and energy, therefore conflicting with the desire to spend time studying. This conflict may mean mothers feel unable to fully adopt a student identity as they are not completely emerged in the academic lifestyle. Jodie felt an added pressure during the degree as her husband failed to provide the support she had expected:

I've had to, sort of, really fight to get time to do it and I think that's been very difficult [...], and it's probably not so much to do with working as more to do with having a family life to try and fit in around them. I think that's probably the hardest thing, balancing that bit (Jodie, phase 2)

Jodie's husband struggled with the amount of time she spent studying, which exceeded both of their expectations. This caused tension within their relationship and contributed to her decision not to study further in order to let 'the dust settle' (Jodie, phase 2). The pressure upon women as mothers is increased when they lack support from elsewhere; for Jodie this

led to mixed feelings regarding her study. Whilst she felt proud of her achievement upon completion of the degree, she was frustrated with the lack of support received and felt guilty about the time spent away from her children. Social support is thought to be beneficial for providing help in stressful situations and preventing negative stressful responses (Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). Jodie lacked social support with no (or little) practical childcare help from others, which increased the stress she felt during the period of the master's degree. Jodie's psychological well-being was therefore negatively impacted by the dissonance between her work, mother, wife, and student identities. In order to persevere Jodie showed great resilience which was likely facilitated by her desire to personally develop and her perception that the degree helped her to recapture her submerged identity.

Having children led to challenges of balancing caring responsibilities alongside careers and studying. Janet became a single parent after her husband passed away and found that looking after two young children alongside a musical performing career was difficult. She struggled to find time to study, only feeling able to pursue her master's degree whilst they were teenagers. However, even with her children having more independence by this age she still felt unable to get as involved in the music department as she had hoped:

Doing it part-time was the only way I could have done it with having children still at home, but again it removes you from the environment where you need to be in order to do the study. (Janet, phase 2)

Janet's children had an impact on the timing and her experience of studying and led to her retrospectively feeling she should have delayed her master's degree until they had left home so that she could focus more upon her academic work. Caring and academic responsibilities required different mind-sets. Steph describes the difficulty with balancing the two roles:

[it] takes you time when you're moving from job, to study, back to childcare, to study, to job, to study and there has to be a sort of transition time, [...] [you] need to take time to get into the writing, you know, to de-children your mind and to enter the world of concentration and focus in a different way. And so I usually find that by the time I've hit lunchtime I'm ready to just work and I could work then for hours if you let me but unfortunately I have to stop at 3 o'clock and go and pick up [child's name] (Steph, phase 4)

The quote above highlights the difficulty of balancing roles, with time constrained not only by the physical time spent in each role, but also the mental transition involved in moving from

one role to another. Due to the challenges of balancing studying alongside work and childcare responsibilities, individuals struggled when course tutors failed to take into account their personal circumstances:

The lecturer put it as, 'you've got the Easter holidays to do this'. For me with a [young child] that was the worst possible time to be given a large amount of project to do
(Steph, phase 2)

Additionally, Steph struggled with compulsory evening seminars as she attempted to balance childcare responsibilities alongside her attendance at the university and found this to be frustrating. Evening classes and setting large assignments during a holiday period may seem appropriate for young students who lack other responsibilities. However, students with a range of backgrounds, ages and responsibilities are present at master's level and this should be taken into account when structuring courses and deadlines (see chapter 9). This is particularly important in the current educational climate in which over half of postgraduates study part-time (Smith, 2010) and 40% are over 30 (HEFCE, 2013a).

Many of the young female participants were already considering family life in their future career plans. After years of building the number of pupils in her teaching practice, Chloe faced anxieties surrounding how she would manage when she had children. By phase 4 Chloe had gained enough students to feel able to turn down any work she did not enjoy. She feared having to restart the process of gradually attracting students if she were to give up part or all of this work in order to have children. The male participants' career decisions were also influenced by their life goals to have children:

I considered being a [...] medical doctor, [...] but practicality says I might not see my family. My unborn, unseen family at the moment, but you know, like, you have to think about these things. I'd like to be around and actually see my family grow up and be at home and not be one of those people that's always off at the office and at the hospital
(Matt, phase 1)

Matt's hoped-for self as a family man impacted upon his current career decisions, as he worked to ensure he would be able to balance his responsibilities and avoid a negative possible self as being an unavailable parent. Similarly, Tom felt that a military career would be unsuitable if he started a family. He hoped to gain a career in which he had control over where he lived and worked, allowing him to settle down with his girlfriend (see also 4.7.2).

Conversely, Ben felt that as a man he had no rush to have children and therefore his career decisions, including the potential to do a PhD in America, were not restricted:

People who have fairly extreme ties, like they get married here and then do a PhD [...], or even have kids, you think right, well you've basically written yourself out of the opportunity to study abroad now because you can't just do that. And I feel like because I don't have those ties then you know, good, I've got the choices (Ben, phase 4)

Ben's life goals were more focused around academia than many of the women within the study who appeared more focused upon either starting families, or their current families. This finding is similar to Bowman et al's (2005) study on UK master's students in which some of the female participants were considering parenthood after graduating from their master's degree. However, contrasting with Bowman's study Tom and Matt showed a similar consideration of future families when making their career decisions.

Families played an influential role during the career transition. Many of the younger students were supported financially by their parents to enable them to pursue master's study. However, towards the end of the career transition the non-mature students attempted to become more independent, and parents once again reverted to a more supportive role. A lack of familial support led to increased stress and negativity during the master's degree. The results showed the impact of participants own (either current or hoped-for) children upon their experiences and career decisions. Participants with children were unable to fully embrace the student identity, leading to some difficulties balancing their study and childcare including the mind-sets required within each. Career plans and goals were made in relation to their wider childcare commitments. Those considering starting families were concerned with how these life goals fit within their other career plans. The career transition therefore involved balancing the desire to find self-fulfilling work alongside fulfilling responsibilities and acting in ways expected of them within their life roles.

5.2 Influence of partner

As the students entered serious relationships, their identities and career plans became intertwined with their partners. A similar finding was observed within Bowman et al's study (2005) on master's students' transitions. The influence of partners was seen throughout the mature students' interviews, and became increasingly prevalent during the final two phases with the non-mature students.

5.2.1 Compromise with partners

For the younger participants, the period of study involved an attempt to transition into adulthood, which included committing to long-term relationships and settling down. Amy's partner had a stable career and hoped to buy a house. Amy began to incorporate these goals within her own future plans. By phase 4 her goals revolved around making a home for her and her partner. Amy's partner therefore impacted upon her own values, and allowed her to focus on his career plans and needs rather than worry about her own lack of plans:

recently a friend did say 'so what are your plans?' and I was saying well it's going to have to depend on a few different things, and I'm going to have to see how it works out, and she was like 'well no that's with him, but what about with you, what are your plans?' and I was like oh I didn't realise they were different [laughs] (Amy, phase 4)

When asked what she looked forward to in her future Amy described a life with her partner in which they were both happy. Perhaps this relates to Bowman et al's (2005) findings that women sometimes put men's careers before their own. It appeared that Amy's partner was career driven and she was waiting on him to find a permanent career in a certain location before looking for her own. Her hoped-for future may also be related to the possibility of parenthood which can impact upon women's career decisions and is thought to make them less likely to choose time-consuming and demanding work even if it is highly paid and enjoyable (Arnett, 2006). In the case of Amy it may be due to her own uncertainty regarding her career plans in comparison to the nature of her partner's career, as he worked full-time in a well-paid job. This suggests that Amy's professional identity and self-concept are not yet fully formed, and rather than engage in exploratory behaviour she adopted a passive approach by submerging her own plans and identity in place of her partner's.

Some participants were actively working with their partner to achieve both their career aims, even if it meant one putting their goals on hold. Tom delayed his own career

plans (to leave the military) until his partner finished her PGCE so that he could support them both financially:

the deal has kind of been that whilst I'm working full-time that I can cover fees and house living and all those sorts of things if we need to, whilst she studies and gets herself where she wants to be and gets herself on a reasonable salary, and then when she is in that position that gives me the scope to leave [his military job] and take a bit of a risk (Tom, phase 3)

Much of the discussion regarding career decisions with Tom revolved around stability for him and his partner. This appeared to be particularly important for him as he felt pressure to financially provide due to being the man in the relationship. This pressure appears to be linked to an assumption found within previous literature that women should still be the primary child carers (O'Neill, Ivaldi, & Fox, 2002). Tom felt that it was more socially acceptable for women to have an uncertain job role than for men:

If she lost her job that would be fine, it would be acceptable because that happens, whereas I feel from both sets of parents, hers and mine, that if I lost a job or a position, it would be less acceptable and I'd almost be less of a man because of it, because I can't provide. Can I look after his daughter if I can't hold a job down? (Tom, phase 3)

Tom remained in his military career for longer than he had been enjoying it due to the perception that in order to adequately fit the role of the man in the relationship he must be the main earner and provider. This caused frustration as Tom attempted to balance his desire for a self-fulfilling career against his desire to take on the role as male and provider within his relationship. Due to having already made the long-term commitments associated with adulthood (a stable career, mortgage and long-term partner) Tom found it difficult to change his career path. Ultimately, his desire for financial stability led him to decide against PhD study:

it's a huge burden on others to pursue what ultimately is an interest, not necessarily a career path, for three years and you're only bringing in 15 grand into the pot in that year. You're going to be very tired, working very hard and at the end of the three years you get a lovely bit of paper and a nice 'Doctor' at the end of your name, but actually finding a job may not be as easy as it should be for someone who has that capability. (Tom, phase 3)

Tom felt that during his master's degree he had neglected relationships with his family and his girlfriend as he tended to work late into the evening and lacked time. In doing so, Tom felt that he had been selfish in order to complete his degree, an attribute which contrasted with how he hoped to be viewed by others. PhD study did not fit with his ideal self in terms of his relationships with others. Tom's role as a man in the relationship and his perceptions of the responsibility this entailed influenced his career decisions. Tom was therefore focused upon career plans which would suit his own self-concept, but also fit with his partner and his perceived role within the relationship.

Chloe hoped for a traditional-style relationship in which she would take care of the children and the home whilst her partner would be the main income earner. By the final phase of the study, Chloe's partner had moved in with her and begun a degree in engineering, meaning she was now the breadwinner. Despite feeling the roles in the relationship were currently untraditional (with him playing more of a home-care role and her being the earner) she coped due to feeling it was a short-term situation. Chloe and Tom's career decisions show how perceptions of appropriate ways to behave within a relationship are impacted by values and beliefs regarding the male and female roles in society.

Working relationships were reliant upon the partners' life goals being compatible in some way. Lisa decided not to continue in her long-term relationship as her partner's life goals were not compatible with her aim to pursue PhD study:

He was like I want to get married in a year, I want to start planning for babies with you and I said well I want to do a PhD and I can't commit to that [...] then it was basically like well you know it's either the PhD or it's me. I'm like I want to do the PhD more than I want to commit to you. (Lisa, phase 1)

Once an individual's goals were no longer compatible with their partner's and a compromise was not found, the relationship was unlikely to last. The values and goals of participants therefore can be influenced by their partners, but can also influence commitment to the relationship.

To summarise, partners within the study were an important influence upon individuals' career decisions. As participants attempted to create a life which suited both them and their partner, compromises were required. If students did not place enough value upon the

relationship, or felt it was preventing them from fulfilling their own goals, then the compromises were not felt to be worthwhile. Erikson suggests that young adulthood involves a process of searching for intimacy with others with whom their identities are complementary (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). As many of the younger participants were approaching adulthood it seems appropriate that the influence of partners developed over the course of the study. Individuals' identities became intertwined with their partners and this was displayed by similar beliefs, values, and possible selves. This is likely to be due to the interdependence within such close relationships as individuals influence each other, with development in one likely to impact upon the other (Lemme, 2005). The impact of partners has not generally been found within previous research on undergraduate students' transitions, and this is likely to be due to the later stage of life of the current participants.

5.3 Influence of peers and friends

Peers were primarily a source of support, community and social comparison. The influence of peers differed for the distance and the onsite learners.

5.3.1 Online communities

For the distance learners, online social media was important in facilitating the creation of a community which allowed individuals to feel connected to others in similar situations. The online community provided a private space, away from tutors, in which students could vent frustrations and ask for advice and support from others:

We're the first group to set up a [...] private Facebook account and we, you know, we shared everything from how to do stats to slagging off people, you know, it was really a supportive "get everything off your chest, help people out", sort of session, which was really nice (Tom, phase 2)

Many of the distance learners valued this social environment away from tutors, where they felt free to ask questions and complain to each other. For Tom, this Facebook group made the difference between an unenjoyable distance learning undergraduate degree with no interaction between students, and a more enjoyable master's degree. Tom lacked academic interaction with his work colleagues, some of whom he felt reacted negatively to his studying. Facebook therefore provided a forum with others whom he felt shared similar interests and experiences. For many, the Facebook group provided reassurance that they were not the only ones struggling with the degree. The community became Lisa's main source of social contact during the writing of her dissertation:

I had made a conscious decision to not do anything until after the dissertation. I didn't socialise, I didn't go out, [...] which meant that my [online course] relationships were probably my strongest relationships at that time because they were the people that I was communicating with. (Lisa, phase 2)

As the online community were undertaking the same degree it is likely that this created a sense of belonging and understanding of each other that individuals may have felt lacking in other relationships. Feeling a sense of belonging to the social group online is likely to have reduced feelings of stress due to the perception that others will help, which can lead to an increased sense of control and higher levels of self-esteem (Wilcox et al., 2005). Facebook became an emotion-focused coping strategy for the group who used it to seek the social support needed to enable them to deal with the stresses of the master's degree (David & Suls, 1999). Lisa felt that without the group many students may have dropped out, highlighting the importance of the social community for those students who may lack support elsewhere in their lives.

Alongside emotional support, the Facebook group provided a space in which students were able to exchange their marks in order to better understand how their own progress related to others:

I actually this time said "look, this is my mark let's just share and share, how is everyone doing? Roughly who's at the top and who's not at the top?" So that was really good to see exactly where people were [...] sitting in the course (Lisa, phase 1)

As the students lacked the opportunity to observe the abilities of others within regular classroom settings, social media provided a forum in which they could better understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Social comparisons are an important source of information when developing academic self-concepts (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). The online community provided a reference group against which students were able to define themselves (Antonio, 2004) and understand their own abilities. This reference group was especially important during the transition into the novel situation of the master's degree where individuals lacked other indicators of success. However, this group was created by Lisa, a natural 'social instigator' (Lisa, phase 1), without whom the participants may not have had this valuable resource.

Despite the benefits of the online social community, it did not replace in-person contact with individuals:

we've got our own sort of secret Facebook group which is quite, you know, it's supportive to an extent, but it's not really the same as, and you know, people live all over the world so you can't really see them. (Jodie, phase 1)

Jodie felt that the Facebook group was no substitute for in-person contact. Jodie regularly described her difficulties with learning to use the technology required for the degree and the novelty of online communication. In general, Jodie struggled with technology and was unfamiliar with online communication. She found it harder to adjust to than many of the other students who were already familiar with the technology. Jodie segregated her online community from her 'normal' life:

It's like another world sitting alongside your normal life, which if you went to university in person you wouldn't have because that would be your actual physical life whereas an online life is not a physical life (Jodie, phase 4)

Jodie therefore did not seem to identify or connect with the social media in the same way as some of the younger students. Due to the potential difficulties caused by adapting to technology, it is clear that the personal factor in higher education cannot be replaced (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999). Residential weeks were therefore important in enabling the distance learners to meet and feel part of a community, which later facilitated online contact:

Having met them in person helped a lot, the residential, even just having the face and you know, you kind of get a sense of their personality and erm, so I think that was very helpful to me because you know, email sometimes [...] you don't get the tone, it's just more dry by email. And sometimes the way somebody says something is much more telling than what they actually say. I like face-to-face contact more for that reason. (Chloe, phase 2)

Online discussions via email or Facebook lack verbal and visual cues (Robson, 2011) meaning that tutors and students need to be especially aware of how their writing may be interpreted (see section 5.4).

5.3.2 *Onsite communities across master's courses*

Those studying on campus appeared to face a greater struggle to create a community with other music master's students. Ben was one of only two individuals on his course. In order to find others with similar interests Ben attempted to create a regular meeting with other music master's students:

the pub night lasted one go and then no one came back, because only a limited number of people came in the first place, and then you know, and it was perfectly nice but one of the things is you know, you kind of come to wonder, is the discipline enough to get a bunch of people, who aren't that similar in the first place, to get them sort of socialising on a regular basis, is that enough? Possibly not. (Ben, phase 2)

Ben's experience shows the social aspect of the course is negated when degrees recruit low numbers. A lack of enrolled students restricts the ability to create learning communities. Additionally, other students were less interested in such proposed meet-ups. Ruth felt that the social meet ups with other master's students were too academically focused:

I would like to get to know them as a person as well maybe, but they're more just sort of like, oh so what area of research are you interested in then? [...] it's really nice to have that sort of discussion, but then when you're doing the informal stuff over coffee, like, let go a little bit and just be normal, and be real, and don't always talk about academia. (Ruth, phase 2)

Ruth had decided not to continue in academia and so it is clear that an academically focused meeting with other master's students may not have suited her social needs. Perhaps the academic discussions were generally more valued by the distance learners due to them lacking the experience of lectures and scheduled contact time. The onsite students had more contact time with course mates and tutors and their aims for social events were less clear and more disparate. Ben acted as a social instigator, however, a lack of interest from others and perceived lack of similarity within the group meant that the community failed to materialise as he hoped. A social instigator in itself is therefore not enough to create an effective community as the personalities and interests of the students also play a role in the success of developing communities.

In the majority of cases students remained focused socially within their own subject areas. At times this led to individuals feeling isolated from the rest of the department:

I don't think I've really done anything else with any other psychology people, either lecturers or students, I don't really feel like we're part of the psychology department. We're kind of like just on our own I guess. (Laura, phase 2)

Laura's course was based in the psychology department. Feelings of not fitting into the department were echoed by the music psychologists based within music departments. The difficulty of 'fit' appeared to be linked to the interdisciplinary nature of the degree:

I think that's a common problem for music psychology, it doesn't fit the psychology department, it doesn't fit well in music departments, erm, it's a very odd subject. [...] A lot of the other [modules] don't fit that well actually, and I think the students actually sometimes feel a little bit isolated (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

In this quote the tutor explained how they felt that there tended to be a culture of 'us' and 'them' with the music psychologists, which the tutors were attempting to reduce. The students on all the music psychology programmes reinforced the feeling of being separated from their department, perhaps due to their course lacking a practical musical element. Nettl (1995) suggests that performance is seen as central within music schools, with those who don't perform (e.g. musicologists and music theorists) existing on the periphery. Perhaps this distinction is highlighted in the feelings of the participants above and exacerbated by the interdisciplinary nature of the music psychology degrees.

The majority of the courses involved some form of group work. Group work was seen as a way to combine each cohort's strengths and encourage the building of communities. One tutor described the advantages of such communities:

I think it's more enjoyable, and you learn from each other and you can be inspired. So especially for people who are feeling a bit lonely and isolated then I mean, especially for PhD students it's quite a long trajectory. And also [...] to avoid this kind of very focused narrow thinking (Institution A, music psychology tutor)

These perceptions relate to the documented benefits of learning communities. Such communities (in which individuals are in the same class across a number of modules or working together within classes) are associated with a number of advantages including 'enhanced academic performance, integration of academic and social experiences, gains in multiple areas of skill, competence and knowledge' (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 131). A community allows the students to feel as though they belong, which in turn enhances their enjoyment and perseverance. Additionally, working with others is likely to increase the sharing of ideas,

which as the tutor above suggests, may prevent narrow thinking. Creating learning communities within and across courses is an effective way to encourage student engagement and motivation. Although the same benefit would probably be gained through contact with a tutor, workloads restrict the amount of time lecturers are able to spend supporting each student.

Developing a stronger social bond with others on her course acted as a motivator for Amy:

[Spending time with course mates] just made my time a lot more happy, and it made me want to be out and spending time with them but also discussing work and yeh achieving things. It just sort of, it brought back the drive that you need to do it I think, and to do it well (Amy, phase 4)

Forming stronger social bonds with her course mates improved Amy's general psychological well-being whilst also providing her with a sense of 'having comrades' (Amy, phase 4). Feeling part of a community with a shared aim helped Amy persevere towards her own goals of succeeding within her master's degree. Amy gained an increased sense of belonging during the second term which was vital in enabling her to feel able to continue within the course. Working together with others in an academic setting was felt to be enjoyable and motivating by many of the onsite participants. These findings relate to past studies which have suggested that being part of a group can enhance an individual's self-esteem, and provide reassurance that others are experiencing similar challenges (Christie et al., 2008). Feeling a sense of belonging within a higher education department has also been linked to higher levels of perseverance within music degrees (Dibben, 2006).

Peers supported individual psychological well-being and coping mechanisms throughout the degree by providing a community in which the participants could feel they belonged. Whilst many of the other relationships described by participants had no relation to the master's degree, the course cohort were unique in sharing similar experiences. The shared understanding and interest within the cohorts resulted in the potential to form strong bonds, particularly within the distance learner groups. The peers within the study were important for helping individuals develop a greater understanding of their own abilities whilst developing a positive academic and professional identity. However, within the onsite courses

students appeared to hold different requirements for socialising, leading some to look towards their tutors to feel part of an academic community.

5.4 Influence of tutors

Throughout this thesis 'tutors' refers to lecturers and supervisors working with the students on the courses observed. An effective working relationship with a tutor was vital in enabling the student to develop a positive academic identity and feel confident to take risks within their work; whilst open and frank discussions enabled students to gain an insight into academic life, which was important for those continuing on to PhD study.

5.4.1 Choice of institution

Academic staff influenced participants' choice of institution. Students tended to be attracted towards institutions in which the tutors' interests and their own were related, and where they perceived tutors as friendly and attentive. Ben's supervisor played an important role from the first time they met in making Ben feel valued. Upon arriving unannounced at the music department Ben's supervisor suggested he come back another day as he was busy, however, as this was inconvenient he ended up spending time with Ben on that day discussing the course. Ben then felt that once he enrolled upon the course he would be likely to be given a good amount of support. Ben's initial expectations were confirmed as he felt he was given extra time by his supervisor. This was at least partly facilitated by the small number of students on his course, meaning the supervisor had time to spend with individual students:

By nature of having smaller numbers they of course get erm get more in depth review if you like from us as academics, the ratios enable very big sort of time, contact time with us (Institution A, musicology tutor)

Heavy constraints are placed upon tutors, restricting the amount of time they are able to spend with each individual student (Wilcox et al., 2005). Therefore, by being enrolled on a course in which he was the only full-time pupil, Ben's supervisor was able to provide relatively higher levels of personal support compared to other staff members who had greater numbers of dependent master's students. If Ben had entered a degree with more course mates the same initial experiences may have led to unrealistic expectations regarding the amount of contact time he would receive.

Ruth's familiarity with her supervisor motivated her to continue at her undergraduate institution:

I didn't want to, like, have to do the whole meeting more new people and building up those connections and like, I don't know, I feel, cos they've helped me through my undergrad I already, I know them and I don't feel embarrassed to go and ask them stupid questions (Ruth, phase 2)

Continuing with a previous supervisor meant that rapport was already established. Those students who remained within the same institution appeared to trust their supervisor's knowledge and ability to guide them towards success within the master's degree. In turn, many of the participants who were considering subsequent PhD study hoped to continue with their supervisors when they felt they had worked well together. Only one participant, Phoebe, accepted a place within a department before meeting her supervisor (although some did 'meet' over the telephone or via Skype, Phoebe had not previously had a conversation with her supervisor before meeting in their first supervision). For Phoebe, being accepted onto a PhD programme in which her supervisor showed an interest in her topic area was the most important factor, with an apparent lack of consideration of how well they were suited to work together. Perhaps Phoebe's confidence in her ability to succeed within research meant that she did not place a high priority on her supervisor's attitude, feeling that the majority of the PhD would involve independent work.

5.4.2 Developing a positive working relationship

Due to the small numbers of tutors working on each master's degree (in comparison to undergraduate level) each had a large potential to impact upon students' experiences. Developing positive working relationships with supervisors was therefore important for the students. Below, Ben discusses the factors which facilitated the development of a positive relationship between him and his supervisor:

I think we have a similar background and a similar perspective, erm, I think we both still think of ourselves as musicians and not just academics maybe [...] We've got a very similar sense of humour as well, and that does help, and also we've read a lot of the same things. [...] I have found articles and books and everything and sort of shuffled them his way and been like oh check this out, just like he has done on the course for me. So we do have a sort of exchange, erm, yeh, I like to think there's like a mutual respect there actually [...] he's very encouraging, he says a lot of very positive things, I mean he's talked about the possibility of co-presenting a paper at a conference next year [...] He

also says things like 'yeh I think you're a faster reader than I am, you've read more' and I'm like oh am I? (Ben, phase 2)

Ben felt supported and encouraged by his supervisor. Support from a supervisor can encourage students to take more academic risks (Whitelock, Faulkner, & Miell, 2008) and led Ben to feel able to explore new areas of research, in new ways. Ben's supervisor was a role model who motivated and inspired Ben to act in similar ways to achieve success within academia (Gibson, 2004). Admitting potential flaws allowed Ben to see his supervisor as imperfect, reducing the potential for him to be seen as intimidating, but rather as an individual who worked hard to succeed within academia. This is likely to have supported Ben's beliefs that intelligence may be developed, and in turn increase his tendency to adopt learning goals (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). It is likely that admitting his flaws also enabled Ben to see his supervisor's success within academia as being more attainable, and therefore more motivating (Ivaldi & O'Neill, 2010):

I feel like an academic now because [...] when I spend time with them [the academics in the department] I feel like, well we're actually quite alike aren't we? And you know our interests are similar and we've read all the same books and we clearly think about things in the same way, so what's the difference? The difference is that you're ten years further along, you know. (Ben, phase 1)

Due to the lack of a disciplinary element from his tutor, the power relationship was diminished and Ben began to feel like a peer and a part of the department. An open dialogue of the kind seen between Ben and his supervisor is thought to be beneficial for students in encouraging them to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, ultimately leading to a stronger academic identity (Lairio et al., 2011).

The positive working relationship between students and their supervisor(s) became particularly important during the dissertation period, due to the close working relationship with just one or two people at this point and the relatively large number of credits awarded to this module. A tutor suggested that students developed interpersonal skills during the dissertation process:

In the tutor relationship I think there's experience to be developed, how to negotiate building some sort of large scale project and using a person as an advisor (Institution B, musicology tutor).

Hannah supported this statement, and felt that outcomes of her master's degree included 'people skills and negotiation tactics' (Hannah, phase 4) gained through having to work with her supervisors. Although she did not perceive her relationship with her supervisors to be positive, after leaving the degree Hannah retrospectively felt she had developed more effective people skills whilst struggling with the working relationship than may have otherwise been the case.

Tutors were vital sources of support and encouragement who helped boost students' confidence and perceptions of themselves as being academically capable. The students tended to find supervisors' opinions of their ability to stay within academia influential, with some completely changing their ideas of what they thought was possible after a comment from their tutor. A similar impact has been observed with sports coaches, whose feedback impacts athletes' perceptions of themselves (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003). The strength of the influence may be due to supervisors' opinions being trusted as they are themselves skilled within academia (Bandura, 1986) (at least this would be the assumption). Steph was shocked at her supervisor's suggestion that she return to do a PhD. The suggestion changed Steph's perceptions of what was possible within her future and excited her:

I can't believe people are asking me to do this [PhD], why would they be asking this thick woman to come and do this amazing thing? It's the best endorsement I've ever had. I have no opinion of my academic brain at all really so I'm chuffed, [...] and it's taken me a long time to think you know maybe there's something, maybe I could do this, maybe it's possible. (Steph, phase 4)

Steph's supervisor encouraged her to see a new potential in her life. Previously she had always focused upon performance and teaching, however, it appeared that now she had the opportunity to continue within academia. Without the feedback and comment from her supervisor it seemed unlikely that Steph would have considered this an option, due to not perceiving herself as academic.

5.4.3 *Approaching supervisors*

As the full-time master's degree is so short compared to undergraduate study, some students who changed institution found it difficult to achieve the same level of rapport with their supervisors. Without a positive working relationship students were hesitant to approach their supervisors. At times students felt their own issues and problems were not worthy of their tutor's time:

we had one person who was our contact and I only wrote her you know maybe two or three times because I didn't feel comfortable writing about very small details or small questions because I just feel like she's very busy and you know my small question I can try to figure out on my own or ask someone else or erm something (Chloe, phase 2)

Chloe was a distance learner who struggled with the isolation of studying (see also 5.3.1), a fact not helped by the lack of contact with her tutor. A lack of confidence in approaching supervisors could lead to stunted academic development if students feel unable to express their own ideas and opinions. The lack of confidence is in turn likely to stifle creativity and originality within students' work (Whitelock et al., 2008). A tutor discussed the difficulty in encouraging students to approach staff:

we've got these new office hours, you know, that we've instituted over the last two years that, you know, are being formalised, and even then, you know, some students [...] have communicated the fact that 'well, we don't know if we can come in and bother you', even though they're open hours, that's what they're there for. 'But you were working on something'. (Institution B, musicology tutor)

The uncertainty about when to approach supervisors was exacerbated when students lacked self-confidence. Amy avoided meetings with her supervisor due to being unsure what work to take in and struggling with the more hands-off approach than she had been used to during her undergraduate degree. During her four year undergraduate degree Amy had developed a positive relationship with her supervisor who she perceived to be clumsy, 'young' and 'new'. As her undergraduate supervisor tended to instigate communication Amy had felt valued as an individual. Contrasting with this, Amy felt her master's degree supervisor:

[...] has done so many amazing things that I'm just sort of like oh, like slightly, not intimidated by her but slightly, I'm not exactly sure how to approach her in the same way [...] because I feel like I can't ask stupid questions with her, she would kind of be like, oh did she really ask that? (Amy, phase 2).

Amy's lack of confidence ultimately led her to feel unable to approach her supervisor with ideas or questions for fear of being shown to be incompetent. Instead Amy struggled to complete her dissertation on her own. This suggests that Amy holds an entity theory of intelligence, meaning that she felt her supervisor's ability was a fixed trait (which she did not possess) and had therefore adopted performance goals in order to avoid negative feedback from others (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Amy's approach to difficulty was avoidance, as the challenge of the dissertation was a potential threat to her self-concept and academic identity (Komarraju et al., 2009). This avoidance is likely to have restricted her desire to take academic risks and develop during her master's degree. Having highly regarded supervisors can be a motivating factor when choosing places to study but in reality it can lead to feelings of inadequacy for the students when a positive working relationship is not developed. Perceiving her supervisor as highly capable may have meant that Amy saw her success as unattainable and therefore was not motivated by her as a role model of success within academia. Amy's difficulties corroborate past research which finds that those who lack confidence in their abilities, and therefore may be most in need of support, are least likely to seek it. Failing to seek this support may prevent students developing to their full potential in terms of skills and self-efficacy (Maddux & Gosselin, 2003).

5.4.4 Distance learners

Distance learners developed a different type of relationship with their tutors from the onsite learners. As most of the communication for distance learners was done via email some students discussed the stunted nature of this type of conversation. Although many felt their supervisors were prompt when responding to their emails, verbal conversation tended to be preferred when discussing potential ideas. Contact time was highly valued by the distance learners, which meant students placed pressure on tutors to provide relevant support to them. In-person contact with supervisors was thought to be beneficial in enabling discussions to explore ideas relating, but perhaps not central, to their topics. Although many of the distance learners discussed topics amongst themselves this was not felt to replace the expertise and knowledge of the tutors. During phase 1 Chloe had been enthused by the two residential study weeks which occurred at the start of each year of the course. However, during her dissertation she began to feel that her supervisor was unaware of who she was. Chloe struggled with this sense of anonymity and lack of connection to her supervisor, a relationship which differed to some of the other distance learners (see also 5.3.1 and 5.4.3). Feeling unknown by her supervisor is likely to have enhanced Chloe's feeling of not belonging, or being integrated into the department. The danger of this can be highlighted by

the fact that the more an individual feels integrated within their place of study, the more they will feel committed to their institution and to completing their degree (Dibben, 2006; Tinto, 1975). A student's academic identity is likely to be more positive when they feel personally known and understood by their supervisor (Lairio et al., 2011). Students who feel their supervisors understand and acknowledge them and their experiences are also likely to feel more intrinsically motivated and confident than those who do not (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Despite struggling, Chloe managed to complete her master's degree. Perhaps Chloe was able to persevere due to having already completed a year before starting her dissertation (Tinto, 1975) and wanting to develop her knowledge (learning goals) and gain more respect from her students (performance goals). The combination of performance and learning goals are likely to have positively impacted upon her motivation and perseverance (Komarraju et al., 2009).

The tutors, contrary to what might be expected and contrary to Chloe's experiences, tended to develop a more open dialogue with the distance learners than with the onsite students:

The distance learners do tend to be slightly more, sort of, responsive and effusive in their enthusiasm actually, again maybe that's email, maybe it's less embarrassing to write that than it is to make an appointment and come and say you've been really helpful, thank you very much. Erm so yeh we do tend to hear more about, well both their dissatisfactions and their satisfactions, so they've got that sort of individual point of contact that they, the onsite could have, but don't. (Institution A, music psychology tutor)

Perhaps the faceless contact method of email allowed some students to feel more confident approaching their supervisors for help. However, the wording within emails was particularly important due to there being a lack of non-verbal cues from which to take meaning:

I find I have to be really careful when I'm emailing, and when I'm sending feedback and you know criticising people on paper and not knowing whether they've understood [...] just getting the tone of voice right I think really is yeh just something that takes a bit more thought and you don't know if you're getting it right or not (Institution A, music psychology tutor)

The tutor above was highly respected by many of the participants, perhaps partly due to her sensitive approach and her aim to ensure students understood the criticism and feedback

they received without becoming upset or distressed.

5.4.5 Providing feedback

In order to maximise students' potential for learning skills and knowledge during the period of their master's degree, feedback from tutors was important. Feedback is vital in enabling students to evaluate their own progress, as many individuals lack the capacity to accurately self-assess their abilities (Molloy & Boud, 2013). The short period of the full-time master's degree meant that many students waited almost a term before receiving any formal feedback and therefore lacked information on their progress until this point. The process of the master's degree is a learning one therefore without this evaluation from their tutors (who presumably are more experienced and knowledgeable within academia) it may be hard for the student to achieve their full potential (O'Neill, 1995). Marks and grades provided a quantitative measure of students' abilities which could be compared against others in an objective manner. Personal fulfilment was gained when individuals achieved targets and marks they had personally set for themselves (Bandura, 1986). Many described shock at gaining higher marks than expected:

Getting my results was pretty huge for me because I was like, by that point I'd fully convinced myself that I just wasn't very good and I hadn't done very well, so to get very positive results I was sort of like no way! Nice! (Ben, phase 4)

Entering a new learning environment typically leads to uncertainty about one's abilities and therefore low levels of academic self-efficacy (Christie et al., 2008). During the transition into master's study students are reliant upon others for feedback due to lacking frames of reference with which to self-evaluate. For example, Chloe described her uncertainty as she waited for her feedback during the second year of her part-time master's:

I'm, sort of, on the edge of my seat over here because [...] I have no idea if I did very well or if I failed [...] that's how it is when I turn [work] in, I think, you know, I did my best, I spent a lot of time on this paper [the dissertation] especially, but I have absolutely no idea how I did. (Chloe, phase 2)

The level of stress expressed by Chloe appeared to be caused by a limited understanding of the standards expected of her and uncertainty regarding her ability relative to these standards which resulted in her lacking confidence in her learning abilities (Christie et al., 2008). For Chloe and other international students this uncertainty was further compounded by the English grading system which tends to award comparatively lower marks for work

which would receive higher marks in their home countries. Lisa described her postgraduate marks as 'woeful' (phase 2) (despite obtaining merits in her assignments) due to comparing them to the Australian marking system within which she would expect marks in the 80s rather than the 60s, as Laura explains:

if you get quite a high mark in Australia it is like an 80, erm I was kind of used to getting above 70 and for my first ever essay I got like a 68 and like not a single negative comment, like you know, "well written", blah blah, and I was like, well how can you not say that I've done anything wrong and then give me only a 68? (Laura, phase 2)

Students relied upon feedback to measure their ability which meant that receiving lower marks than expected led to feelings of uncertainty regarding their academic abilities, even after realising that the marks were considered to be high in England.

When speaking about the desired outcomes of master's study the majority of the students spoke in terms of completing the degree and achieving certain grades rather than personal development. Perhaps this is due to the fact that completion and grades are more quantifiable and therefore easier to measure as goals than the more subjective personal development outcomes. One tutor explains the difficulty caused by this reliance upon grades:

It's hard for you to say "well I gave it a 64, but the meaning of that mark is, it's a bit contingent, it is in my personal opinion, and you have to take it with a grain of salt". I can't really do that, because then what's the student going to say? "But you gave me 64, and this is my profile and that number is going to be crunched with the other numbers and it's going to result in a number and that is going to quantify me". (Institution B, musicology tutor)

The quote highlights the difficulty of the subjective nature of marking within a humanities context. However, it is difficult to see how else master's students may be assessed if not by marks. Such reliance upon grades may be related to the need to attain certain levels in order to be accepted onto PhD courses and to qualify for jobs. Therefore, the students are always likely to focus upon grades to some extent as this potentially impacts their future options.

5.4.6 *Insight into academic life*

Supervisors were ideally positioned to allow their students an insight into academic life. Many of the participants who planned academic careers were warned about the realities of this path by tutors. Ben's supervisor highlighted the challenges he faced in his academic career whilst remaining enthusiastic about it. Honest discussions about these challenges allowed Ben a realistic view of the academic career path:

They'll tell us their difficulties with work, they'll say, "oh I've got to do this, and it's a real pain", and "oh the university will muck you about on this sometimes, don't worry about it." [...] They just say look, if you really want to do this, then you are going to have to do that, it will look good if you do that. But they're very honest about their own careers as well and stuff like that, and I really like that. (Ben, phase 1)

The open discussions about potential difficulties within academia allowed Ben the chance to develop an effective academic identity which would allow him to prepare for, and persevere with these potential future challenges. However, Ben's relationship with his tutor may have the potential to lead to incomplete or inaccurate assumptions about an academic career due to his reliance upon a single individual's experiences. Therefore the need to engage in a process of exploration and gain information from other sources should be stressed by tutors who give such advice.

Other supervisors went further in describing the negative aspects of academic life to students. Amy's undergraduate dissertation supervisor actively discouraged her from entering academia:

[I] considered, sort of, going into research, but my dissertation supervisor actually put me off [becoming a lecturer], [...] she did say, like, if you can find any other way of getting into it, then do that, because as a lecturer with all of the other things that they end up having to do [...] they have so little leeway to be able to go and do the research they want to do. (Amy, phase 1)

The pressure upon academic staff to balance teaching alongside research are well known and it appeared that because of this some staff felt that students wanting to research would be better placed to do this in another context. The danger of such insights are that the students may gain a one-sided view of a single individual's ability to cope within their career path, rather than a more objective view of the career itself. Due to students not yet being socialised within the academic environment, comments from their tutors have the danger of

being misinterpreted. It is important therefore that whilst an honest and open approach is taken by the tutors, the context is emphasised alongside the need to seek out further information. Laura appeared to be conflicted about the advice given by her lecturers:

Everyone that I speak to that is a lecturer or professor, although it seems like they love their job they always advise you against going down that route. Like my music research boss is always she's going on about like "don't do it, you don't want this, it's too stressful" and her life is crazy, she's always so busy and I'm sure you could take on less than she takes on (Laura, phase 4)

Laura felt that remaining in academia would provide her with the lifestyle she hoped for which included being able to continue to learn, however, she was uncertain of the realities due to the conflict she viewed in others. Due to this uncertainty she was also considering her partner's idea of setting up a small business which she felt would be flexible if she decided to start a family. The difficulty for the students was recognising how much of the stress and challenges faced by their supervisors were part of the job itself and how much was due to choice or personal factors.

One tutor highlighted his feelings regarding students' decisions to remain within academia:

I'm very excited when people want to do a PhD and want to remain in academia. I'm also worried for them because it's a kind of weird existence which, you know, for some people it's right and for other people it isn't. And there are quite a lot of people in academia who want to get out and some people on the outside who'd like to get in, but I think we don't do enough to highlight that (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

The academics appeared to feel a responsibility to ensure students were aware of the realities of academia before pursuing that path. One tutor described a debate he had with another music psychologist over the morality of encouraging students to pursue research whilst there is a lack of jobs available in the field. A debate surrounded whether tutors were responsible for warning students away from paths which may not lead to careers, or for encouraging them to fulfil their potential regardless. All the staff spoken to within the current study did appear to provide encouragement when appropriate to students regarding their ability to cope within an academic environment. For instance, Phoebe was warned about the academic workload by her undergraduate supervisor whilst also being encouraged:

[her undergraduate supervisor said] there's much more stuff to do next to caring for the seminars and [...] you have to stay up to date and you can't just relax on the work you've done already, you have to do more work, but he also told me that he thinks [...] it's possible for me, or that he can imagine me doing that. (Phoebe, phase 1)

The approach taken by Phoebe's supervisor involved warning her of the realities of the profession whilst also encouraging and supporting her, which was a popular tactic amongst the tutors.

As highlighted in the literature, tutors remain an important influence during master's study and the majority of participants still relied upon them for support, feedback and encouragement. Tutors provided individuals with an insight into their own abilities and potential for success within academia. The tutors therefore had the potential to support and encourage the development of positive academic identities during the period of study. However, the benefits of tutors were reliant upon the students' attitudes and coping methods. Those who lacked confidence, held helpless coping methods and felt a lack of control over their development tended to avoid contact with their supervisors. The need to support those who are most vulnerable is therefore apparent. Students' academic identities and self-efficacy suffered when they lacked a strong working relationship with a tutor, as they struggled to feel personally valued, worth the time of the tutor, or part of a community. This is likely to lead to students struggling to maintain their motivation during the degree. Showing an awareness of the student as a whole, including their external priorities, led to the students feeling more valued and confident. There was also a need to ensure students were aware of what they should expect from their tutors during the course of study. Music students can have high expectations of their supervisors (Pitts, 2005), therefore it is important that these expectations are managed to avoid disappointment. Additionally, the tutors' expectations for their students should also be made explicit in order to ensure students understand their own responsibilities and are able to take control of their own learning (Otter, 1992). This may help to ensure students feel more confident in approaching their supervisors for support when needed.

Tutors need to be aware of their impact upon the students' self-perceptions and be sensitive of the potential this may have for influencing well-being. In order to best develop students' academic identity and independence it is important that tutors develop a

relationship in which open and honest discussions may take place. Such honest and open relationships are important for the development of trust (Simons, 2002). Tutors who discuss their own experiences and difficulties may be viewed as more approachable by the students, in turn increasing the likelihood of developing a positive working relationship. However, such discussions need to be placed in context to avoid any misunderstanding by the student. Students need to be encouraged to engage in self-exploration in order to better understand themselves and avoid viewing a tutor as a wholesale role model. Tutors therefore can assist the development of a positive and coherent sense of self during the period of study in order to support the developing independence of students.

5.5 Summary

Social factors were strongly intertwined with individual's developing identities, including their perceptions of what was possible for them. Participants aimed to manage how they were viewed by others, behaving in ways to either conform to, or rebel against, societal expectations of them. Individuals felt pressured by society and others to act in certain ways, perhaps by complying to norms (Biddle, 2013), and these perceived expectations impacted upon participants' expectations and experiences of studying. Such expectations included perceived societal norms regarding gender roles and stages of life. Holding a number of conflicting roles was potentially challenging due to balancing the expectations associated with each (Evans, Carney, & Wilkinson, 2013; McGowan, Redeker, Cooper, & Greenan, 2012; Super, 1957), in particular parenthood and studying.

Upon entering the master's degree the younger students were often financially supported by their parents, which enabled them to study full-time. During the career transition individuals attempted to develop their own sense of independence by coming to rely less on their parents. Upon exit from the degree parents played less of a practical role, tending to be more focused upon general emotional support. Transitioning out of the master's degree and becoming an adult tended to involve settling down with partners, and for the younger students the final two phases of interviews included discussions about creating a future together. The identity and career decisions for many of the students were therefore not just personal, but interlinked with others with whom they wished to spend their time. Individuals compromised and worked with their partners to find a solution which suited both parties. Male and female participants considered how their desire for a family (or having no desire for a family yet) impacted upon their perceived career choices, with many

attempting to find a career which would fit alongside this life goal. Peers and course mates provided a sense of community, in which the individual could develop higher levels of academic self-efficacy, compare themselves to others, and gain support and encouragement to persevere with the course. Such communities played an important role in self-evaluation, particularly due to the delay before many received official feedback on their work. Peers influenced individuals' identification as musicians, with many comparing their musical participation against their course mates in order to evaluate their own musical self (Pitts, 2003).

Tutors were in a position of great responsibility as there was a tendency for participants to view them as positive or negative role models who provided examples of possible futures. By allowing an insight into the life of an academic, in particular the challenges faced, tutors helped to increase students' perceptions of their success as being attainable. Such open conversations increased the approachability of tutors and helped to reduce the risk of appearing intimidating. Tutors therefore played a role in the development of identities and possible selves for the participants by acting as role models, providing feedback and supporting students to understand their own abilities. However, it was important that individuals did not imitate their tutors in a wholesale manner. Instead, the importance of exploration is again highlighted to ensure individuals are self-aware and develop congruent and authentic professional identities.

A number of factors appeared to facilitate a smooth transition for the students:

- Support and encouragement from family members, including financial and practical support to enable students to spend time studying when required
- To belong to a community (either in person or online) so that individuals could feel understood by others who faced similar experiences and gain a sense of comradeship which motivated them to work towards the shared goal of completing the degree
- An understanding, approachable tutor, who showed an interest in them as a whole person. Students were then able to take risks with ideas and academic identities. The tutor provided insights into academia to allow an individual to better prepare and decide whether it was a suitable career path for them

Although it is an understandable argument that by master's level students should be expected to be independent and able to approach their supervisors, many still lacked the confidence to do so, often due to feeling their own issues were not worthy of the time of the supervisors. In order to make the most of the social factors available, individuals needed confidence. Without this confidence tutors and peers tended to not be approached or utilised as a means of support. Those who lacked confidence and held performance goals tended not to utilise their supervisors or peers, due to a fear of being seen as being unworthy or unable to achieve. This helpless coping method meant that they failed to fully develop a secure academic identity.

6 : Personal development

The previous two chapters have discussed the personal and social factors which acted as motivations and impacted upon participants' experiences during the career transition. These chapters have highlighted the ways that the interactive relationship between self and social factors influenced the participants' career decisions, experiences, and identity development. The participants tended to be motivated by a desire to gain personal fulfilment and a career which fit their professional identity and life goals. The master's degree enabled students to do so by providing a space in which they could develop knowledge, skills and self-awareness. The next two chapters will focus upon the development of the participants during the career transition in order to better understand the outcomes of master's study. The transition into and out of master's study was characterised by development both personally and vocationally. Development refers to the process of change and growth which often takes place during a period of disequilibrium (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). During master's study, individuals were involved in a process of learning which can be defined as 'permanent or semi-permanent changes in how individuals think and act' (Billett, 2004, p. 111). Learning therefore 'transforms who we are and what we can do [...] It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming' (Wenger, 1998, p. 215) which impacts upon the whole person (Scott et al., 2013). Within this chapter personal development and the sense of self are discussed, referring to developing self-efficacy, self-awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and independence. The term knowledge will be used to describe information which has been interpreted, processed, evaluated and understood by the students (Georgii-Hemming, 2013), whilst skills refer to expertise in a particular area and therefore tend to be more practical. The term attributes is used here to refer to the characteristics of an individual, often referring to personalities and confidence. All three of these terms are related, as in order to gain knowledge individuals must first have the skills needed to acquire it (possibly through researching or conversing), whilst increased knowledge may result in an individual acting in a more skilled manner when attempting tasks. Personal attributes can act as mediators which influence whether tasks and knowledge are sought or avoided.

6.1 Sense of self

Participants were involved in a process of identity formation throughout the career transition. Due to the close link between music and the self-concept, part of this process included a consideration of the role of music within their current and future lives.

6.1.1 Developing identities and self-awareness

The master's degree provided an opportunity for participants to take control of an ongoing process of identity formation in order to move towards careers and futures which matched their self-concepts. Participants tended to have a strong sense of who they wanted to be and attempted to make career decisions congruent with this ideal self. However, participants' ideal self was fluid and changeable as they encountered new experiences, knowledge, and people during the career transition.

During the career transition, many of the participants developed a greater awareness of who they were, who they wanted to be and what they enjoyed. The master's degree led Ben and Lisa to realise an enjoyment of research, and a desire to remain within academia. Ben decided to pursue a master's degree in order to regain a sense of direction within his life after a disappointing first degree. Whilst studying the master's degree, Ben realised the subject area matched his own views and beliefs about music and felt driven to remain within academia. Realising the potential to continue within academia was a strong motivating factor:

I just feel like I've found direction where I didn't have any before basically and realised that there is an existing framework in which my thoughts and ideas and so on mean more than just sort of a fleeting you know, more than just being a glimmer, it's actually worth pulling them through and thinking alright what's really going on? (Ben, phase 4)

When individuals placed more value on education, in terms of the potential to remain within it for their careers and contribute to the literature, their motivation to succeed was increased. This highlights the need for students to have access to pre-enrolment information in order to make appropriate decisions regarding where to study, as their experiences and enjoyment of the courses are dependent upon the course content and staff approach (Olsson, 1997).

Many participants discussed the ways in which the master's degree led to an increased awareness of how they worked. Perhaps this connects to the development of critical thinking

skills, as individuals appeared more able to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses when working. Whilst studying, Chloe realised that she desired variety and continual improvement within her career and life:

I've learned about myself that things always have to be improving or I get bored, erm, or I get very, I get just unsettled if things are exactly the same for very long, so I think I'll always be looking for some way to improve or to change a little bit, I mean not changing the work necessarily but changing the conditions or something (Chloe, phase 4)

This realisation made her re-evaluate her career plans, so that she could maintain her enjoyment of teaching.

It was difficult for participants to pinpoint exactly what led to increased self-awareness, for many it appeared to be a part of growing up and entering a certain stage of life:

I've discovered a lot more about myself and what I'm capable of and also what I want, I mean I still can't necessarily clearly say this is what I want for sure, but it's coming more into focus, and I'm learning whether it's what I want or what I don't want, erm, I'm kind of discovering a lot of that and a lot of that came through like I said maybe not directly through the degree but everything I learnt kind of around that period of my life (Chloe, phase 4)

Self-realisation and professional identities are formed through a 'dynamic relationship between different life spheres rather than an isolated phenomenon only taking place at the university or in the work place' (Nyström, 2009, p. 16). The master's degree was an influential factor in developing increased self-awareness, but was not the sole reason for it. Rather, it may have placed individuals in a position with increasing responsibilities (for those like Chloe who worked alongside studying) which required participants to re-evaluate their priorities, values and goals in order to maintain the motivation to persevere. Self-knowledge has been associated with adjustment and self-confidence (Pitts, 2005), therefore through learning more about themselves the participants were able to develop a more coherent sense of self, sense of security, and greater well-being.

Self-awareness was vital for students when determining whether a career was suitable for them. Phoebe decided against pursuing a career as a professional musician due to feeling that her own personality was not suited to it:

When you're actually a professional musician you have to push your way up, you always have to be against other people and show an aggressive side to promote yourself and I'm not that kind of person (Phoebe, phase 1)

Alternatively, academia allowed her to remain within music whilst staying true to her own values and beliefs. Those in careers which were felt to be incongruent with their personal identities tended to feel dissatisfaction:

I think the main thing for me, being in the military for so long it's, I just want to be known as me, have a job where you know it's not someone in a green suit or a funny outfit with a funny hat on, erm, it's you know, it's me that's being recognised (Tom, phase 4)

Tom wanted to reclaim a personal sense of identity which he felt was missing from his military role. Tom did not associate with his uniform, feeling instead that he lost his sense of identity, both personally and musically, by remaining in the military. Tom's disassociation with the military values and uniform meant that he failed to personally recognise praise aimed towards the military band. Tom's feeling of not belonging was enhanced after conducting a study with his colleagues as part of his master's degree in which he realised his own disassociation with the uniform was at odds with his peers' views. His research showed that many of his colleagues gained a sense of identity through wearing a uniform and felt comforted by belonging to the military group. The stark contrast between him and his colleagues increased his feeling of not belonging. Tom started to look outside his career to gain self-fulfilment and began to associate more with his academic identity:

I've always wanted to say why to things, I think it's suited me quite nicely, in that I've never really taken anything for granted, or on face value, you know, if this study said that then I want to know well why did it say that and why didn't you investigate this? (Tom, phase 3)

Above, Tom describes his curiosity as being suited to academia. Master's study allowed Tom to explore his own interests and ask questions, something which contrasted with his military role in which he was restricted to following instructions from others. Feeling a discrepancy in this way between behaviour required (following orders without question) and self-concept (being an inquisitive individual with a desire to be musical) can lead to negative emotions (Ibarra, 1999) due to the disequilibrium caused (Festinger, 1962). Tom found a greater sense of cognitive congruence by studying his master's degree.

6.1.2 *Musical self and participation*

The place of music within the participants' lives often changed before and during the career transition. The participants adapted their musical participation to fit their circumstances and values. For some music became not just what they did, but a social outlet and source of financial income. In this sense music became intertwined with the individual's social and personal identities, therefore it is not surprising that it also featured in their future plans. Before entering his undergraduate degree Ben focused upon performing and spent much of his time practicing until he realised that he was behaving in a manner incongruent with his values:

If I was spending time with friends I'd sort of sit there looking at my watch thinking like, I need to go home because I could get a couple of hours in [of practice] before bed, you know, and that was like my thinking and I became like, just a robot. [...] It made me a bad person, it made me very unhappy (Ben, phase 1)

Ben rejected the professional musical activities which tended to be hierarchical and based upon value judgements. After realising that he was becoming the type of musician he disliked he altered his use of music and began to partake in more inclusive activities with amateur musicians. His musical attention shifted towards academia in which he felt 'at home' and 'naturally suited' to (Ben, phase 2). During his master's degree he developed an interest in folk music which became a large part of his social life and did not require him to practice outside of group sessions. Ben's shift towards folk music and academia allowed him to remain within music (which was closely connected to his self-concept) whilst retaining personal values regarding social activities. Music was not only a part of his self-concept but his self-concept influenced which musical activities he engaged with. Ben's aim to remain within music was almost a non-decision of the type often discussed with undergraduate students (O'Neill, 1995):

What else would I do? I mean like, it's something in which I've acquired good skills, it's something I care about, it's something I enjoy, it's something that's financially beneficial to me, it's something that is one of the reasons I'm friends with the people I'm friends with often, yes, I mean I don't think it would ever not be important (Ben, phase 1)

By the final phase of the study Ben had realised that by remaining within academia he was able to partake in the four main things he enjoyed:

I realised that there were four things I liked in life and they were learning, teaching, erm social life and music, and you just think well that's academia isn't it? That's musical academia (Ben, phase 2)

Ben's realisation that his interests and values were well-matched with academia led to greater certainty and motivation to move towards this career. The master's degree provided Ben with a musical outlet which was better suited to his interests and values than performing had been. Pitts states that it is 'the multifaceted nature of musical experiences [that] allows individual participants to engage with it in ways that best suit their needs and temperament' (Pitts, 2005, p. 44). Due to his high level of musical involvement Ben viewed himself as a musician at the start of the study, before gradually seeing himself both as an academic and musician towards the end.

Fiona's decision to study the master's degree was connected to her desire to retain a link to music. Fiona worked full-time within the financial sector, but had studied music at a conservatoire and enjoyed performing when she was younger. The degree provided an opportunity for her to retain her interest in music without performing. Upon finishing her master's degree Fiona described her current lack of musical involvement:

Over Christmas I've been sat there thinking I just seem to have just turned my back on it a little bit you know? While I was doing the course it was sort of like, music is in your head, it was like yep okay I'll think about this, oh no I've just thought of this piece I want to play and so I'll go play. Now it's just like I can't even remember when I last looked at my piano to be honest, well apart from dusting it, which is dreadful (Fiona, phase 3)

Fiona struggled to remain focused upon playing now that she lacked the musical connection through her degree. This evoked a sense of disappointment and Fiona hoped that she would return to music soon. The disappointment is likely to have been caused by a divergence between Fiona's behaviour and self-concept (Festinger, 1962). Whilst Fiona still viewed herself as a musician she felt her behaviour did not validate this due to working in a non-musical career and lacking the time to participate in musical activities. Fiona was therefore unable to express and fulfil her musical self which led to disequilibrium and feelings of disappointment.

Some participants began to view music and life differently. Learning more about music appeared, for many, to increase their appreciation of it, even if they decided not to continue professionally within it in the future:

I had this belief that music was vitally important, well, certainly to me and I felt it was important on a global level, that without it we would be quite different human beings, that there's a necessity to express ourselves in a musical way either by playing an instrument or singing, or by listening. It's strengthened that belief certainly by reading a lot of the literature that there is about it. (Janet, phase 1)

Learning led to a sense of increased relevance of music and a better understanding of the position and importance of it within their lives. For some it led to a realisation of the potential to go further and do more with music, which increased the strength of their musical self.

Chloe perceived herself to be a musician as she made her living through a mixture of performing and teaching work. She saw music as being important in her future life with her partner. Chloe viewed her partner's musical background positively, as he renewed her enjoyment of music making:

Lately I've been [...] playing things for fun that I always wanted to play and never did so I think that's been a new thing. I think [*partner's name*] has been influential in that because he does that too [...] he still picks up his trombone and just plays something for fun, or he'll sit down at the piano and we'll play duets just for fun. So I'm rediscovering that music can actually be fun, it's not always stressful, because it was pretty much always stressful because I either had recitals or auditions or juries or something (Chloe, phase 4)

Music became a social tool through which Chloe and her partner could bond and spend time together in a shared venture which brought fulfilment to both of them. Chloe began to associate music with enjoyment and positive feelings, rather than with the negative stress which she had experienced for a number of years previously. Her partner acted as a role model with his approach to music and allowed her to re-evaluate the way in which she used it.

Music was an important part of many of the participants' self-concepts and something they felt they could not be without:

I don't see how I could live without it [music], ever. That's like asking me if you can live without breathing a little bit. You know, that's how ingrained into my DNA it is, and it would make me very very sad you know, if my kids or whoever I get married to, you know doesn't have some interest in this [...] music is always just going to be there. It's like the driving force behind everything for me almost. You know, like everything I do in

research has something to do with music, and the brain, I can do without the brain that's fine, but you can't take music away from me (Matt, phase 1)

During phase 1 Matt suggested that music was so important to his current and future self that he would not be able to exist without it. His social and academic interests revolved around music and influenced his social and personal identities. Matt was unable to gain funding to enable him to continue studying music at PhD level and therefore felt forced to accept a non-musical job at a recruitment firm. This led to a reduction in his musical participation and his musical self was therefore challenged. In order to retain a connection with music Matt participated in an instrumental ensemble during his free-time. He had mixed feelings about this musical ensemble as it reduced what little free-time he had further and appeared not to fully satiate his desire for musical involvement. Matt missed contact with others who shared an understanding and interest in music to the same extent as himself. The end of the master's degree therefore led to Matt having to adapt the place of music within his life, from being all-encompassing, to being a leisure pursuit.

The reduction in free time during master's study meant Jodie struggled to maintain her instrumental practice which led her to reevaluate her playing. Jodie's attempt to balance childcare, working, practicing and studying alongside each other meant that she was restricted in the amount of time she was able to practice, which in turn led to a new found appreciation of this time. Perhaps this also led to her decision by the final phase of interviews to do more creative writing:

I think the trouble with music is it can be a bit too all-consuming. Especially with I think these days with all the things like connections and networking stuff, I just feel like it takes over a bit and in a way I feel like I need to get out of that a bit more and switch off from that and find things that are just nothing to do with it at all, yeh, kind of disconnect from it as well (Jodie, phase 4)

Jodie worked as a professional musician, and defined herself as a musician. However, since being a young child she had felt torn between music and literature. Jodie did not want to focus solely upon music and wished to reclaim some of her earlier sense of self in which literature and writing played a large part. By studying Jodie felt that she could gain valuable writing experience (which would benefit her creative writing) within a subject she could justify spending time on (as it helped her career).

Some realised that music need not be the main focus within their professional lives. Amy hoped to work in a position where she could contribute and help others. Using music in her career would be an added bonus as it would allow her to utilise the skills she had gained, however, she felt she would be content to keep music as an enjoyable leisure pursuit instead. At times Amy felt studying led to her forgetting her enjoyment of music and therefore she did not feel it was necessary for it to be a part of her career. Past research has shown that music can become less enjoyable for individuals when they are focused entirely upon it (Pitts, 2005), as Amy was during her undergraduate degree and to some extent during her master's. Due to the close link between music and the self-concept, a diminished enjoyment of music can lead to negative emotions (Orzel, 2010). By moving to view music as a leisure pursuit within her future, Amy began to re-associate music with enjoyment and reduce the negative feelings previously associated with it. However, through doing this Amy also felt less of a musician as she reduced the time she spent in the musical activities which had previously been a significant part of her life (Gee, 2010). Therefore, despite identifying herself as a musician at the start of the study, she now felt unjustified calling herself such as she was less involved in music than many of her peers. Additionally she felt that she did not fit others' expectations about what it means to be a musician. It was important that individuals felt they were perceived to be musicians by others in order to strengthen their own musical identities:

I've always been known as [Lisa] the musician or [Lisa] the music teacher, I'm totally identified by my music. There are very few people in my life who associate with me that would have no knowledge of me and my musical background (Lisa, phase 1)

The extent to which an individual participated in musical activities generally determined whether they felt able to call themselves a musician or not. This links to Pitts' suggestion that music students constantly reassess their identity and worthiness to be called musicians depending upon the extent of their musical participation (Pitts, 2005). Therefore, those who worked in musical jobs or were heavily involved in music outside the degree tended to be the most confident in identifying themselves as musicians.

Participants differed in their opinions on what it means to be a musician. Ruth classed all the tutors in the music department as musicians because they were all passionate about music, even those who only studied it academically and were not involved in the production of it. Others felt that in order to be a musician one must produce music in some way. Those who worked as music teachers or performers tended to have a narrower view of

musicians as being those who produced music. Conversely, those who were less involved in music, or likely to be less involved, tended to have a broader definition of what it means to be a musician. Perhaps those who still felt a strong connection to music but were no longer participating with it to the extent they once had were forced to re-evaluate their own views of what it means to be a musician in order to maintain their own musical self. However, it did appear to be more difficult for these participants due to the views of others and the general perception that musicians produce music. There have previously been calls for the definition of musicians to be broadened so that individuals may feel more able to consider a wider range of careers and there may be less stigma attached to those who do not go into performing careers (Rogers, 2002). However, it appears this is still a long way from taking place.

The master's degree allowed individuals to take control of their developing identities and move towards more desired future selves. During the period of studying individuals developed a greater self-awareness which allowed them to make more effective career decisions. Individuals were involved in a process of negotiation during which they attempted to find a place for music within their lives which suited their goals and self-concept. The process of identity development was impacted by the institution in which they chose to study (Lairio et al., 2011), as this determined the course content and values which were highlighted as part of the degree (Juuti, 2012).

6.2 *Developing knowledge*

6.2.1 *The impact of students' previous experiences*

The master's degrees required individuals to broaden and develop their knowledge and understanding within a discipline, therefore, the students' level of knowledge prior to starting the course impacted upon their experiences during it. The majority of participants were studying courses which involved a combination of music and psychology content, including an intensive introduction to statistical analysis. These music psychology courses recruited students from a range of different backgrounds. Participants with a musical background generally found the introduction to statistics difficult, as they grappled with content which psychology undergraduates would normally undertake over a period of years. For this reason, Amy felt that a psychology undergraduate degree would have better prepared her for starting the master's degree (than her music undergraduate degree), by

providing a basic grounding in research methods. The intensive nature of the full-time master's degree meant that Amy still felt uncertain about research methods by the time she was required to write her dissertation proposal and gradually became increasingly aware of ways her method could have been improved if she had more time:

We did the research methods this semester but we had to hand in our proposal before doing them, erm, I think, like, it might have been helpful to do that last semester so that we have a better idea of, sort of, how to construct methods and, like, the most effective way of doing research essentially. (Amy, phase 2)

Amy was disappointed about feeling unable to achieve her full potential during her dissertation due to this poor planning. When asked about the outcomes of her course Amy stated:

I think maybe the planning of the dissertation was an issue. I think that, like, might have hindered the way that I could have gone about planning my research and, like, finding out things and, like, making it the most worthwhile research I can (Amy, phase 2)

Amy struggled to plan a suitable dissertation topic, which negatively impacted upon the outcomes she felt she gained from the course. For the majority of participants the dissertation was the largest research project they had ever undertaken, and as such required a large expenditure of time and energy. It was therefore important that it be perceived to be 'worthwhile'. Without feeling the dissertation was worthwhile students struggled to develop the intrinsic motivation needed to persevere and excel. Amy's experience highlights the potential difficulties of designing course content for interdisciplinary degrees which recruit students from a wide range of backgrounds. The order of modules presented within such interdisciplinary courses impacted upon students' experiences, with some feeling that knowledge learnt later in the course would have been useful at an earlier stage. This is perhaps an inevitable difficulty with full-time courses in particular, where individuals are still exploring new areas and skills whilst deciding upon their dissertation topics. Participants found it useful when projects were ongoing throughout the semester so that they had time to discuss difficulties with their tutors shortly after they occurred:

We could like have a group meeting on one of the lectures we had off and then if we had any questions we'd only have to wait a couple of days until we had another lecture (Ruth, phase 2)

For those who lacked confidence in these modules it was encouraging to know that support

from tutors was never far away.

Some felt unchallenged by the music psychology course content due to already being knowledgeable in both music and psychology. Matt felt disappointed that he had not learnt as much during his master's degree as he had hoped or expected to. In part, this was due to his broad background in both music and psychology. Matt had chosen the degree based within a psychology department which focused upon statistics and quantitative research heavily, areas he had covered during his undergraduate degree. The other music psychology degrees observed in this thesis were based within music departments. If Matt had chosen one of these alternative master's degrees which included qualitative methods training (which was less explored during his undergraduate degree), this may have improved his overall experience of master's study. Although all the music psychology degrees attempted to cater for students coming from both musical and psychological backgrounds, it is clear that a lack of knowledge within the subject area could lead to the student feeling overwhelmed by the course, whereas a large amount of previous experience within the subject area led to some students feeling unchallenged and unsatisfied. A more detailed explanation of the content of the courses could help students make the right choice regarding their master's degree so that they can feel adequately challenged within their studies without feeling too overwhelmed. However, HEFCE have reported that many prospective postgraduate students struggle to source information on specific course content which would allow them to compare degrees within different institutions (HEFCE, 2013d). In order to manage potential postgraduates' expectations and allow them to make informed choices it seems important that departments provide more detailed guidance upon exact course content, beyond module titles, and required contact and independent working time.

6.2.2 Students' attitudes to course content

Generally, the master's degrees provided opportunities for individuals to broaden their knowledge (in taught module areas) and develop a specialism (in their dissertation). The majority of tutors felt that it was important that the students were introduced to new areas of research as well as being able to develop their current interests. However, students differed in their attitudes towards the wide range of topics covered during the master's degree with some being 'quite resistant to a broad education' (Institution B, music psychology tutor). Some viewed the broad content of the degree as a hindrance, preventing them from studying the topics they felt would be most valuable to their future or interests:

the other reason I was battling with the first semester was it just didn't feel very relevant to me, it felt very relevant to school teachers, or people who only teach [...] but as soon as it leapt into the performance psychology it suddenly all clicked with me and I got very interested in it (Jodie, Phase 1)

Jodie performed and taught peripatetically in her career alongside the master's degree, but found the course module on education related mainly to classroom music teachers and therefore she felt unable to apply any of the knowledge she learnt. She found the module on performance psychology more practically relevant to both her teaching and her playing. After studying these two modules, Jodie realised her interests lay within performing more than teaching:

The second module was all about performance which I suppose obviously made it apparent that that has a much dearer place to my heart. So that was a good revelation in itself actually, in that, you know, I probably toyed with the idea of school teaching over the years and I just, it probably really isn't going to be for me in that way. (Jodie, phase 2)

Jodie's experience is an example of how the students were not always aware of where their own interests lay. By studying a range of areas students were introduced to new topics which sparked their interest and became increasingly aware of where their interests lie. Exploring a range of topic areas can therefore lead to a more fulfilling experience than if students just focus on their pre-course interests. Further, in order to successfully achieve the aims and outcomes of most of the courses, students are required to develop their general knowledge in the course subject, i.e. in order to successfully complete a music psychology course, students are required to develop knowledge regarding the scope of music psychology. The difficulty in balancing the course content to allow students to follow their own interests whilst also introducing them to new topics is highlighted in the following quote:

There's a sense in which the master's degree should still be broadening even though it's focused and that balance is difficult to strike. You can go too far, and also if you push people too far with that they can then, you get some blowback where they then give you a really hard time and that can be personally quite distressing when someone's giving you a hard time for what you think is perfectly reasonable. (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

Some tutors felt that those students who were narrowly focused in their interests may be limiting their master's degree experience and be unlikely to achieve an academic career by doing so. However, students did not always listen to tutor's advice to study a wider range of modules, instead choosing to focus upon their current interests. This may be partly due to students lacking work experience, meaning they were unable to recognise the ways in which course aims and outcomes related to real world demands. The lack of awareness of real life implications could have negative consequences if students fail to act on advice due to a lack of perspective regarding its value. Additionally, past research has shown students can fail to plan for their careers whilst studying (Greenbank, 2010), due to focusing on the short term course requirements without considering their long term effect. Perhaps this lack of future-oriented thinking results in some students failing to act on staff advice regarding broadening their interests due to wanting to study modules which they find interesting at that time, without considering the detrimental impact this may have upon their future. Fundamentally, this may relate to students' perceptions of being 'consumers' who want to receive a service they desire at that moment in time, without the foresight which may enable them to view the wider benefits of their course of study.

Some students were more open-minded to broadening their knowledge during the master's degree. Janet had completed a music technology degree before starting the music psychology master's. She valued the chance to use and study music in a number of ways. Ben similarly focused on using the master's degree as an opportunity to learn about new areas of study. In the quote below he explains how a module which introduced different topics each week influenced his listening interests:

It was quite nice because it introduced me to a whole bunch of things I never thought I'd know about, which is really good, which now impact my life more broadly. It's funny because when I came here I just listened to jazz all the time, because that was my background, and now, even though it's not what I'm studying, well my listening is now basically [...] folk music (Ben, phase 2)

Ben hoped to continue studying folk music for his PhD and felt that his master's degree had presented the opportunity to develop his knowledge in this area to a point where he felt able to transition smoothly into further study. Those who were open to new areas of study tended to find interests and pursuits which suited them well, showing the importance of curiosity and open-mindedness for identity construction (Lairio et al., 2011). Those who were

less open-minded might have restricted themselves from finding areas of interests, careers, or taking up opportunities which would have suited them.

It is clear that undertaking the master's degree, in the majority of cases, led to students developing knowledge which was perceived to be useful for coping with future PhD study and professional practice. Participants' identities were transformed during master's study (Lairio et al., 2011) as they began to better understand themselves and became increasingly aware of music and academia more generally. Those with an open-minded attitude towards the degree tended to appreciate learning broader content which often led to developing new interests. In order to be motivated to learn broader content, however, students needed to feel it was relevant in some way. The students tended to be aware of the knowledge they had developed during their master's study, and in many cases were able to see potential practical applications of this knowledge, especially those who were currently working or planning to go into PhD study. Alongside the knowledge, students also developed a number of skills, although they were not always able to recognise these during the period of study.

6.3 Skills

When asked to describe skills developed during the degree the following were discussed:

- Organisation and time management
- Communication and interpersonal
- Critical thinking
- Academic writing

The list is presented in no particular order as no quantitative measures were taken.

6.3.1 Organisation and time management skills

Organisation and time management were important skills for success within the master's degree due to the intensity of the full-time courses, or balancing part-time study alongside other commitments. This was particularly important as the master's tended to be much less structured than the participants' undergraduate degrees. Some staff felt the lack of structure presented difficulties for the students:

How do you [...] apply yourself to advancing your work with much less guidance and nobody structuring large portions of your time? (Institution B, musicology tutor).

The lack of structure required students to be more self-directed within their work. Due to the intensity of the degrees, Ben, Jodie and Laura felt they had gained the ability to write assignments more efficiently during their study. Both Ben and Laura felt the turnover of assignments prepared them for working within the areas of academia and research as they were required to complete successive projects in short time spans:

I think they want proof that you are expedient, shall we say. You've got to be efficient at delivering what is asked for within a time frame and delivering it with a presentation
(Ben, phase 1)

Part of this skill involved a more critical approach when reading articles and confidence in picking out relevant points or literature, rather than 'having to read the whole thing and just saying "oh I guess that wasn't very helpful"' (Chloe, phase 2). Jodie felt that learning to be more efficient at reading articles enabled her to balance her study alongside other commitments and ensure she could 'avoid being up until two in the morning reading things that you didn't understand and you didn't need to read' (Jodie, phase 1). The use of the word 'need' appeared to suggest that only literature directly related to the dissertation topic or course content was worth spending the time reading. This attitude may be linked to a work ethic described by a tutor below:

[the] shift to independent university learning is quite a hard transition to make and I don't think students ever recover from the shock of that and so then they get into the mind-set of 'well what do I need to do that's absolutely necessary for me to pass this?' and don't go the extra mile. And there are students that go the extra mile and it's inevitably those students that go on to be successful (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

Jodie was balancing her time between her young family, professional practice and the degree and as such struggled to complete her studying in an efficient time frame. She repeatedly mentioned the course prospectus' suggestion that the degree would require three hours studying per week, an amount she felt was underestimated. She struggled with the fact that the course took more time than she or her husband had expected. During the master's degree Jodie felt her marriage was under strain and therefore it would not be surprising if she attempted to reduce the number of hours she spent studying to ensure she covered the course requirements and no more. Women with dependent children such as Jodie are thought to face emotional strain when attempting to develop a student identity, especially when not supported by their families. In part, this is due to the conflict between

the desire to act in a way which constitutes being a good mother and a good student (Christie et al., 2008). This highlights the importance of providing clear and realistic guidance for students regarding the amount and type of work required during the course. The impact of neglecting to do so could include drop-outs, increased stress, time pressures and social difficulties.

6.3.2 Communication and interpersonal skills

In order to succeed within and after the master's degree individuals were required to develop written and interpersonal communication skills. Two of the institutions highlighted presentation skills as outcomes of their courses. Ruth was required to present her dissertation ideas to her department as part of her music psychology master's degree. Ruth found this to be stressful and did not enjoy it, but valued the feedback she gained and felt it would help her develop her presentation style in the future. Although Tina struggled to recognise the benefits of studying her master's degree (until phase 3 of the study), she did emphasise the importance of presentation skills:

The fact we are doing the presentations and doing lots of work on presentation stuff in our class [...] is so important I mean, yeh you need to be able to present and to, like, in careers today, I mean my cousin just gets offered stupid jobs and it's just because she's a really good presenter (Tina, phase 1)

Tina felt that her enhanced communication skills helped her become a more effective teacher, and that she was now comfortable to tailor her lessons towards her pupils' needs. A musicology tutor suggested students developed communication skills during the presentation aspect of the course and through working with a diverse group of peers from different backgrounds. Another tutor corroborated the potential to gain team working skills:

I think they come out with an ability to teamwork because erm the research techniques module in particular involves team working, and that also means that they have to get quite good at conflict management, and dealing with uncooperative team members, which is extremely useful when you work erm in any industry (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

The potential to develop interpersonal skills may seem external to the core of the degree content, but is a skill likely to be beneficial in working life.

Communication and writing skills were important for those considering PhD study. The master's degree provided an opportunity to develop confidence in writing in an academic style. Jodie felt it was important to develop academic skills before starting PhD study:

I thought well it's better to start with an MA because it gives you good grounding and you know, all this essay writing it's a very particular style, the academic writing, I've never done that before and you know, it's really easy to sound, you know, to not sound academic if you've never done it before, you just sort of sound a bit chatty (Jodie phase 1)

Jodie emphasised the importance of written communication as an outcome rather than interpersonal skills (perhaps due to being a distance learner). Due to the long-term commitment of the PhD course, individuals tended to use the master's degree to evaluate and develop their abilities in order to test the suitability of further study for them.

The development of higher level academic writing skills resulted in individuals feeling more confident in their writing in other areas:

[...] in job applications where probably I would have spent a lot longer worrying about how to word things it does seem to be much easier, and actually even when I'm writing reports or doing any of my examining, I'm sure it comes from doing those essays and things for the MA just that way of writing. Just being more concise and saying exactly what you mean and backing stuff up and just being able to put sentences together in a more creative way (Jodie, phase 4)

It is therefore clear that some skills developed during the course are not limited to the academic arena, but are beneficial in working life and when applying for jobs. In fact, one tutor suggested:

[the master's students] become, sort of, a more independent student, one who's, sort of, more critical, asking more questions and that might better equip them for doing a, kind of, career choice out of that (Institution A, musicology tutor).

Therefore, the writing and critical thinking skills developed during the master's degree are likely to enable individuals to make better career decisions and sell themselves to potential employers, again highlighting the impact that the non-vocational courses observed can have upon the students' careers.

6.3.3 *Developing critical thinking and academic writing*

Whilst both tutors and students felt critical thinking skills were developed during the master's degree, there was some confusion over exactly what this meant. Harvey defines critical thinking as:

[...] being able to develop opinions and be able to justify them, to be able to think about knowledge as a process not as some 'thing' they tentatively approach and selectively appropriate. A critical approach ultimately requires students to self-assess, to be able to decide what is good quality work and to be confident when they have achieved it
(Harvey, 2000, p. 13)

In this sense critical thinking is not only an approach towards understanding past literature, but will also allow individuals to achieve to the best of their abilities. Master's study aims to create independent academic thinkers who are capable of critically evaluating issues and research (Scott et al., 2013; Institution B, course prospectus). These abilities would appear to come under the term 'critical thinking' as it is discussed by Harvey. Some participants felt that this skill was not required during undergraduate study and struggled to understand how to think critically. Previous to master's study many of the participants had experience of gathering literature together within an essay, but now they were required to go further by critiquing and evaluating the authors' arguments. Although many showed a natural curiosity and tendency to question they were uncertain how to apply these skills within academia:

I would always naturally question everything but [...], I didn't really get my head around quite what that meant in writing (Jodie, phase 1)

Individuals faced uncertainty about 'what it is I'm meant to be picking out' (Amy, phase 1). The difficulty of questioning others' research can be heightened for certain international students for whom questioning others is not the cultural norm. This generally contrasts with the approach in the UK in which students are expected to be critical rather than simply accepting what they are told (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). One tutor felt that because of this 'teaching and encouraging critique is one of the biggest things that I find myself having to do' (Musicology tutor, institution A). Critical thinking was a skill which presented difficulties for the students and the tutors within the master's degrees.

Chloe lacked the confidence in critical thinking as she was new to the field of study and assumed that others were more knowledgeable than her:

What right do I have to criticise these very intelligent people who are, you know, have all these degrees, are very established in their field and, you know, I'm just a master's student [...] I feel like I'm not really worthy to criticise their work or, you know, are my ideas really that important or am I even interpreting this correctly (Chloe, phase 2)

Chloe did not describe herself as academic and was studying in order to enhance her professional practice as a teacher. The lack of academic identity appears to have been detrimental as it led to her feeling unconfident when critiquing others' work whom she assumed to be more academically capable. During periods of transition many are forced to renegotiate their identities as they socialise into new environments with different expectations (Ibarra, 1999) which can lead to uncertainty regarding abilities (Christie et al., 2008). The period of transition is therefore likely to be challenging for those who lack a strong positive academic identity. These results suggest the importance of supporting students to feel more academically capable in order to encourage the development of a more critical approach.

Those who did develop a critical approach became more competent academics and improved their writing style. Samantha began to question her own writing and everything she read more deeply. She described her reaction to comments from her supervisor:

the first piece of criticism that [*supervisor name*] gave me was erm, this is sketchy and not wholly convincing, so because of that I started thinking, okay if I say this I have to say this to back it up or else it will sound fluffy, yeh so I started thinking a lot more about things. (Samantha, phase 2)

After receiving this feedback Samantha restructured her writing approach and became more critical. The increase in self-criticism eventually led to Samantha developing a more advanced writing style and receiving higher marks in her assignments. As highlighted by Samantha, feedback from tutors is an important tool for helping students to develop their academic work further than may otherwise have been likely (Burt & Mills, 2006). Feedback can also encourage students to question the practices and values held by themselves and others in order to support the development of critical reflection (Burnard, 2006). However, it is important that individuals have a strong academic identity and self-efficacy in order to feel able to try out new critical thinking skills.

Tom developed a more open-minded approach to dealing with arguments:

I think I take a bit more of a measured approach to things, erm and I'm definitely more willing to listen and I think when I was younger if I disagreed with something I used to instantly say why I disagreed with it. Whereas now I'm a bit more willing to listen to perhaps someone else's point of view and go away and consider it for a while (Tom, phase 3)

After developing critical thinking skills during the master's degree Tom felt more able to approach non-academic situations with the same type of analytical, measured approach which allowed him to be more contemplative and open-minded to different viewpoints. It is exactly this open-minded approach which is valued within the private and public sector as having the potential to stimulate innovation and change (Smith, 2010).

6.3.4 Transfer of developed skills

Socialisation into master's study could be challenging for those who had a break from academia before commencing their studies, or who had changed their area of study or institution. Some of the students struggled to understand how to think and write in a suitable academic style after having a break from study:

When they first gave us a journal to look at it was just like what the hell do we do with this? You know, and now it's being able to go through it and pick it out properly and all that, [...] and just what to expect from, you know, a good dissertation (Fiona, phase 2)

Fiona highlights the fact that not everyone entering the master's degree is academically confident. Studying as a part-time distance learner meant much of Fiona's master's degree was conducted in an independent manner. During the early period of her degree, as she attempted to adapt to the academic requirements, she failed her first assignment which meant she was unable to achieve the overall merit grade she had hoped for. Fiona's experience highlights the difficulty which can be faced by mature students who have returned to education after a break and need time to adapt to the requirements and expectations of the course.

Janet believed that group work was one of her strengths in her career and felt able to bring people together towards compromises. However, within an academic environment she felt less confident:

I've found that my techniques to work with people in bands didn't necessarily have the same result when I was working with people in academic study groups (Janet, phase 2)

The lack of confidence was partly related to her assumption that others within the group were more knowledgeable than her. Her experience highlights the challenge faced by participants who feel unconfident or unable to transfer the skills used in their working life into the academic environment. Fiona faced similar difficulty when attempting to transfer her financial report writing skills into a style appropriate for academic essay writing:

[*Supervisor name*] mentioned about my original draft of my dissertation, it was very report like, as if I was writing a finance report, which is what you know I've spent the last 15 years doing, so it was getting out of that (Fiona, phase 2).

Both Fiona and Janet had a break between their undergraduate and master's degrees in which they worked professionally. Neither saw themselves as academic, although both considered themselves to be musicians. This lack of academic identity may have impacted negatively upon their self-efficacy and reduced their confidence to take risks within their degree.

Jodie initially struggled as she attempted to understand how to write and think in the academic style required for the music psychology degree, after previously studying music performance. Jodie also felt that technology had advanced a long way since her earlier degrees and as such she needed to adapt to online resources, portals and socialising in order to complete the course assignments. This finding corroborates past studies which have shown that advancing technology can prove challenging for those who have had time away from education (O'Donnell, Tobbell, Lawthom, & Zammit, 2009). Younger students may have more recent experience with the technology which is often required to complete assignments and submit work. Some of the mature students were required to develop or remember their academic skills whilst also acquiring new technological skills, which can be time consuming (Roberts & Higgins, 1992). Due to the intense period of the master's degree their socialisation must be swift in order to be successful in the course, therefore support may be needed to ensure they are able to progress with the appropriate technology as quickly as possible.

Despite the potential difficulties faced on their return to education, past research has suggested that mature students are highly motivated and disciplined individuals who may be more appreciative of studying and able to apply critical thought more easily than younger students (Gardner & Wallace, 1997; Richardson, 1995). This may be due to having more work and life experience which can lead to enhanced time and organisational skills,

especially for those who balance work alongside childcare and other priorities. Life experiences such as bringing up children and organising a household can lead to the development of many skills, often tacit in nature, which can be valuable for learners (Eraut, 2004). It is clear, however, that individuals faced challenges when transferring skills from the work place to higher education. In order to enable students to fulfil their potential, institutions need to be aware of this period of transition and the challenges it poses for students as they socialise into the new requirements of the master's degree.

The participants developed a number of academic, communication, and organisational skills during the career transition. In order to fully utilise and develop these skills it was important that individuals had a positive academic identity and high levels of self-efficacy. Feedback was vital in enabling the student to develop these skills to their full potential, and a positive relationship with their supervisor impacted upon individual's confidence, enabling them to approach the work critically. The difficulties arose in encouraging students to be self-aware of the skills they had developed, and were often only realised in hindsight, or as students gained work experience.

Those who returned to education after a break were likely to face a longer period of socialisation into master's study, as they attempted to readjust to an academic way of thinking and course requirements (such as electronic submissions). Institutions should be mindful of the course structure and ensure students are allowed a period of socialisation before marks are counted in order to ensure they have the best opportunity to fulfil their potential. The knowledge and skills developed during the degree resulted in changing identities, attitudes and approaches for many of the students.

6.4 Attitude

6.4.1 Attitudes towards education

The students' attitudes towards the master's degree impacted upon their experiences of the course and its outcomes. Amy developed a more positive attitude towards her master's degree during the second term, which ultimately resulted in a more positive experience during the later stages of her studying:

I didn't really enjoy my first semester and I had a bit of a bad time and I didn't really want to, you know, do anything. I didn't want to be involved in anything. When I went home then I found out that my dad had had a really really crap time the whole time that I had been away [...] and I just thought well if he's had such a crap time then I have nothing to complain about [...]. So when I went back for the second semester I had a very different perspective and that's maybe what, sort of, drove me to work really hard and make sure that I have this [study] routine (Amy, phase 4)

After developing a sense of perspective regarding her own difficulties, Amy's attitudes towards her work changed which led to a more positive experience of the course. In turn this change in attitude led to her developing more effective coping methods and successfully passing the master's degree. By phase 4, Amy felt that she would not have completed her degree if she had continued to struggle as she had during her first semester, clearly highlighting the impact an individual's attitude and values have upon their overall motivation and experiences. Amy appeared to move from a more passive 'consumerist' approach during the first term, to a realisation that her satisfaction with the degree was in a large part dependent upon her attitude and approach towards it.

Lisa developed a newfound appreciation for learning after time away from education. She felt that her time out of education allowed her to develop a deeper understanding of academia, whilst the degree itself pushed her to develop her academic skills (see also 6.4.2). She summarises her perceived outcomes of the degree:

I think the master's has sort of opened my eyes up to a) what's more out there in the world, b) what's happening academically and in research, c) I've learnt an amazing amount of time management and critical skills which I'm still working on because critical analysis is definitely my weak point. But I do just feel like I'm a lot more confident (Lisa, phase 1)

Time away from education enabled students to try alternative work alongside a chance to gain a sense of perspective and renew their appreciation for studying. The master's degree was no longer a simple continuation of education, but rather a conscious decision made due to valuing the potential outcomes of studying further. The break from education resulted in a change in individuals' attitudes towards academia and, for many, meant a renewed sense of enthusiasm for education which led them to their master's studies. A positive attitude towards education is important for maintaining perseverance (Blair et al., 2010), therefore this change in attitude enabled many individuals to commit more strongly on their return to

education. Although many of these individuals had external commitments by the time they returned to education, they had greater motivation to continue despite the added stress of the master's degree. This has implications for course evaluations, in that students who have a point of comparison may have different opinions and values which impact upon their satisfaction with their master's degrees (see chapter 9).

Ruth, Amy and Tina continued straight from college into postgraduate study and all struggled to maintain their motivation during their full-time master's degree. Ruth initially gained a research preparation scholarship in the belief that she would continue straight into PhD study, however, by phase 2 she felt that she needed time away from education in order to contemplate her next step. During her master's degree Ruth decided that in order to make the most of the experience she needed to relax and focus on the social experiences during the degree. Therefore, despite Ruth changing her career plans during the master's she was proactive in ensuring she made the most of her time studying to get involved in a number of activities she enjoyed. Her change in attitude is likely to have been made possible by her no longer wanting to continue onto PhD study and feeling employers tended not to focus upon marks for master's degrees.

Tina faced a more challenging period of master's study after continuing straight from her undergraduate degree due to fearing that if she left education she would never return. She struggled to maintain her motivation during the master's and by phase 2 regretted not taking a year out in which to gain some work experience:

I think my brain has just, sort of, worn out after having five years at uni[versity] and it's just not understanding what I'm doing to it, so I can really appreciate how that would be really useful to have that year between undergrad and master's. (Tina, phase 2)

Part of the difficulty with motivation may be related to Tina continuing within the same institution, with the same supervisor. An additional year in the same situation may have led to boredom caused by a lack of novelty or change and feeling progression was stifled. Tina also felt frustrated by her perception that a number of ideal jobs were advertised whilst she was studying, but she felt unable to drop out of the master's degree, therefore feeling it was actually an obstacle to her achieving her career plans.

Students differed in the extent to which they found the master's degree to be stressful. Despite balancing his work alongside the degree, Tom did not find the master's stressful as many others in his situation did:

I never found anything particularly stressful because I was in control, you know, nothing really freaked me out [...] I enjoyed doing it, you know, reading all the journals and everything, and I think if you enjoy something that much then I don't think it will ever stress you out really and what's the worst that could happen if I miss a deadline? (Tom, phase 4)

Despite working full-time as a military musician, Tom focused on and identified more strongly with his degree. The degree was the main source of fulfilment within Tom's life and this motivated him to persevere and reduced the stress he felt during the period. Others who worked alongside studying (Fiona, Jodie, Chloe, Steph) tended to be more focused upon their careers and external commitments, with the master's being an addition which brought with it time pressures and stress (alongside a sense of achievement and fulfilment). For Jodie the lack of control over external factors increased the stress she felt when studying:

I was getting very stressed about it because things like I didn't have internet connection for a month and we'd moved house and didn't have childcare [...], but they were out of my control a lot of those, all of those things were out of my control, and I think it's when you're out of control that you feel stressed (Jodie, phase 4)

The perception of control was therefore important for reducing the levels of stress participants felt during the period of study and maintaining a positive mental attitude. In order to maintain a sense of control within the master's degree it was important that individuals developed effective working styles.

6.4.2 Working styles

Working styles were influenced by levels of interest, as individuals became more motivated and resilient when they enjoyed their studies. A comparison of Ben's experiences during his undergraduate and master's degrees highlights the impact of enjoyment upon motivation. Ben felt unimpressed by music as a young boy due to his perception that many individuals pursued it in order to appear better than others. It was only when he heard some modern rock music that Ben began to identify with, and pursue, music. The approach of Ben's undergraduate music department was at odds with his own values, meaning once again that his childhood assumptions of musicians were confirmed and he felt he did not belong. The department failed to acknowledge his musical interests, which led to Ben feeling his personal values and musical self were negated. Ben found that the musicological approach of institution A suited his own interests in music. As the topic suited his musical self and values he felt more motivated to explore the subject, and read widely in the area even before

starting his master's degree. He became even more enthused about his own interests when he realised the potential of remaining within academia:

I've become aware of the potential to be a musical expert [...] So it's actually really encouraged me to pursue minority interests [...] I've kind of become more passionate about musical activity and so on, it seems worth more to me now. And it's more exciting because it's not something simply to enjoy within that moment, it could be something that endures and turns into something else. (Ben, phase 2)

Ben's experiences highlight the importance of finding an institution which fits with one's own values and approaches to music in order to develop a positive academic identity. Ben realised his academic potential and began to feel a closer fit between his academic and personal identities during master's study, which allowed him to consider a future within academia. When individuals felt course content was relevant to their lives outside of the master's degree the perceived value of their learning increased, which had a positive impact on their perseverance and motivations, corroborating past research (Drew, 2001). The relevance did not have to be found necessarily within the taught material, but students appreciated the chance to explore their own interests through free-choice assignments. Fiona particularly enjoyed learning about performance anxiety (see also 4.5):

I suffer from it [performance anxiety] badly so it was quite interesting reading about it and putting some perspective on it you know (Fiona, phase 2)

Whilst Matt stated that:

[I] really enjoy my dissertation if that counts, because it feels like, you know, what I'll actually be doing in the future hopefully (Matt, phase 2). (See also 6.5.1)

Allowing individuals to adapt the course content to fit their interests enabled them to feel their own values and beliefs were important, in turn enhancing their positive academic identities. Such an environment is likely to promote exploration (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Learning is 'profoundly reflexive and emotional' (Christie et al., 2008, p. 4) and as such can produce positive feelings of excitement, discovery and anticipation. Christie et al. state that students can be motivated to continue studying due to these emotional gains. Similarly within the current study when individuals were able to follow work which was interesting to them then the potential for these emotional gains increased, impacting positively upon their intrinsic motivation. Being able to follow interests gave individuals a sense of fulfilment and enabled them to progress towards career plans and hoped-for possible selves.

Confidence levels impacted upon the participants' perseverance and motivations whilst studying. The master's degree was the first time in Lisa's life when she felt competent as an academic. During this time her motivation, enjoyment of the course and general self-confidence were high:

I just felt very capable and accomplished and you know there were definitely times of you know doubt, but [...] I guess the motivation and support from others from [*master's degree university name*] really helped with those times (Lisa, phase 4)

Higher levels of self-efficacy are likely to lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 1985) and individuals persist for longer with a behaviour when they feel their efforts are likely to lead to desired outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When Lisa felt more academically able during her master's degree she was motivated to work hard and succeed in order to maintain this feeling of competence and success. However, Lisa's self-doubt increased and motivation fell when she moved institution for her subsequent PhD (see also 7.1.1 and 6.5.2). She felt disconnected from her new department and struggled to understand the expectations of her supervisor. Although a PhD is often seen as a natural step after completing the non-vocational master's observed within the study, moving institution can lead to distress and anxiety for individuals if they are unsure of the expectations within the new learning environment (Christie et al., 2008). Lisa struggled during the first term of her PhD, especially after feeling disappointed with how differently she felt about this compared to the excitement and enthusiasm she had felt during her master's degree. Those with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to better adapt into new environments (Lairio et al., 2011). Perhaps Lisa's self-efficacy was very specific to her master's institution due to her feeling as though she belonged and was known by her supervisors and course mates (see 5.3.1) in a way which did not occur during the early period of her PhD.

The participants' experiences and attitudes interacted bi-directionally: individuals' attitudes towards studying impacted upon their experiences of the course, whilst their experiences of the course led to developing attitudes. Learning knowledge and skills as part of the course, and the experience of balancing studying alongside other priorities, led to students reappraising and evaluating their commitments, values and identities. For some, the experience led to a stronger academic identity, whilst for others it strengthened their musical self, or led to decisions to pursue different paths. Participants' attitudes towards

their education impacted upon their working styles. Valuing the potential outcomes of studying was important if a student was to persevere, as highlighted by past literature (c.f. González-Moreno, 2012). The individuals who recognised the value and relevance of the degree to their wider lives were most likely to develop effective attitudes and working styles. Part of the way in which many of the students' attitudes developed was through becoming more independent, both as learners and more generally within their lives.

6.5 Independence

Developing independence can be described as 'coming to see oneself as competent and capable of taking care of everyday goals and activities' (Zirkel, 1992, p. 507). This process involves an individual choosing how to live life and is 'synonymous with freedom of choice, self-determination and autonomy from outside interference' (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1985, p. 108). Independence was sought in two main ways by the participants:

- Independence within the master's degree
- Independence within personal lives and future careers

6.5.1 Independence within the degree

Higher education aims to encourage independent learning (Burland, 2005) and in general, the postgraduate degrees allowed students greater independence than undergraduate study, if only in terms of topic choices. Tom had been motivated to study in order to gain an increased sense of independence (contrasting with his military career). The master's degree required Tom to be self-directed, particularly because he was studying as a distance learner. He did at times struggle with the extent to which he was expected to be self-directed, relying on his supervisor for feedback on his draft assignments and becoming disappointed when final marks were lost but no advice had been given on ways to improve:

I wasn't particularly happy with the feedback I got erm which I passed back up [to his supervisor] because a lot of the things I was marked down for I felt were avoidable, erm with a bit more guidance from my tutor. I certainly think they should have been picked up on some of my drafts considering they basically stopped me getting a distinction.

(Tom, phase 3)

Many of the students desired a sense of independence in terms of studying topics of interest and leading their own research projects, whilst still requiring support and guidance as they became socialised into postgraduate study. The feeling of personal autonomy and control

over the master's degree provided a sense of achievement for Jodie, as unlike the rest of her life in which she focused upon her children and work portfolio, the master's provided her with an opportunity to have:

that sense of having something that was, you know, yours alone; that didn't have to be promoted to anybody or sold to anybody or had any bearing on anyone else, you know, it was your thing and you were responsible for it (Jodie, phase 4).

Jodie described the degree as an opportunity to reconnect with her younger self. Perhaps after becoming a mother and wife she felt disconnected from earlier interests and identities. Returning to study allowed her to focus on a personal interest away from the rest of her priorities and commitments. Jodie appeared to be facing a subordinated identity at the start of the degree (Britton & Baxter, 1999) as her children had taken precedence over her own interests and values. Through studying the degree Jodie was able to regain a feeling that she was doing something challenging for herself.

Jodie felt that the main difference between undergraduate and postgraduate study was the increased responsibility for independent decision-making. The master's degrees had a narrower focus than the students' undergraduate degrees which meant that the majority of students were already studying topics closer to their personal interests, with two of the three institutions also allowing free-choice dissertation topics (with guidance from supervisors). Encouraging independent work in a safe environment where individuals feel able to take risks is thought to be conducive to creativity (Cole, Sugioka, & Yamagata-Lynch, 1999), therefore free-choice assignments may be more likely to lead to more innovative work and approaches by the students. According to achievement goal theory, when students feel a sense of autonomy they will engage more deeply and show greater interest in an activity (West, 2013). Six of the seven tutors spoken to highlighted independence as an outcome of their courses, displayed through a free-choice approach to the dissertations. These tutors felt that enforcing set questions upon students reduced the opportunity for them to develop their independence and would be less challenging than free-choice assignments. It appeared that for many of the students, the perceived freedom to choose an interesting topic led to higher levels of enjoyment, however, there were still variances within this. Matt and Laura were enrolled upon the same course, and faced the same restrictions regarding dissertation topics, but reacted in different ways. Both were required to choose their top three dissertation topics from a list of possible questions (all of which involved quantitative research methods) and were then allocated to appropriate supervisors and

questions depending on class demand. Matt enjoyed the greater sense of freedom he felt over his master's dissertation (see also 6.4.2). He felt that he was still being guided towards success, but had a greater sense of control over his own project:

I get to do more research, you know, while being supervised, [...] in a sort of a safety net, but, you know, without being as supervised I guess, a lot more independence. (Matt, phase 2)

Matt was interested in his topic, despite it being unrelated to his PhD proposal. He therefore approached the dissertation as a training exercise, in which he could broaden his skills and interests and learn to work independently. The benefits of allowing students to choose assignments from a list were negated when individuals found none of the topics interesting. The effect was worsened when individuals felt forced to study a topic they were not interested in for an assignment. This prevented students from feeling autonomous and achieving the satisfaction of developing and designing their own research assignment:

It's not as though any of us are like actually interested in what we're doing, it's just about showing that we can do it, so I guess that's a little bit disappointing because you don't get, there's not really like the passion in the subject, so yeh it's all about the process rather than the content (Laura, phase 2)

Fixed assignments could prevent students from studying something relevant to them which negatively impacted upon their working style and perseverance. Laura struggled to maintain her motivation in her dissertation project as she felt restricted in her choice and unable to study her area of interest. She felt 'they should understand that it's our project not theirs and if we don't get it done in time then it's our problem' (Laura, phase 2). Without the sense of self-determination allowed by choosing her own topic, Laura lacked the intrinsic motivation to pursue the assignment (Ryan et al., 1985). Whilst Laura felt that the dissertation may help her develop skills she did not value the project and therefore struggled to make the most of her time during it. Therefore, it was Laura's lack of interest in the set questions which negatively impacted upon her motivation in the assignment. Matt coped with the fixed assignments more effectively as he still felt the available choices were interesting and relevant, whereas Laura was unable to gain a sense of autonomy over her dissertation topic due to feeling the choices were irrelevant.

Independence was generally perceived to be a valuable skill within academia and students' lives more generally:

The dissertation is not in and of itself, you know, it is important as much for how it impacts upon someone's ability to erm to grow and, you know, to develop as an individual in all sorts of ways particularly in this case as an independent operator [...] to have initiative to make decisions, significant decisions about how this is going to happen, erm, and to be able to defend those decisions you know, and I think that's [...] just going to be something you have to come up against in any line of work at any point (Institution A, musicology tutor)

Independence may also impact upon employability as HEFCE report that employers look for key behaviour attributes in their employees, including the ability to take responsibility for one's work (Mason et al., 2003). It would seem that developing independence whilst remaining in the relative safety of the academic institution is likely to benefit students in their future careers. However, students at master's level do still require support as they learn to become more autonomous:

[...] students [can] really blossom and enjoy that independence [of the free-choice dissertation] and they really become super motivated, whereas with some of the other stuff they may be less motivated, but it can also be the other way round that students find that degree of independence frightening and need a lot of guidance and support because they're not used to working independently (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

The quote above highlights the heterogeneity of the master's cohorts who, having come to postgraduate study from different disciplines, at different ages, and with different levels of higher education, approach the courses in different ways. Once again it depicts the need to adopt a student-centred approach to ensure students are supported to develop their full potential. Within institution B students were all interviewed before being accepted onto the course in an attempt to ensure that the cohort could manage the pressures of the master's degree. Despite this application process it is clear that there is still a margin within which students may sit, where they may have the potential to complete the course, but need more or less support in order to do so. The tutors highlighted the difficulty of balancing the course so that those who are already able to be independent may challenge themselves, whilst those that need more support are guided towards feeling more confident to work independently. One tutor suggested the difficulty caused by the two contrasting semesters:

In some ways we don't prepare them well for [the dissertation] at all because the first semester is very structured and we get lots of great assessments and then suddenly it's like going oh do what you want [...] Yeh I suppose it takes a very particular kind of student to cope well with both of those things, but the very organised, kind of very motivated ones are absolutely fine (Institution A, music psychology tutor)

Within all the institutions, the initial assignments were viewed as training to develop the skills and independence needed to successfully complete the dissertation. However, the quote above suggests that the highly structured first semester of the full-time course is not in itself preparation for the dissertation. Students must also prepare themselves and develop effective coping mechanisms for working on a large scale project.

6.5.2 Independence within personal lives and future careers

For some, the master's degree was a step towards developing an independent career. Ben felt that studying the master's degree allowed him a greater sense of autonomy over his future:

Just the sense of realising well actually you know if I wanted to just do a shit load more work, I could probably publish something and erm if I wanted to know about this or wanted to say something about it, say go to a conference or whatever I could. Just realising that actually it's really down to me. Whereas before I just thought 'oh if you just show up then other people will sort of put you through things'. I've become more independent in that way as well. So I'd say really it's just the sense of my own place in that scheme (Ben, phase 4)

Ben's increased sense of control links to a realisation of the potential to excel as an academic. However, this quote does appear disjointed with his reliance upon his tutors to advise him about funding opportunities and deadlines for PhDs.

Some were attracted towards careers in which they felt they would retain independence and control. Hannah felt enthused by the potential to become a researcher and have the power to focus upon topics which interested her, without having to complete work for set assignments (as in higher education). This did appear to be an idealistic view of the job of a researcher, however, it highlights the importance of feeling in control for many of the students. During phase 2 Hannah began to doubt her ability to pursue PhD study after she struggled to maintain her motivation during her dissertation. By the final interview phase Hannah had accepted a job helping her friends to run their start-up company. She felt that the external pressures of being relied upon by others helped to motivate her, but was still

considering the idea of a PhD in the future. It would appear, however, that Hannah's working style may not be best suited to the PhD process as she was extrinsically motivated and worked best to deadlines and external pressures. Those studying PhDs felt they involved more independent study than the master's degree, as Phoebe stated: 'it's a lot of doing stuff on your own and coming up with ideas on your own' (Phoebe, phase 3). It was important therefore that students felt confident in their research abilities and were able to self-direct their work and time in order to succeed at PhD level.

Despite the development of independence during these master's degrees the transition into PhD study was not always smooth. Lisa was unsure about the extent to which she was required to be independent during the start of her PhD. She had developed research ideas which she planned to show to her supervisor in their initial supervision, but feared being 'shut down' or told that she would have to do much more work before her ideas were possible. This fear appeared to be so great that she had approached friends, who were further through into their own PhD studies, to gain reassurance. Even by the final phase of our interviews Lisa was struggling to develop an independent working style, seeming to struggle with a perceived lack of clear guidance from her tutor. It would seem that unless Lisa manages to develop a more independent working style she may continue to struggle throughout the PhD process (see also 7.1.1).

Independence is an aim of many educational institutions, and an important personal attribute for enabling students to successfully transition out of study. Tutors tended to highlight the importance of developing students' independence. However, it was difficult to fully prepare students for independent work, within and outside of the degree. Research suggests that making independent decisions and taking responsibility for one's actions are the top two criteria needed for individuals to feel they have reached adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, developing a sense of independence during the degree is linked to the process of moving towards adulthood for the non-mature students. For the mature students it may be more related to reclaiming a sense of personal identity through achieving individual goals (Blair et al., 2010).

6.6 Summary

The career transition involved a process of identity formation as individuals developed their knowledge and skills through the course content itself and their experiences outside of the degree. Individuals developed a broader understanding of their subject area, their own capabilities, interests and possible selves. Students became more self-aware (Pitts, 2005) which led to developing identities (Lairio et al., 2011), and in many cases higher self-confidence. The master's degree enabled participants to gain fulfilment through achieving personal goals. During this period the non-mature students tended to develop a greater sense of independence within their academic and working lives. The master's degree was a period of emerging adulthood, as the younger students considered possible professional identities at a period of time when they lacked personal long-term commitments. For the mature students the master's degree provided an opportunity to regain independence, as they returned to studying subject areas which they enjoyed. This allowed some mature students to gain fulfilment by doing something for themselves and satisfy their own interests and goals. Individuals struggled to develop career plans when they lacked confidence and awareness of their own skills and knowledge, including how these may relate to working life. Additionally, those who felt they were unable to pursue topics which were relevant and interesting struggled to maintain their motivation and positive academic identity. This chapter has focused upon development in terms of the individuals themselves, we will now discuss development in terms of careers and the transition from studying into working life/PhD study.

7 : Vocational Development

During the career transition individuals underwent a process of ‘socialisation for work’ (Cohen-Scali, 2003, p. 238) which involved developing attitudes, values and personal qualities relevant for working life. Such socialisation was made possible through a process of career self-management which can be defined as ‘the establishment of career goals, the development and implementation of career plans, and strategies and feedback regarding one’s progress towards career goals’ (Seibert et al., 2013, p. 169). Both mature and non-mature students were involved in this process of career self-management, either by moving towards entry into working life/PhD study or developing a current career. The effectiveness of career self-management behaviour was dependent upon the availability of relevant resources, the extent of exploration conducted by the individual, their coping mechanisms, and their identity development.

This chapter discusses the impact of the master’s degree upon the participants’ career transitions, highlighting the close relationship between developing identities and developing career plans. It begins with a discussion of the transition out of master’s study and a comparison of the career advisors’ and students’ approaches towards employability support during their time at university. Following this there is a consideration of the way in which participants developed career plans and the impact of practical experience.

7.1 The career transition

7.1.1 Transitioning out of the master's degree

The transition out of university was abrupt for those who had spent the majority of their lives within education. Some students were forced to enter working life before they were ready due to being unable to secure the funding they needed to continue into PhD or further vocational study. Ben had hoped to continue straight into PhD study but lacked the required financial resources. He was therefore forced to adapt his career plans and find work as he prepared to reapply for PhD funding. Ben managed to retain a strong subjective academic identity as he felt part of the departmental community even whilst working as a teacher. The transition out of study was therefore made less abrupt for him due to remaining in contact with his supervisor and continuing to study in his spare time. Others felt that leaving university had a greater impact upon their identity. Amy found the transition to be abrupt due to no longer having access to university resources:

Not having access to emails, and not being involved in the university thing just makes me realise, you know, how time passes so quickly, how quickly you're no longer a student and you're not involved at all and you know, to go from being entirely just in the university itself and they're just sort of wrapped up in this academic world and then they're just thrown out onto the streets (Amy, phase 4)

Amy's transition involved a change in lifestyle from focusing on her social and academic life within the music department, to concentrating on her job. As many of her classmates moved away or worked full-time nearby, the feeling of working towards a shared goal (of completing the master's degree) within a social group no longer existed. The end of the master's degree therefore prompted a change from a more social identity, to developing a more personal sense of self through working and developing career plans. Those facing enforced transitions were therefore involved in a process of attempting to maintain their academic roles and identities or adapt to new roles and identities.

Those continuing in education also faced challenges, despite the master's degree being used by many as a stepping stone into PhD study. Lisa struggled during the beginning of her PhD (see also 6.5.2; 6.4.2) after being told to explore the theoretical literature on her topic in order to develop her own understanding of the area. Already the PhD had required her to develop a more thorough and in-depth understanding of her discipline area than expected during master's study. Moving institution and entering a new PhD department resulted in Lisa forfeiting the close relationship with her supervisor and lacking the community which had been so valuable in encouraging her to feel capable to succeed at master's level (see also 5.3.1). Entering a new learning environment can threaten an individual's academic identity due to a lack of knowledge about how the institution works (Christie et al., 2008). Lisa's academic self-efficacy was once again threatened (as it had been during undergraduate study) whilst she attempted to adapt to the new institution. Her drop in confidence resulted in a reduced sense of autonomy, meaning that Lisa felt unsure how to achieve at PhD level.

A change in topic area or department also led to some difficulties for students during the transition into PhD study. Phoebe's PhD was based within a sociology department (instead of the previous music departments she had been based in for her first and master's degree) and she struggled to develop her understanding of the discipline's approach towards her subject. Phoebe worked full-time whilst studying and therefore it is likely that her socialisation into PhD study was prolonged due to her struggling to become involved in the

department or develop her academic identity. Due to the potential difficulties during the transition into PhD study, even for those continuing straight on from their master's degree, there is a need to reconsider how best to support individuals during this period. It is clear therefore that the transition from master's into PhD study is not always smooth and does still require adjustments in terms of knowledge and self-efficacy.

Generally, those who remained within the same field of work had a smoother transition as they were able to return to their pre-study roles (whilst those entering new areas who were forced to adapt to new roles). However, the satisfaction for these participants tended to be related to the extent to which they were able to maintain a sense of progression within their lives after finishing the master's degree. Those who had used the master's degree in order to progress as teachers could now focus upon applying their newly acquired knowledge in order to develop their professional practice further. Due to being predominantly self-employed these teachers tended to have the freedom to implement their knowledge into their work, therefore feeling able to progress within their teaching roles. However, others who were unable to utilise their knowledge within their pre-study roles tended to feel dissatisfied by a perceived lack of overall progress. The master's degree was a period of self-development leading to increased academic self-efficacy, positive academic identities and feeling closer to one's hoped-for self. However, social factors and obstacles did still prevent some from being able to progress professionally. Those who were unable to achieve their career goals after completing the master's degree tended to experience negative well-being due to being unable to fulfil their possible selves. Both Fiona and Tom hoped to change careers and continue into PhD study in the future, however, during phase four both remained within the same jobs they had when they enrolled onto the master's degree. Both felt a void in the place of studying as their lives continued with little having changed since starting the degree. Completion of the master's degree meant they were more likely to meet PhD entry requirements in the future, but currently their circumstances remained the same.

Laura's sense of well-being was threatened when she felt forced to return to working as a waitress after completing her master's degree. During her master's degree, Laura was proactive in approaching organisations and individuals in order to gain work experience, and was working as a research assistant whilst studying. She hoped to continue working as a research assistant before pursuing PhD study in a few years. However, she felt pressure to obtain more work after graduation:

I ended up doing a catering job for a couple of weeks and working in the evenings so I could buy food. [...] I worked in hospitality throughout my undergraduate degree and that was fine, and I worked in a really fun restaurant with all my friends, but after like you know moving over here and completing a master's, to then go back to hospitality is just the most soul destroying thing. [...] I guess because I knew that my qualifications and experience were so much further along. (Laura, phase 3)

During the period of the master's degree Laura developed a positive academic identity and became more confident. The master's degree allowed her to progress towards her future goal of PhD study and hoped-for future. To then return to waitressing meant that she had not progressed as she had hoped and expected to, but was instead having to return to work she had done before in order to save up for master's study. This is likely to have caused a sense of disequilibrium (Marcia, 2002) during which her professional identity did not match her situation, resulting in conflicting subjective and actual identities (Mills, 2004). The incongruence caused by this situation led to a challenging period as Laura reevaluated her possible selves and academic identity in order to regain a sense of well-being. This links to Festinger's (1962) theory of cognitive dissonance which states that when an individual holds two or more elements of knowledge which are relevant but inconsistent in some manner (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2008) then the individual will experience cognitive dissonance which is uncomfortable and they will be motivated to move to reduce this. The cognitive dissonance therefore can be seen as highlighting errors within an individual's belief systems which need to be reassessed (Gawronski, 2012). The disequilibrium between Laura's developed identity and her working life threatened her possible self as an academic and forced her to adapt and explore other ways of achieving her desired self, a concept explored further in chapter 8. This meant that Laura began her PhD study sooner than planned in order to retain the professional academic identity she had expected to gain through research assistant work (see also 7.2.2).

The transition out of master's study proved challenging for the majority of participants in some way as they adapted to new roles, or the ways in which their new identities impacted upon their previous roles. In order to smoothly transition out of master's study it was important that participants felt a sense of progression within their lives, and were able to develop positive professional identities which were felt to be congruent with the roles in which they were engaged. These results corroborate past research on the unpredictability of career transitions (Bowman et al., 2005), in particular the potential difficulties of becoming socialised into different roles.

7.1.2 Recognising skills

Developing skills will broaden the range of jobs an individual is able to apply for after leaving university (Bennett, 2007). However, it is vital that the individual is aware of their own skills and are able to sell themselves, and the value of their degrees, to potential employers (Rook, 2012). Some participants struggled to recognise skills they had developed during the master's degree, feeling that much of it had been a continuation of their undergraduate learning. Hannah was unable to determine master's specific outcomes after her 'comprehensive' undergraduate psychology degree (Hannah, phase 2). Hannah's uncertainty may have had a negative impact upon her ability to sell herself to potential employers. Participants who were uncertain of the outcomes of their master's degree tended to narrowly focus their discussion on the academic skills developed. Those who were more confident in recognising skills often had more practical or work experience, and therefore a greater sense of perspective on how the master's degree was relevant to them and to careers more generally.

Students were sometimes unsure whether they met the entrance requirements to pursue their chosen career path. Lisa struggled to find information on the marks required to enter PhD study, feeling that there was a lack of online guidance which provided generic advice on the level required by universities. The lack of clear and cohesive information for postgraduates has been previously reported (Bowman et al., 2004) and the implications of this are discussed further (chapter 9). Interpretation of entrance requirements was partly dependent upon an individual's confidence in themselves and their abilities. For instance, Amy felt that her experience working with individuals with communication difficulties would not be sufficiently relevant for her to be accepted onto a therapy course. Due to this uncertainty she had not applied to any courses and was vaguely looking for some experience which would allow her to meet this entry requirement. Again this appeared to be a helpless approach to career development as Amy was involved in a vague process of attempting to gain experience without any plans or strategies for how to do so. Being unable to recognise how the master's degree was relevant to advertised jobs is likely to have restricted individuals' ability to write attractive job applications:

Sometimes you forget about putting down things from the university and you forget that you can actually use it in an application but if you have other things there I tend to use them instead of the university as an example, I'm not sure why. (Amy, phase 3)

Despite only having worked for a year full-time, Amy tended to focus upon her employment experience when writing applications instead of her educational experiences. Although her

employment experience is likely to provide effective examples of the skills and attributes she holds, it may mean she fails to highlight additional attributes gained through studying. As Amy was applying for work which she felt was 'very different to what my degree was' (Amy, phase 3) her uncertainty regarding what to write about her study experiences on applications was heightened. Amy repeatedly mentioned a desire to study a vocational degree which would lead her to a specific career and without this she struggled to understand the merits of her course. In fact, Amy felt that her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees only showed an ability to be creative. Perhaps her focus on this one outcome was based on the degree titles rather than the course content, or upon her perceptions of how others would view her qualification. Amy struggled to develop a professional identity during her study, and was now hoping that a vocational degree would enable her to pursue a clear career path and develop a professional identity.

Jodie was better able to recognise the relevance of her master's degree:

the last [application] I did I made [the master's degree] relevant by saying that it was about what it was about and saying that it certainly influenced the way that I teach erm and you know I can offer probably some kind of workshop on that kind of topic or something, erm yes so I have done that I've always put down what it was in because I think a lot of people are interested (Jodie, phase 4)

Being aware of the outcomes of the degree and the impact it had upon her teaching was likely to have played a part in Jodie successfully gaining an interview in every job she had applied for since completing the master's degree. Jodie's approach differs to Amy who tended to group her undergraduate and postgraduate experiences together in her application forms. Perhaps the comparison is unfair due to Amy considering work unrelated to music, however, it is likely that if she cannot understand how her experiences would be beneficial to a job, others are even less likely to be able to do so.

Individuals who understood the transferability of their skills were more likely to consider a broader range of career options in a more confident manner. Ruth felt that employers might not be aware of how her education and work experience was relevant within different careers, but she felt that it would provide her with a good grounding for a number of jobs related to education and music. Ruth was confident in the values of her own experiences and felt that she would be able to sell herself to potential employers. Similarly, Chloe began to apply for jobs which required teaching qualifications due to feeling that her own experiences and education were very relevant, especially after developing a different

stand-point from which to view education with her Suzuki qualification⁸. Although Chloe's qualifications did not match the job requirements she felt she could sell herself to potential employers.

Higher education staff face the challenge of how to ensure students are aware of the relevance of the course outcomes in the wider context (Mason et al., 2003). Tutors struggled to find effective ways to ensure that students were aware of the outcomes of the master's degree:

The question is whether we should make it more explicit, "now you've learnt this, now you've learnt that", that could be a bit patronising as well (Institution C, music psychology tutor)

Drawing attention to course outcomes was perceived to be 'unnatural' and to 'disrupt the natural flow' of the taught sessions (Institution B, music psychology tutor). One course tutor felt that the uncertainty regarding personal skills and attributes may be connected to music students:

For musicians we take a lot of what we do for granted, so you know, we are used to team working, we're used to being self-motivated, we're used to spending time alone, we're used to spending time with other people, erm we're used to self-criticising and improving, we do that naturally through our performance activities. And so I think that music students in higher education sort of take all of that for granted and don't realise that it's actually quite special (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

When students are aware of the relevance of skills to their future careers their motivation to develop them is often increased (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008), therefore encouraging self-reflection is likely to lead to greater motivation to work on behaviours which will make future careers more possible. A careers advisor suggested that self-reflection was important in order to understand course outcomes, as they were unlikely 'to jump out and say "this is what I do"' (Institution B, advisor). She felt that understanding which core skills were required by employers may increase students' ability to recognise these outcomes of their courses.

⁸ The Suzuki technique is an approach to teaching music which typically focuses upon training individuals from a young age. More information can be found on the Suzuki Association of the Americas website ('About the Suzuki Method', 2015)

7.1.3 Engagement with careers support

This section does not focus upon the different types of careers support available, but rather discusses student engagement with careers and employability support. The influence of tutors is discussed earlier, therefore the relationship between careers advisors and the students is the main focus here. The broader implications of the institutional approaches towards careers support are discussed further in chapter 9.

Generally, there was a lack of engagement with careers support. The participants tended not to value the available careers support, which resulted in some not using the advisors at all and others feeling disappointed with the advice received. Matt felt that by master's study the majority of students had clear career plans and were therefore not in need of careers advisors. Despite this view his transition out of the master's degree was not smooth after being unsuccessful in his PhD applications and ending up in unrelated work as a recruiter. He felt that his recruitment job was generally not a long-term option and therefore was considering other careers whilst remaining uncertain about possible relevant opportunities. Matt's transition may have been supported by career advice, however, his perception that advisors were for those who were still unsure of their career decisions led to him feeling they were unsuitable for him. Others did attend careers sessions but found them to be unhelpful. Amy was unsure of her future career plans and paid multiple visits to careers advisors during her time studying but felt disappointed by their inability to direct her towards a suitable career. Whilst the advisors could suggest approaches towards career planning, they were of course not able to make choices. For this reason, Tina felt that the careers advice available within her school of music had not been relevant due to her career indecision. She felt that due to her uncertainty the university could not have prepared her better for the transition into working life, as it was her responsibility to do this. During her undergraduate degree Tina had attended a one-to-one careers session in order to gain advice on how to become a music journalist. She became disillusioned and disappointed with the advice that journalism was a difficult career to enter. It is likely that the advisor was simply attempting to provide a realistic opinion of the difficulties of the career path (which some felt universities should provide and is known to be important in effective career interventions (Reese & Miller, 2006)), however, Tina found this approach disappointing and felt that the advisor may have doubted her personal abilities to achieve success within the career. The career advisor's attempt to provide a realistic opinion of a career path led to Tina doubting her own abilities due to a lack of confidence and her professional identity being undeveloped. This highlights the potential difficulty of feedback for individuals who lack self-

confidence. Tina did not return for careers advice relating to her decision making, but did seek support further with her CV development.

The preference to discuss career options with someone who was perceived to understand an individual's wants and abilities led to many of the participants approaching supervisors for advice regarding PhD study. Tutors are likely to be able to provide insider information about the reality of academic life which careers advisors may not be aware of. Part of the tutor's role should be to help students' develop greater self-awareness in order to benefit career planning (Schmidt, 1982). However, tutors were not always comfortable with providing careers advice:

I mean in some ways I feel that we're the worst placed people to give careers advice because you know we've all just come to university and never left, so you know, what do we know? I still haven't decided what I want to be when I grow up so you know I feel incredibly ill equipped to help with it sometimes. (Institution A, music psychology tutor)

Additionally, course tutors may not provide the impartial type of advice that advisors are able to:

the thing that we would often say we offer is objectivity, you know we try and give them balanced advice and information, there's not erm a benefit to us in them staying on at university, where there might be more of a vested interest with an academic to have sufficient postgrad students studying here (Institution A, advisor)

Taught postgraduate students can bring academic and financial benefits to institutions (HEFCE, 2013a). Additionally, some course tutors enjoyed teaching master's courses as they bridged the gap between their undergraduate teaching and their own avenues of research. It is possible therefore to see why tutors may have personal reasons for encouraging students to continue studying. In fact, Bowman et al's study (2005) reported that 5 out of 6 course directors were constantly looking for new master's students. In the current study the subjectivity of course tutors may have been viewed positively, as students hoped for feedback regarding their ability to enter certain career paths, something which they are only likely to glean from someone they know. Generally, students who had developed a positive relationship with their supervisors tended to approach them for careers advice, whilst those who lacked such a connection were more likely to approach the careers service for support.

Careers advisors expected students to be in control of their own personal development:

[...] don't come in with your CV that you did five years ago and haven't even looked at it before you've got here because it's wasting my time and it's a bit insulting really because actually you're sitting there wanting me to write it (Institution B, advisor)

The advisors highlighted the importance of providing resources for the students in order to allow them to self-reflect and make informed career decisions which were suited to their own values and interests. With the focus upon self-reflection it is obvious that advisors expect students to take the time (with the resources available to them provided by the institution) to explore their own beliefs and attempt to prepare themselves. Allowing time to consider one's options was thought to be neglected by the students, therefore personal sessions with careers advisors allowed a period in which to direct and focus self-reflection. However, whilst some participants discussed the benefit of being encouraged to think more deeply about their future during the interviews for the current study, many of the same discussed their disgruntlement with the careers provision:

I'd come [to the careers advisor] with an [job] application saying 'how can I improve this?' and she was kind of overly enthusiastic about it, and I didn't get as much improvement advice out of her as I was hoping for (Hannah, phase 2)

if they asked these kinds of questions [as in the current study] I think careers counselling would just take off 100% because I mean careers counsellors at universities, they're not, they don't know every career path available to specific degrees and that's kind of up to you to find out but by asking these kinds of questions you can really get a grip on what you feel like you either want or should be doing. And that's like a really good step in the right direction (Hannah, phase 4)

In the first quote above Hannah describes her disappointment at what she perceives to be a lack of constructive criticism from an advisor regarding her job application. After applying for the job Hannah did not receive an interview or any feedback. She therefore felt that the enthusiasm from the advisor had been misleading, and ultimately did not return to the careers service. At this stage Hannah expected to receive specific information and advice from the advisor. However, during the second quote she states the value of being asked questions during her interviews with me which helped her to develop greater self-awareness. Perhaps Hannah had developed a greater sense of autonomy over her future by phase 4 which meant she felt less reliant upon others to provide information and support. However, during phase 2 Hannah may still have been disappointed at such an approach as she expected direct advice on how to improve her application. This highlights the need for

careers services to clarify the type of support they are able to give to students, and the need for students to engage in self-exploration at all stages of their studying.

Due to the relatively short period of master's study, careers services face different challenges as advisors may lack the time to develop personal relationships which may be beneficial in encouraging students to engage with such provision. At the time of the study a number of developments and changes were taking place with the careers support provided within at least two of the institutions by attempting to develop stronger links with alumni in order to create networks and contacts. These changes might be a reflection of the increase in embedded employability within institutional strategies after the 2012 fee increases (HEFCE, 2013b). Considering some of the students' frustrations regarding a perceived lack of information from tutors on possible future careers it would seem that this may be a useful resource. Generally, the current frustrations regarding careers provision appeared to be that it was felt to be irrelevant for the students, a factor which may be reduced by an increased focus upon self-reflection and a more embedded approach towards employability. Developing networks with alumni, and encouraging engagement with such schemes alongside self-exploration is likely to be beneficial for facilitating students' developing professional identities and career plans.

7.2 *Developing career plans*

The process of developing career plans involved defining and redefining professional and academic identities in order to find a career which was felt to be congruent to the individual's self-concept. Career plans tended to be in a state of flux due to the potential for unexpected events and external influences to act as obstacles or open opportunities. As circumstances changed and cognitive dissonance arose, individuals were forced to reappraise their situation and adjust their plans. This is most likely related to the discomfort caused by such cognitive dissonance and the shared human drive to reduce it by changing thinking patterns or behaviour (Festinger, 1962). What was felt to be an obstacle or an opportunity, and how the participants reacted to these, was dependent upon their confidence, identity and values. The process of learning during the career transition also impacted upon career plans as individuals became increasingly aware of their attributes, interests and abilities and how these may relate to potential careers.

7.2.1 Evolving career plans

Exploring possible future career paths allowed individuals an opportunity to learn more about themselves and evaluate possible professional identities (Blustein et al., 1989) in turn enabling more justified and decisive action (Phillips, 1982). At times the personal development during the degree led to increased self-awareness which directly impacted upon what an individual perceived to be a fitting and relevant career. Lisa drastically altered her career plans during the transition after initially being motivated to study for employability reasons (see also 6.5 and 6.1.1). Whilst studying, Lisa's interest in the subject area was sparked and she decided to pursue PhD study. She was then able to use the remaining period of the master's to socialise into the academic requirements in preparation for her PhD. Through studying a subject area which interested her, Lisa realised her enjoyment of academic study in a way which she found surprising. Lisa's changing career plans may be related to her developing incremental beliefs, feeling that her ability could be improved through effort (O'Neill, 2002). During her undergraduate degree Lisa felt she was not academic, which appears to relate to a perception that academic ability was innate and unchangeable (meaning she felt a lack of control over her ability to become successful within education). During her master's degree Lisa realised her own potential within academia, therefore developing more incremental beliefs which in turn increased her academic confidence and enabled her to realise her ability to succeed. Lisa developed a greater sense of autonomy and ownership over her academic success which in turn enabled her to gain more fulfilment from studying.

Similarly, Amy's interests developed as she discovered an interest in linguistics during the master's degree which led her to consider training as a therapist. It appeared to be easier for Lisa to alter her plans towards continuing within education than it was for Amy who decided to gain an additional vocational qualification. This was due to the need for Amy to obtain finances and more work-related experience in order to achieve her goal, both of which were restricted during the period of the master's degree. On the other hand, Lisa was able to use the master's degree itself to prepare for her future plans. Lisa's master's degree therefore acted as a type of socialising experience in developing a career plan to continue within academia (Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996), whilst Amy's master's degree acted as a contradictory experience (Bowman et al., 2005).

During the master's degree Ben developed a positive professional identity and strong values which impacted upon his career choices. In the following quote he described his views on two possible career options:

With grad[uate] schemes you basically sell your soul it seems because it involves working for companies who are just, just monopolise, they're just awful. And with something like a call centre job I mean wow where do you begin? It's an ethical nightmare, you don't get paid anything, you're, well in my case, my employer was one of the most erm sort of contemptible people I ever met [...] I was just like I don't want to work for you, you are a terrible person. You know, and I just thought I don't want to work in this industry, it makes money from the vulnerable and that's not nice. (Ben, phase 4)

Ben's comments above emphasise his unwillingness to 'sell his soul' for money, even in the short-term whilst he attempted to gain PhD funding, which suggests that he is reluctant to work in a job which feels incongruent with his personal identity. Instead, Ben chose to work as an instrumental teacher, a job in which he was able to share his own values regarding the inclusivity of music with others. Ben had developed stronger values during the master's degree which meant that he became increasingly unwilling to work in jobs which conflicted with these goals. He therefore developed a more coherent self-concept and became increasingly focused upon gaining work which suited his professional identity.

Lisa was also focused upon finding an institution for PhD study which she felt would enable her to fulfil her potential and study her interests. This resulted in her turning down an offer of a fully-funded PhD. The institution was the same in which she had studied for her undergraduate degree:

I wasn't academic at undergrad, I was not one of the brains, I didn't do honours and I mean that's sort of the reason why I wouldn't want to do the PhD at the Con[servatoire] because I do feel like there is a bit of a stigma that I wasn't one of the academics, [...] I wasn't exactly holding my own brilliantly academic above anyone else. (Lisa, phase 3)

Whilst studying towards her master's degree Lisa developed greater academic self-efficacy. It may have been difficult for Lisa to embrace the academic lifestyle and her new academic identity by returning to an institution in which others held expectations of her based upon her younger self and previous attitude towards education. Additionally, due to the departmental focus on performance and ethnomusicology, neither of which fit her own interests, she felt the institution did not fit her needs.

Due to the potential for students' career plans to change during the period of the master's degree, a tutor at institution B explained the need for the degree to be flexible:

[The master's degree] can't just be research training, you know, it can't just be vocational, it has to have that degree of flexibility. But also it has to be something where if you come in with a very vocational goal it has to be open enough and in some senses, kind of, challenging enough that you might have the opportunity to change your mind about that. So 'I'm doing this because I want a job, doing this will help with that' but actually six months in thinking 'well actually I'd quite like to do a PhD'. Or vice versa you come in thinking you'd like to do a PhD and half way through you realise you want to be a teacher, and somehow the programme helps you with that (Institution B, music psychology tutor)

Institution B's music psychology degree involved a number of opportunities for students to tailor their assignments to their interests in order to benefit their future. This flexibility should allow individuals to gain the most from their degrees, even when their career plans change during the process. Such flexibility is important due to the potential for the degrees to be transformatory.

7.2.2 External influences upon career planning

A number of external influences impacted upon participants' career plans and added to the unpredictability of careers. Unexpected life events impacted upon participants' experiences of the degree, and influenced the amount of time they were able to commit and focus upon it. During Janet's master's degree two events occurred which restricted her ability to study: the death of her father and developing an illness which left her unable to focus or concentrate. During the six month period in which she helped to care for her father she struggled to maintain a study routine as she balanced her degree alongside caring for her children and working as a musician. Shortly after the death of her father she contracted an illness which left her unable to study or work. She decided to concentrate on her career after finishing her master's degree (whereas previously she had hoped to continue studying) after the negative experience of having no income due to being self-employed. The two unexpected events led to Janet striving to regain control over her life and career by entering a talent competition in which she hoped to gain publicity and more work as a performer. Unfortunately I was unable to interview Janet during the final phase of the study and therefore am unaware of whether she completed her master's degree. It is clear, however, that unpredictable life events can impact upon the experiences of the master's degree and

future career decisions.

Unexpected events and situations stimulated individuals to reappraise their decisions in order to make choices appropriate to the situation. Tom faced the prospect of being discharged from his current job after being diagnosed with a medical condition which was not supported by the military. Tom would receive financial compensation if discharged, which would allow him to reduce the shortfall within his wages whilst he retrained as a teacher. Therefore, the prospect of being discharged provided Tom with the hope that he would be forced into a decision and given the means to follow his desired career without having to deal with as many financial difficulties:

It kind of would give me a kick up the butt, you know, they kick me out with a year's pay, right I've got a year to do something, find something. It's quite exciting in a way, scary, but exciting (Tom, phase 4)

Being forced to find a new career would reduce the pressure on Tom to decide whether to stay or leave the military. This provided him with a sense of freedom and allowed him to feel more able to take a pay cut in the short-term so that he could retrain in a career he would enjoy.

Those planning to live or study in different countries relied heavily on timely information and advice from others in order to make appropriate plans for their future. Misleading advice could be costly for the students. Laura had been encouraged by her PhD supervisor in Australia to begin her course earlier than she had planned, in the summer of 2014. Laura therefore arranged to return to her home country for the summer in order to be ready to start her PhD, which involved giving notice to her landlord and employers in England. However, her start date was then delayed until the following year meaning that Laura was forced to search for temporary work when she returned home in order to survive until receiving her first PhD funding. The misleading encouragement and advice led to Laura changing her living arrangements prematurely and having to leave her research assistant job in the UK early (leading to more stress in terms of finances). Lisa also struggled with misleading information regarding her part-time PhD after arranging to teach on days when her supervisor stated she would not be available for supervisions. Upon starting the PhD she found that her supervisors' timetable had changed and she had to rearrange her pupils in order to be able to attend available supervisions. Research has shown that students want to be able to plan ahead in order to reduce their stress and anxiety (HEFCE, 2013d). The lack of

correct pre-enrolment information resulted in a period of stress in which Lisa was forced to rearrange schedules, which were already complex due to working as a teacher in multiple locations. The potential for musicians to be working a portfolio career means that timetabling information is vital to ensure individuals have the necessary information to be able to manage and plan their time effectively.

When making decisions many of the participants were reliant upon others to accept their application for a job, university place or scholarship. Hannah had expected to work as a research assistant in order to gain experience needed for her PhD application. However, after applying for a number of research positions and not hearing back from employers she remained within the supermarket job she had at the start of the study. She went on to accept a role within her friends' company which was unrelated to her research. Participants' career paths were therefore impacted upon by an unpredictable mixture of planned and unplanned events, or what might be called 'happenstance' (Krumboltz, 2009). These unplanned events are not completely random but are shaped by social and personal determinants which influence which events are likely to impact upon an individual's choices (Hancock, 2009). Individuals differed in the extent to which they made alternative plans in case applications were unsuccessful, but the majority pursued one primary plan whilst having only vague back-up plans. Ruth, for example, was able to pursue her master's degree after successfully gaining a full fee and maintenance scholarship. When asked what the alternative would have been if she had not been successful she commented:

I might have had to do it part-time and do it over two years and then have a job as well, [...] I hope that if I hadn't got that funding then maybe [*grant name*] or something would have arisen so that's £3000 I think, so that would have covered most of the fees. But if I hadn't got any funding I might have had to have a year off or something, but you know, that route, it was sort of, we'll cross that bridge when we come to it kind of thing, and thankfully we never did (Ruth, phase 1)

It is clear that Ruth was focused upon gaining the scholarship, relying upon her ability to be successful in this rather than prepare for the alternative outcomes (despite her own lack of confidence regarding her worthiness to hold the scholarship). The outcome was not as positive for Ben after relying upon a single scholarship application due to being unaware of the alternatives. After unsuccessfully applying for PhD funding, Ben was forced to change his career plans for the year following his master's degree. Ben had assumed that his application would be successful and approached job hunting in a passive manner believing that

something would 'turn up'. This resulted in him facing a challenging transition as he was forced to claim benefits before gaining work as a peripatetic music teacher. Ben's experience highlights the potential difficulty caused when individuals fail to plan ahead, instead relying upon one plan or waiting for opportunities to present themselves. Ben's approach appeared to be 'anticipated serendipity' (Bowman et al., 2005, p. 50) as he was proactive in gaining a wide range of experiences within academia, however, his hope that something would present itself (either a job or the scholarship) led to him finishing his master's degree with no job or scholarship.

7.2.3 *Difficulties of career uncertainty*

Uncertain career plans tended to result in haphazard decisions. Amy lacked career plans and had initially chosen to study music at university without considering her future:

[...] so I had, you know, all that time to not think, and be like, oh yes, I have all this time, and I can decide something. And everybody in my year at that time, or most of us, were thinking, ah I don't know what I'm going to do, and so it came to like, the fourth year and we just had no clue (Amy, phase 1)

Amy approached career planning in an unstructured and passive manner. Part of her uncertainty may have related to her wide-ranging interests and the belief that she would enjoy whatever career she had. With this attitude it was difficult to narrow down the choices, particularly with no strategic methods to do so. Such career uncertainty can be caused by ineffective strategies to systematically make career decisions or a lack of career experience (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Amy admitted struggling to understand how to apply a systematic approach to her own decision-making, and although she gained work experience none of it interested her as a long-term career. The above quote shows that Amy expected to develop her career plans during her degree, perhaps through the process of osmosis (Bowman et al., 2004), however, as is often the case, this did not happen. Perhaps her reference to her own indecision being mirrored by others is an attempt at maintaining her personal well-being by viewing her uncertainty as the norm. This could be an example of an emotion-focused coping mechanism, as Amy attempted to adjust her feelings about lacking career plans by perceiving this as normal, rather than acting to change the situation. This coping mechanism is likely to be linked to Amy's lack of confidence and undeveloped professional identity. Amy's uncertainty meant that she was particularly susceptible to the views of others, often exploring career options which were suggested to her, including her

master's degree. Amy was still uncertain about her career when she decided upon master's study:

I was thinking oh is this what I want to do, and is it going to be worth it, and where's it going to lead me, and like, all these questions, but because I was so stubborn and I'd already said this is what I'm going to do, this is exactly where I'm going to do it, and like, this is, you know, my plan, then I just followed through, and I think it worked out. (Amy, phase 1)

Amy strictly followed her only career plan (to do a master's degree) despite being uncertain about the impact this may have upon her future. Focusing upon this plan enabled Amy to feel in control of her life (Aspinwall, 2005), at least in the short-term, and therefore reduce the stress and anxiety related to her uncertainty. The careers advisors suggested that those, like Amy, who had uncertain career plans should find work instead of continuing to study:

It's a journey, and you don't get into a car or you don't get into a train and not know where you're going. Unless you deliberately decide that's what you want to do [...] and it's a bit like careers isn't it and with jobs, you know, people wander into a master's sometimes without thinking it through, and that was one of the things I was saying you know, be clear why you're doing it. If you're doing it because I haven't got a clue what I'm going to do next then fine own up to that, but bear in mind you might still be in the same position twelve months down the road (Institution B, advisor)

Gaining work experience was thought to be an alternative which would facilitate the development of a number of beneficial skills and attributes, enabling individuals to develop a greater understanding of working life and better plan their future.

Expectations that the master's degree itself would be beneficial for developing career plans tended to remain unfulfilled. Hannah highlighted her own naivety in this expectation and retrospectively felt that other students should have a clear plan and motivation for pursuing their master's degree before enrolling. A similar sentiment was felt by Laura who had always been interested in working as a researcher and had hoped master's study would enable her to achieve this goal. She warned against the dangers of studying master's degrees with no career plans:

I'd probably say don't just do it as a next step because you don't know what you want to do, because that's what the majority of our course were doing and now they've finished it and they're still not any steps closer to knowing what they want to do. (Laura, phase 3)

Although Laura had initially been uncertain which specific path she wished to take aside from it being research-related, she aimed to utilise the master's degree in her future. Those who had not considered (or were unsure of) the impact their master's may have upon their future faced difficulties with career decisions. This suggests the importance of self-awareness and recognition of course outcomes.

A large proportion of career decisions were based upon assumptions. This led some participants to unnecessarily discount career options, or believe options to be more (or less) attainable than they were in reality. Tina had initially dismissed teaching as a career (see also 4.6.2), despite having always wanted to share her knowledge with others:

I just sort of assumed that the only thing I could be was a classroom teacher and I never really wanted to be a classroom teacher but I just for some reason assumed you know that's the route that you go down teaching wise (Tina, phase 4)

It was only upon being offered a peripatetic teaching role that Tina considered this option, ultimately finding it to be enjoyable. The lack of consideration of this as a career may reflect a lack of effective career-exploration which would ultimately have prevented her from entering a career she enjoyed if she had not been approached by a school with a job offer. Tina's experiences relate to Hodkinson's findings (2008) that students' decision-making is based on partial information gained from trusted people and that serendipity plays an important role in career transitions.

In order to develop realistic career plans it was important that individuals understood the job market and potential career paths. The master's degree provided an opportunity to develop a greater awareness of academia and the realities of this career path. Many students, upon starting their master's degree had assumed they would continue straight into PhD study. However, due to the structure of the one year master's degrees and the intensity of the courses only one participant (Phoebe) entered PhD study straight after her master's degree. This number appears low compared to the twelve (Ben, Tom, Ruth, Phoebe, Lisa, Hannah, Matt, Laura, Fiona, Tina, Samantha) who were initially considering PhD study during our first phase of interviews and the six who still planned or were seriously considering entering PhD study in the future (including Lisa who enrolled onto a PhD course by our final phase of interviews and Laura who had been accepted to start her PhD the following year). Tutors highlighted the difficulty of the early application processes during the master's degree, with some suggesting that it was hard for students to understand whether

or not they were interested in PhD study when they lacked experience of writing large essays. Students need to be prepared with a suitable topic and finances early on in the master's degree if they want to continue straight into PhD study. As the master's degree is a period of personal development during which interests may change, it may be unrealistic for the non-mature students to expect to continue from a one year master's degree straight into PhD study. Perhaps students should be warned of the potential benefits of waiting until the end of the master's degree before starting their PhD applications. This would allow them to focus more on the course and external opportunities which may eventually increase their chances for funding.

The results corroborate past literature which states that career planning is rarely an event (Hodkinson, 2008) but rather an ongoing, life-long process (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Students' career plans changed during the master's degree as a result of their developing knowledge, which led to evolving identities, interests and values. Individuals therefore underwent a period of self-development and increasing self-awareness which required them to readjust their career plans in order to ensure they remained consistent with their self-concept. Individuals were influenced by significant others who validated or negated decisions and their evolving identities. The reliance upon others to gain access to opportunities and positions led to uncertainty and some feeling a lack of control over their future. Effective coping mechanisms and self-esteem were important in order to reduce feelings of stress and retain a sense of control during the uncertainty of the transition. During the career decision-making process the concept of risk was a mediating factor, with some individuals feeling more able and willing to take risks in order to achieve a long-term goal than others. This is discussed further later (chapter 8).

7.2.4 Increasing employability

Students differed in the extent to which they felt the master's degree would impact upon their employability. Ben felt that his master's degree broadened his musical experiences and ultimately led to him becoming more employable as an instrumental teacher. Ben became interested in folk music and began taking part in the local music scene after being influenced by his master's degree and tutor's interests. As part of his degree he learnt a new instrument and musical genre and joined a university band as an extra-curricular activity (which was only available to him as a student of the university). Ben felt that these experiences enhanced his credibility and showed a broader understanding and involvement in music than he would have otherwise had, increasing his employability as an instrumental teacher.

Some participants felt the master's degree was a stepping stone into PhD study rather than valuable in itself. Samantha felt that the master's degree was 'neither here nor there' (Samantha, phase 1), believing that most people either stopped education at undergraduate level or continued into PhD study, and that staying at master's level was unlikely to be beneficial for her employability. This belief appears to contradict the following quote:

There's this course in [*home country*], it's part of an [...] accredited university degree and my lecturer wanted me to take that class because I already had my degree in music but she said you needed a master's to prove, to be hired by them (Samantha, phase 1)

In order to teach within her old institution Samantha only required a master's degree, however, her own beliefs were that the master's degree was only a stepping-stone towards PhD study. Her perceptions regarding the value of the master's degree therefore appear to be subjective, perhaps related to a desire to challenge herself as far as possible. Matt felt that the master's degree left him in employability limbo:

I just feel sort of stuck in between places right now, you're over qualified for most jobs as a master's, but you're underqualified for a lot of jobs for a PhD (Matt, phase 3)

Despite feeling the qualification left him 'stuck', by our final interview Matt was working in a role which was unrelated to his degree, but in which he felt his research skills were beneficial. Similarly, Tina was unable to state positive outcomes from her master's degree whilst she was studying, especially regarding one particular module, however, once she began looking for jobs she found that many required skills which she had developed during this module. This highlights the challenges faced by students with a lack of work experience when attempting to place their course outcomes into a wider context. There is a need for greater exploration, including work experience, in order to ensure individuals are able to sell themselves to potential employers and recognise the benefits of their master's degree. The implications of this for course evaluations are discussed further below (chapter 9).

Some individuals felt the master's degree might over qualify them. Hannah, for example, felt that employers may feel an individual is lacking commitment to a field if their master's degree and work areas differed, whilst Tom felt employers may assume an individual will move on quickly:

I think it can definitely count against you unless you're going for a specific job in that a lot of people see you as being over qualified, and quite academically ambitious, and that they won't employ you because they think you're not going to hang around very long (Tom, phase 1)

However, institution A's career advisor felt that becoming overqualified was unlikely:

Let's say for instance they've got a PhD and are applying for jobs which don't require a PhD, they may be a bit concerned, will they be regarded as being overqualified, or too specialist in a particular area? And again I would say probably no but it's about how you sell it, it's about how you explain it, and it's really about having to unravel that, needing to explain the rationale behind what you've done. (Institution A, advisor)

Perhaps individuals will only be overqualified if they are unable to explain the value of their additional degree and experience to potential employers. All three careers advisors emphasised practical experience over and above the master's degree as being important in enhancing employability. The careers advisor at institution B felt that employers would often assume that postgraduate students simply wanted more money than undergraduate students, whereas if individuals also had practical experience then they would be seen as more employable, she added:

the MA might just get you to the door and opens the door but that stuff that you're doing in your spare time will actually give you the skills that are actually needed (Institution B, advisor)

Due to the non-vocational nature of the courses observed within the study, some staff members were uncertain of the extent to which the master's degree impacted upon the employability of the students. One musicology tutor felt that 'it's sort of difficult to see [...] how you develop employability beyond simply the ability to express ideas' (Institution B, musicology tutor). In fact, some tutors tentatively championed the idea of the master's degree being an 'academic and intellectual pursuit, rather than something which is career directed' (Institution A, musicology tutor). However, the comments from the careers advisors highlight the fact that even if employability is not a focus within the master's degree, students should be encouraged to gain practical experience relevant to their future in order to facilitate a smoother transition into working life.

One tutor suggested that work experience encouraged individuals to develop a stronger work ethic as they gained a sense of perspective on their education, including a new-found appreciation for studying and working full-time hours. This suggests that work

and study can complement each other well, with each able to provide perspective and skills which have a positive reciprocal impact. Previous studies have suggested that real-world experience prompts students to think more deeply about their own professional identities and career path (Gaunt, Creech, Long, & Hallam, 2012). Work experience may facilitate a smoother transition into working life by helping individuals to develop more realistic expectations of working life (Graham & McKenzie, 1995) and develop beneficial personal attributes. These include maturity, communication and interpersonal skills, and an understanding of workplace culture, including work ethics (Little, 2006). Socialisation into the workplace culture may be a more difficult and lengthy process without work experience (Harvey, 2003).

7.3 Gaining practical experience

Participants gained academic and external experiences which provided them with insights into working practices and would ultimately be beneficial (or a hindrance) in their attempt to socialise into new roles, or adapt their position within current roles. Participants who gained practical experience developed greater confidence and self-awareness and expected this to impact upon their employability.

7.3.1 Socialisation into academia

The master's degree was valued by those hoping to continue into PhD study as it enabled the development of a greater knowledge base from which to decide upon PhD topics and an in-depth understanding of the academic environment more generally. The master's degree increased Lisa's understanding of the processes required when producing a dissertation, something which she had not previously experienced. Having been successful in producing her own master's level dissertation she felt more confident in her ability to succeed at PhD level. A greater understanding of the requirements of PhDs allowed participants to feel more confident in their career plans, as they were able to base them upon more concrete experiences of the realities of each option. Lisa felt that although she was still 'naïve', she understood more about what it meant to be a lecturer and the ways in which universities were run. As she hoped to work in academia this insight was important in helping her to develop professional and academic identities. Lisa's identities were negotiated within the social context of the university in which she was enrolled, as the institution presents the norms, values and expectations within which individuals experience their studying (Juuti, 2012).

Amy felt more prepared for potentially entering PhD study after her master's degree as she was more aware of how to conduct research:

[The dissertation] has kind of helped me develop some understanding of how to go about, sort of, planning things and, like, what I would need to consider if I was going to do research on a grander scale than the master's degree. (Amy, phase 2)

The dissertation enabled individuals to evaluate their level of interest and ability in producing a large-scale project. As a result of this process, Hannah felt she now held a better understanding of the types of resources available and the scope for new research topics:

I think it opened up a lot of resources that I didn't know about before, journals and things perhaps. I didn't know there was quite so much about music psychology because, I mean, you can only do so much exploration and stuff without access to all these paid journals that you get in university libraries (Hannah, phase 3)

Being enrolled as a student granted Hannah access to a range of online and hardcopy resources which meant that she could explore the topic of music psychology more thoroughly than previously. Hannah realised the breadth and potential of music psychology, including the flexibility of the field and scope for further research. In this sense the master's degrees may enable a smoother transition into PhD study for participants.

Online resources tended to be a new experience for the mature students, who had previously relied upon paper copies. Although some aspects of new technology caused difficulties for the mature students, the access to online resources was viewed positively:

I've really enjoyed exploring that [online library], and that was sort of an unexpectedly nice discovery. And then the libraries in [city name] are wonderful, you know, they're fantastic. So that was really, that's been fantastic (Jodie, phase 1)

Online resources provided convenient access to a wide range of materials, which was especially important for Jodie as a distance learner who was balancing studying alongside working and caring for her small children (see 6.3.1). Many of the participants found the lack of resources upon leaving the course to be difficult:

Leaving the library, I think it's the hardest thing, yes. That is actually the thing that I miss the most, I think to myself oh I wonder about suddenly this thing about singing [...] and I sort of went on to the Google Scholar and I looked up this article and thought oh that's Sage publications that's cool. No it's not cool I can't look it up, I can only read the abstract now. (Steph, phase 3)

Steph felt disappointed that now she had finished her degree she was unable to continue her research as easily. She was interested in subscribing to regain access to online resources, however, felt that she would prefer the kind of blanket access afforded to her during her studying as the articles she found interesting tended to be spread across a number of journals. Journals tended to require individual subscriptions, which was costly compared to the more open and free online access afforded by university study (although of course students were required to pay tuition fees in order to be granted such access). Tom found the lack of access frustrating upon completing his degree as he was unsure how to continue researching and learning. Attempting to continue researching after the master's degree could be costly, as Chloe found when she tried to continue reading into performance anxiety. Chloe found the books to be prohibitively expensive and relied upon gifts from others to develop her collection. Laura was disappointed that during her master's degree she had felt too busy to make the most of the free resources, whilst upon finishing she had the time but no access. Alongside the access to academic resources, Samantha missed the online Naxos music library, which had stimulated her leisure and academic interests. Therefore, although the master's degree provided a period of opportunity for individuals to develop their knowledge within a subject area, it also caused frustration upon completion when individuals felt unable to continue their research. Such difficulties with continuing access may soon change as there are now an increasing number of open access journals where articles are available free of charge (Butcher & Hoosen, 2014). Due to the rising costs of education within the context of widening participation, it is likely that such a trend will increase and journals will be required to find different ways to fund themselves. This is likely to be beneficial for those wanting to continue developing their knowledge for professional or academic reasons whilst not being attached to a university.

7.3.2 Developing professional practice

The master's degree provided an opportunity to develop professional practice through increasing students' theoretical understanding and knowledge. Therefore, although the courses were not technically vocational, the students with past experience of working were able to use the course content in a vocational manner. Fiona struggled with performance anxiety which had led her away from a performing career when she was younger (see 4.5). Fiona appeared to display problem-focused coping strategies here (Weinstein, Healy, & Ender, 2002), as in order to reduce the negative emotions she felt from feeling unable to perform she attempted to develop the knowledge needed in order to reduce the anxiety. She found that through learning more about performance anxiety she was better able to cope:

I think it is the course [that has helped me reduce my performance anxiety] because, just, the ideas that they've put into your head. It's made me, instead of going straight into panic, to sit there and think (Fiona, phase 2)

Although her course did not involve any performing, her music-making was improved by learning theories which she then applied in her own time to her playing. Through this greater understanding it is likely that Fiona developed a stronger sense of control, which led to her feeling less anxious when performing. By taking control of her performing again Fiona reclaimed her musical enjoyment and developed a more positive musical self. Her high levels of confidence enabled her to feel able to use proactive problem-focused strategies in order to reduce her levels of performance anxiety. Additionally, her course mates were supportive and encouraged her to perform to them in a safe environment, which helped her to overcome her fear of playing to others.

More commonly, participants described the impact the master's degree had upon their teaching practice. Through her research and study, Chloe realised the wide range of teaching styles which could be used with children. The course introduced the Suzuki method which Chloe felt was useful for her younger students and she went on to complete some qualifications in the method. The course therefore led Chloe to discover a new teaching method and allowed her access to the resources and support needed to research and validate this method so that she felt confident when presenting it to her pupils and their parents.

Chloe stated that the master's:

[...] helped my teaching and just my whole philosophy of teaching. Maybe not the day to day erm you know each lesson, but having a purpose and knowing why I want to include you know things like group lessons and you know, learning by ear and memorising and all these things, and really seeing, you know, scientifically why they are important
(Chloe, phase 2)

In this sense, Chloe's subjective identity as a teacher appeared to be strengthened by her increased awareness and understanding developed during the master's degree. For others, developing an understanding of music allowed them to validate their past decisions regarding effective ways to teach or perform. The teachers in the sample tended to find their research corroborated previous intuitions regarding effective ways to teach. Jodie felt the course:

just solidif[ied] stuff that I think I kind of knew either through instinct or had picked up along the way or you know had got from other colleagues, it was just, you know, it really cemented a lot of stuff (Jodie, phase 3)

Jodie suggested that the course involved a process of confirmation, rather than a discovery of information. This improved her confidence in her methods and made her a more relaxed teacher. An increased understanding of others was a recurring theme among the teachers, alongside a more relaxed approach towards their teaching:

I'm definitely a calmer teacher as a result of having done this, even though I've been incredibly stressed for the last two years erm I've kind of taken a more relaxed approach to it I think. I think I've been much more open to what the students are giving me (Jodie, phase 3)

With the increased knowledge and levels of confidence gained whilst studying the master's degree individuals developed more secure professional identities and were able to relax into their roles. A deeper understanding of the psychological theory behind music led some to feel more empathic towards their pupils. Tom felt he had developed a better understanding of the psychology of performance during his master's degree and that this impacted upon his ability to teach:

I think I've learnt a lot about how other people, you know, their perception of what they're going through, and I really think that helps me teach as much as anything and how I act as a section member or a section leader, how I try and draw the best out of people for their performance. (Tom, phase 2)

These descriptions of increased empathy and relaxation into the role appear to suggest a more creative approach towards teaching, which can be defined as:

A way of thinking and exploring subjects and curriculum experimentally and exploratory with materials and media in a student led environment with the freedom to change direction and introduce materials spontaneously (Burnard, Holliday, Jasilek, & Nikolova, 2015, p. 100)

In order to be able to develop a more creative learning environment teachers need to have time to self-reflect on their practice and methods (Burnard, 2012), and for the participants this was enabled during the period of the master's degree. After developing an increased understanding of musical theory the participants felt more confident and justified when experimenting with their teaching methods and ensuring they adopted a student led approach. After developing their teaching methods many participants felt their pupils were more reactive to the lessons which in turn led to increased satisfaction (and confidence) within their work. The opinions of others are important when assessing one's own identity and it is likely that when pupils became more responsive within lessons (in a sense validating the participants' ability to teach) then participants felt increasingly competent as teachers and developed stronger professional identities (Ibarra, 1999).

After finishing the master's degree some participants felt anxious about fading knowledge:

I can still, kind of, call upon that information, but it doesn't feel as fresh in my brain so I think I need to spend some time reviewing, you know, once in a while go over, erm you know, past papers that I wrote or some of the articles that I read to keep it fresh in my mind. Because there's nobody to talk to really about erm everything we learned either (Chloe, phase 3)

The quote above highlights the need for Chloe to continue revisiting and refreshing her knowledge in order to maintain this confidence. Developing knowledge is therefore an ongoing process which continued past the point of graduation for many of the participants, with individuals continually negotiating their professional identities. This links to past reports that individuals continually engage in musical activities and negotiate their musical identities in order to feel valid in calling themselves musicians (Roberts, 1990). The process of identity development within modern life is therefore continuous and ongoing (Britton & Baxter, 1999).

7.3.3 *Obstacles to obtaining experience*

At times students found it frustrating that in order to gain work they needed previous practical experience. This highlighted the importance of internships and work experience in enabling students to pursue their desired careers. In particular, a lack of experience working in an office environment was felt to be an obstacle for Ruth and Tina when applying for jobs. Although both individuals felt they were able to do the tasks required of them within an office environment, they felt their chances of employment were low without the experience to 'prove' this. Tina did not apply for roles which stated the need for more experience than she had, despite feeling that she was able to do the job:

they required a minimum of 6 months office experience, because I do have some experience when I was an intern of working on reception and doing little duties and I have done little admin stuff but maybe not for that length of time, and it's just stupid, because that's the minimum requirement and it's like well I know I could do it, I'm a quick learner, I did an IT module at uni and the fact that I've got these degrees shows that I can apply myself and do really well but the fact that that's a minimum requirement means that I won't even get considered for it (Tina, phase 4)

It might be that Tina would have been able to convince others that she was fit for the post, despite not fully conforming to their requirements. Her approach may be an example of a helpless coping mechanism (Robins & Pals, 2002), as rather than take a risk in applying and potentially face rejection, Tina elected to focus upon jobs in which she felt she had more chance to be successful. Tina lacked confidence and therefore might have reduced the number of opportunities she applied for, ultimately restricting her chances to gain employment (Betz & Hackett, 1981). She did apply for other work within a conservatoire which she felt she had a good chance of gaining, but was not offered an interview due to insufficient work experience. After applying she was informed of a number of opportunities for volunteering which she had been unaware of, and which she needed to become involved with in order to stand a better chance of gaining employment. Volunteering may prevent some from being able to access a career if they lack financial resources. Ruth and Tina felt that many of the volunteering positions within music organisations were based in the south of the country, which meant higher living costs whilst lacking pay, a prospect both struggled with:

I couldn't afford to just do the volunteer thing and that's what I hate [...] that's why the [conservatoire] thing was such an amazing thing because they were paying you, you know, three days a week and it wasn't that much money, like £7,000 a year for three days a week but that's so much more than most arts organisations would give you, for that experience you'd be expected to do an internship for free because they don't see you as having that experience (Tina, phase 4)

Due to the lack of paid work experiences available within arts organisations some individuals felt careers within this sector were unrealistic and therefore looked elsewhere for jobs. The lack of paid internships is likely to restrict the number of individuals able to enter certain career paths which require previous experiences.

Participants were better able to understand their own interests regarding work after gaining practical experience, a finding which corroborates previous research (Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh, & Knight, 2001; Bowman et al., 2005). Practical experiences enabled individuals to better understand how their self-concepts fit with certain careers and to explore the suitability of jobs and organisations (Nolan & Harold, 2010). Such self-awareness is an important factor for facilitating a smooth transition into working life. The benefit of the work experience, however, was dependent upon the participant's response to it, as individuals reacted in different ways to any given situation (Greenbank, 2010). It was important that individuals had developed effective coping mechanisms for recognising and utilising available opportunities. Those who held incremental beliefs perceived their intelligence and ability as malleable, felt a greater sense of control over their success, and tended to become involved in a range of opportunities which meant they gained beneficial experiences (Robins & Pals, 2002). Those with career plans were better able to recognise their potential to develop further in order to achieve hoped-for selves whilst accepting they needed to continue to develop further before reaching these possible selves. Therefore, those who held career plans and incremental beliefs were most likely to participate in a range of opportunities in order to develop their skills, knowledge, and achieve their goals. Those already working alongside the degree tended to utilise their knowledge and feel more capable within their job roles, therefore developing more positive professional identities. Although the master's degrees themselves were not vocational, they did provide a period during which individuals could gain the experience needed to facilitate a smoother transition into working life/PHD study, or develop current practice.

7.4 Summary

In summary, despite the non-vocational nature of the master's degrees, participants underwent a period of personal and vocational development. For the mature students, vocational development tended to be related to their current career, as they progressed and developed as teachers and performers by gaining a greater understanding of their discipline. The master's degree provided an opportunity for non-mature students to continue learning whilst gaining valuable practical experience. Additionally students were socialised into academia by developing an academic identity, an awareness of the academic lifestyle, and contacts. However, the transition into PhD study was not always smooth. Individuals' assumptions that they would continue straight from master's into PhD study tended to be unrealistic due to early application deadlines.

The career transition involved a process of identity formation as individuals assimilated new knowledge and interests from their roles as students (and workers) which impacted upon their professional and personal identities (Juuti & Littleton, 2010). The process of developing identities for mature and non-mature students tended to differ, and will be discussed further below (see chapter 8). Due to the process of ongoing personal development and the impact of external factors, the career transition did not tend to go as planned, a finding which corroborates past research (Bowman et al., 2005). Self-confidence was required in order to maintain psychological well-being during the often challenging period of searching for jobs or PhD funding. Those with higher levels of self-esteem were more likely to feel in control and adopt learning goals (Weinstein et al., 2002) which are likely to be important during the period of transition. According to attribution theory, when an individual feels in control they are more likely to maintain the effort required to succeed, and approach challenges (Weiner, 1979). Those with learning goals and incremental beliefs (who believe they are able to take control and increase their level of intelligence) were likely to be more motivated due to feeling able to control desired outcomes. Those who were confident in recognising their own abilities were better able to understand how these related to working life. Holding career plans was beneficial in motivating and guiding participants' behaviour towards desired possible selves. Confidence, career plans and coping methods were therefore vital for facilitating the transformation and full utilisation of available opportunities during the career transition. Those who lacked self-confidence and awareness were less likely to take opportunities and more likely to be anxious about their place in society.

The period of the master's degree can act as a facilitated transition during which individuals prepare for their next step whilst remaining within a relatively secure environment (Gee, 2010), however, in order to make the most of this period of time students need to be proactive in taking advantage of opportunities. The theory of happenstance is relevant here (Krumboltz, 2009), as individuals were not always actively seeking a particular career, but through accepting opportunities were able to move towards jobs which they enjoyed. Therefore the culmination of the career path during the transition arose from an interaction between social factors which provided opportunities and obstacles for the students, alongside the students' attitudes, beliefs and self-concept which impacted their approaches towards given situations.

8 : Discussion: the career transitions of UK music postgraduate students

The transition involved a period of personal and vocational development during which individuals were transformed through learning. Learning can be defined as ‘permanent or semi-permanent changes in how individuals think and act’ (Billett, 2004, p. 111). Learning therefore ‘transforms who we are and what we can do [...] It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). Developing knowledge during master’s study led to increased self-awareness, and individuals were driven to develop and maintain a coherent self-concept and professional identity. This desire for an authentic and congruent self-concept motivated the participants to study and persevere during the career transition. The satisfaction of the transition therefore depended upon the extent to which their behaviour was felt to fit with their ideal self.

A key contribution of this thesis is the finding that non-vocational degrees can directly impact upon the professional development of musicians and facilitate the development of a positive professional identity. Past research has tended to highlight the importance of work experience for increasing employability (Blackwell et al., 2001) alongside specific skills and attributes (Rogers, 2002) which may benefit students’ transitions into working life. However, the wider benefits of theoretical knowledge have tended to be left unspoken. Non-vocational courses are often assumed to enhance employability without a consideration of how they may do so (Dibben, 2006). The current findings have highlighted the importance of less tangible degree outcomes for the satisfaction and fulfilment of the students. Developing self-awareness and engaging in a process of career-exploration are highlighted here as being important for the successful development of career plans and professional identities. The following section discusses the ways in which the career transition impacted upon individuals’ developing identities and the interwoven nature of identity and experiences. The experiences of mature and non-mature students are discussed and compared in order to understand how the master’s degree is experienced at different stages of life.

8.1 Motivations and identity development

As discussed in Chapter 4 all the participants were driven by interactive motivations which developed during the career transition in response to changing identities and situations. Motivations related to lifestyle choices, self-fulfilment, and realising desired identities. All these motivations are related to the desire to find a suitable job and lifestyle. The results corroborate past research which has reported that individuals are attracted towards careers in which they are able to fulfil their potential and feel valued (Saka, Gati, & Kelly, 2008). Maslow's description of esteem needs and the need for self-actualization are linked to the current definition of self-fulfilment, as individuals are thought to desire self-respect and respect from others, whilst wanting to behave in a manner congruent with their self-concept (Maslow, 1943). Participants were motivated to develop and demonstrate to themselves, and to others, their levels of ability (Nicholls, 1984), both of which are examples of achievement behaviour. Therefore, the desire for self-fulfilment may also relate to the theory of achievement motivation, as individuals strove to succeed within and outside of academia (Atkinson & Birch, 1978).

The master's degrees impacted upon individuals' identities, self-efficacy, and general well-being. Participants' self-concepts were influenced by both the experience of studying the master's (alongside external commitments and events) and the development of new skills, knowledge, interests and communities. Chapter 6 highlights the ways in which learning led individuals to develop new interests, values and knowledge which ultimately impacted upon their abilities and sense of self. Those who were open-minded in their approach to master's study faced periods of disequilibrium during which they were forced to question their career paths and interests. Such openness to new experiences is important for developing a flexible identity, by broadening and challenging identities (Perkins, 2012). Learning led to increases in self-confidence as individuals gained fulfilment, a sense of purpose and higher academic and professional self-efficacy (James & Nightingale, 2005). In this sense, learning impacted upon the participants' lives more generally. This supports Bennett's (2013) statement that identity is a core component of learner development, self-efficacy and self-concept. In order to support identity development, it was important that participants were encouraged to explore new topic areas whilst also delving deeper into topics which were deemed to be relevant and interesting to them. Restricting students' ability to do so tended to negatively impact upon their motivations, ability to explore, feelings of autonomy and identity formation, a finding which supports research highlighting

the link between feelings of relevance and science majors' identity development (Bennett et al., 2016). The participants' identity development inevitably led some to change their career plans. Through the process of learning individuals were confronted with the reality of what it takes to study a postgraduate degree, which led some to question their fit within academia.

8.2 Academic and professional identity development

The current findings highlight the dynamic and ongoing nature of music students' professional identity development which continued during adulthood. These results corroborate past literature which has suggested that increasingly turbulent careers and the end of a career for life have forced individuals to continue to engage in identity and career development as a lifelong process (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Careers within music, writing, and the arts more generally tend to be multifaceted, requiring individuals to develop professional identities which are flexible, adaptive, and focused upon lifelong learning (Bennett, 2013; Bennett & Robertson, 2015; Bennett et al., 2016a). Such contextual factors were reflected within the participants' transcripts, as they were motivated to explore opportunities and develop knowledge which would be beneficial for their future careers. Chapter 7 discusses the volatile nature of the career plans caused by the unpredictability of entry into roles (due to gatekeepers). The mature and non-mature participants were at different stages of their lives and therefore their experiences of studying and identity formation differed.

Arnett's (2000) theory of Emerging Adulthood helps to clarify the experiences of the non-mature participants who were moving towards developing independence and making long-term commitments. The transition into adulthood was partly characterised by becoming less reliant upon parents and forming long-term committed relationships. At the start of the study family members remained an important influence by providing financial and emotional support which enabled the non-mature students to continue studying. However, financial support from parents raised feelings of obligation due to the students' desire to be independent and self-sufficient. During the career transition the non-mature students became increasingly influenced by partners, showing the movement towards adulthood whereby participants were starting to make more adult commitments and become less reliant upon their parents. The full-time non-mature students had the greatest opportunity to develop an academic identity due to being involved in the department and most able to interact with staff and peers. Such interaction is thought to be important for identity construction (Lairio et al., 2011). As discussed in chapter 5, students needed to feel

confident in order to seek out such interactions. Some felt they did not belong in the academic community and this led to challenges for maintaining motivation. However, those who did engage in the departmental activities and community were able to evaluate academia as a fit within their future lives, leading some to reject this career path and others to move towards it. The master's degree was therefore a period of trying out an academic identity at a higher level and evaluating its fit with the self-concept (Super, 1957). This relates to Ibarra's concept of provisional selves (1999) which suggests that individuals experiment with a number of different identities before developing more concrete professional identities. The increased self-confidence and self-awareness that many of the individuals described during the study is likely to have impacted upon identity formation and, in turn, which careers were perceived to be congruent with their self-concept. Not all of the non-mature students had made the concrete future choices expected of adulthood by the end of the study, however, the majority of participants' career plans had evolved.

The majority of mature students worked in musical careers, which are known to be turbulent and therefore require ongoing development (Bennett, 2009) and identity negotiation. Those working as professional musicians hoped that the master's degree would enable them to become better teachers and provide them with the qualifications required to gain additional work. Choosing to study the master's degree was one indicator of an attitude of lifelong learning, which is thought to be important for sustaining the portfolio careers typical within the arts (Bennett, 2013). Despite the master's degrees not granting qualified teacher status, it was still perceived to be valuable for increasing employability as teachers. This links to the concept of subjective identities (Mills, 2004); whilst the master's did not technically (objectively) make the individuals any more qualified for teaching it helped them to subjectively *feel* more qualified. As discussed in chapter 7, developing 'relevant' knowledge enabled participants to form more concrete ideas regarding effective approaches to their musical activities, which led to enhanced confidence and a stronger professional identity as a musician or teacher. The increase in confidence meant that individuals felt more competent and relaxed in their roles, and more able to take on different opportunities. Participants were better able to recognise their own abilities and attributes, in turn feeling more confident to sell themselves to potential employers or clients. Positive career transitions tend to involve a cycle of gaining increased confidence through exploring opportunities, resulting in individuals feeling able to take on more opportunities which lead to further increased confidence (Weller, 2012). Through this process individuals develop greater self-awareness and understanding of their abilities, values, and goals. In the current

study participants developed more knowledge which resulted in them feeling more confident within their current roles, and able to take on new challenges and opportunities. Through this process a stronger professional identity was developed. Significant others validated and enhanced participants' confidence and professional identities by reacting more positively to their teaching styles and giving them additional, or different, responsibilities at work.

All the mature students held at least some of the long-term commitments typical of adulthood such as mortgages, families, a marriage partner and a career (Richardson, 1994). The mature students were also involved in an ongoing process of identity construction (Britton & Baxter, 1999). However, as three had children and four had careers and were settled down in their current location, the period involved a process of strengthening or altering current identities and realising previously submerged identities. This finding relates to Britton and Baxter's (1999) study on the motivations of mature students, in which they found that studying was part of a continual process of identity construction. The mature students' transitions involved developing independence, as individuals felt they were doing something for themselves.

The career transition involved a period of personal development and identity construction for both mature and non-mature students. For the non-mature students a coherent self-concept had not yet been formed as they remained within a period of emerging adulthood, therefore the degree provided an opportunity to explore and move towards a desired sense of self. The mature students had already entered adulthood and the master's degree provided the means to further develop or realise their desired identities.

8.3 Role of music

Whilst much of the previous research on music students has focused upon those training to be performers or music educators, this thesis is rare in providing an insight into the experiences of students on theoretical music courses. Hannah was the only participant within the study who lacked an interest in music, despite having played as a child. Hannah was motivated to study a music psychology degree in order to better understand the attraction of music for others. For all of the other participants the master's degree involved an exploration of the place of music within their lives in order to maintain self-fulfilment, confidence, and to ensure a coherent self-concept. These individuals held motivations and

life goals which appeared to be incongruent with the turbulence of typical classical music careers (Burland, 2005).

Chapter 6 discusses the position of music within participants' lives. Some held negative previous experiences of musical study, or felt their current roles did not fit their musical self. The master's degree provided an opportunity to satisfy a need for achievement, prove their ability, and explore an area of interest in music which allowed them to move towards a more suitable career. The theme of stability ran throughout the results in the study. As discussed in chapter 4, the master's degree provided an opportunity for many to move towards (or maintain) stability whilst retaining a connection to music. This finding may relate to the need for safety in Maslow's hierarchy of needs in which he states that due to people tending to feel safe within their 'good' societies, such a need is often displayed by a desire for stability in terms of careers, savings and insurance (1943, p. 379). The theme of stability was linked to a desire for a certain future lifestyle, a motivation highlighted by a few past studies (Bowman et al., 2005; HEFCE, 2013d; Slight, 2012), but often overlooked in large scale surveys on students' motivations (Leman et al., 2013; Soilemetzidis et al., 2014).

The place of music within participants' lives altered over time, depending upon other life goals, their stage of life, and motivations. Returning to Pitts' quote:

The multifaceted nature of musical experiences allows individual participants to engage with it in ways that best suit their needs and temperament, setting their own goals and achieving satisfaction from fulfilling them (Pitts, 2005, p. 44)

Individuals strove to participate in music in a manner which fit their self-concept, including their values and life goals. Those who worked as music teachers and performers were most confident in identifying themselves as musicians. These individuals felt that music was part of what they did and who they were. Those who were less involved in music tended to maintain broader definitions of what it meant to be a musician, perhaps in order to maintain their own self-concept and well-being. Those who were less involved in performing music held less certain musical selves, a finding which supports the literature on hierarchies within musical careers in which performance is seen as the pinnacle of success as a musician (Bennett, 2012; Perkins, 2012). Academia was often felt to enable individuals to retain a connection to music in a way which suited their desire for knowledge. Those who chose to enter non-musical careers tended to lack the same identification with music. Whilst still enjoying musical participation (even if only through listening) they felt this did not need to

be a central part of their career and lacked the self-belief and confidence needed to forge a career within music (MacNamara et al., 2006). When participants' musical identities were at odds with their behaviour or self-concept then personal well-being was affected (Festinger, 1962) and individuals attempted to change their perceptions or involvement in music. When music was no longer felt to be satisfying then individuals either adjusted their involvement or ceased their participation. In order to cease participation without a negative impact upon psychological well-being it was important that individuals adjusted their musical self. This links to research which suggests that musical identities undergo constant evaluation and are typically stronger when an individual is more involved in musical activities (Pitts, 2005). The participants' musical identities were continuously evaluated, and the opinions of others were important for developing a secure sense of self as a musician.

8.4 Self-awareness

As discussed in chapter 6 developing greater self-awareness was an important part of the process of identity formation during the career transition. Hall defines self-awareness as:

The extent to which people are conscious of various aspects of their identities and the extent to which their self-perceptions are internally integrated and congruent with the way others perceive them (Hall, 2004, p. 154)

During the career transition the participants experienced a number of novel situations which are thought to motivate self-exploration (Hall, 2004). Individuals developed a better understanding of their own interests and values which led to greater well-being, security of self and a more coherent self-concept. Strong self-awareness and a well-developed self-concept are important for recognising one's abilities and attributes (Hall, 2004; Hall & Chandler, 2005), and can enable individuals to develop intrinsically satisfying careers based on their own strengths and values (Bennett, 2012). Self-awareness enables individuals to make the most of potential opportunities in order to ease the transition into working life (Weller, 2012). It is important that individuals are intellectually and emotionally ready for careers which involve working in a number of different roles (Bennett, 2013), therefore stronger self-awareness and a coherent self-concept are important for the success of music graduates' transitions. Participants who were more aware of their abilities and how these were relevant to working life experienced smoother career transitions. In particular, those who were already working as music practitioners appeared to have the smoothest transitions and were able to use their greater self-awareness to gain more work and enhance

their professional practice. Those participants who were unsure of the degree outcomes tended to be uncertain about which careers would be relevant for them, and how their master's degree could be beneficial for working life. The uncertainty reflects a finding within the literature that students on non-vocational degrees tend to experience personal and professional uncertainty during their early career (Bennett et al., 2016a).

The findings highlight the benefits of ensuring that students are encouraged to take time to self-reflect upon their identities and career values. This process of exploration is likely to lead to firmer and more authentic identities alongside greater preparation for working life (Phillips, 1982). This finding links to the career transitions literature which highlights the importance of exploration for developing career plans and understanding one's place within the social space (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Due to the ongoing process of professional identity development and the need for individuals to adapt to changing work environments, exploration will continue to be beneficial across the lifespan (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Alongside self-exploration, career-exploration is important for ensuring students are aware of job prospects, entrance requirements and opportunities in order to best prepare for working life (Taveira & Moreno, 2003). By focusing teaching and learning within higher education upon such exploration of possible futures within music, students are likely to develop more authentic identities and coherent self-concepts which allow them to be flexible and more employable throughout their career (Bennett, 2013; Bennett et al., 2016a). Career exploration can include gaining work experience. By gaining relevant work (and study experience) individuals were able to explore the fit of a career path, reducing their reliance upon assumptions and generalisations when making career decisions (Krumboltz et al., 1976). Participants who gained work experience which they viewed as relevant or enjoyable were better able to recognise the broader outcomes of the degree and understand how the course related to working life. Unfulfilling part-time jobs had less of an impact upon students' self-awareness, perhaps because of the lack of identification with such work.

8.5 Coping mechanisms

The transition from master's study into working life/PhD study presented uncertainties as individuals became socialised into new environments, developed their identities and were reliant upon gatekeepers to gain entry into desired roles. Course tutors were an important source of support for coping with uncertainty during the career transition and evaluating one's progress. A positive relationship with the course tutor was important for developing positive academic identities. Such positive learning environments are important if individuals are to feel able to take risks, in terms of both their identity and coursework, in order to creatively engage during the master's degree (Burnard, 2012). However, individuals typically needed confidence and/or learning goals in order to feel able to approach their supervisors for support. As discussed in chapter 5, an open dialogue with tutors increased their perceived approachability, therefore empowering students to feel able to utilise the relationship and take academic risks (Whitelock et al., 2008).

Participants who held learning goals and incremental beliefs were best able to develop career plans and self-awareness. Such coping methods led them to engage in a number of activities within and outside of their master's degree in order to develop their skills and knowledge. The participants with learning goals were motivated to learn, develop and master tasks. Individuals are more likely to develop learning goals when they hold incremental beliefs, and feel in control of developing their knowledge and abilities (Marsh et al., 2003). Participants who felt a lack of control over their intelligence (held entity beliefs) and were more focused upon maintaining their perceived success to others (held performance goals) were less likely to approach challenges and new opportunities for fear of failure (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2003). This importance of control relates to Weiner's theory of attribution (1979) which states that actions and motivations are influenced by levels of expectancy and affect. Those participants who believed that they could behave in a way which would enable them to succeed in tasks were more likely to develop effective coping methods. The coping methods of participants impacted upon their attitudes towards gaining work experience, approaching their supervisors, engaging with the course content and engaging in exploration.

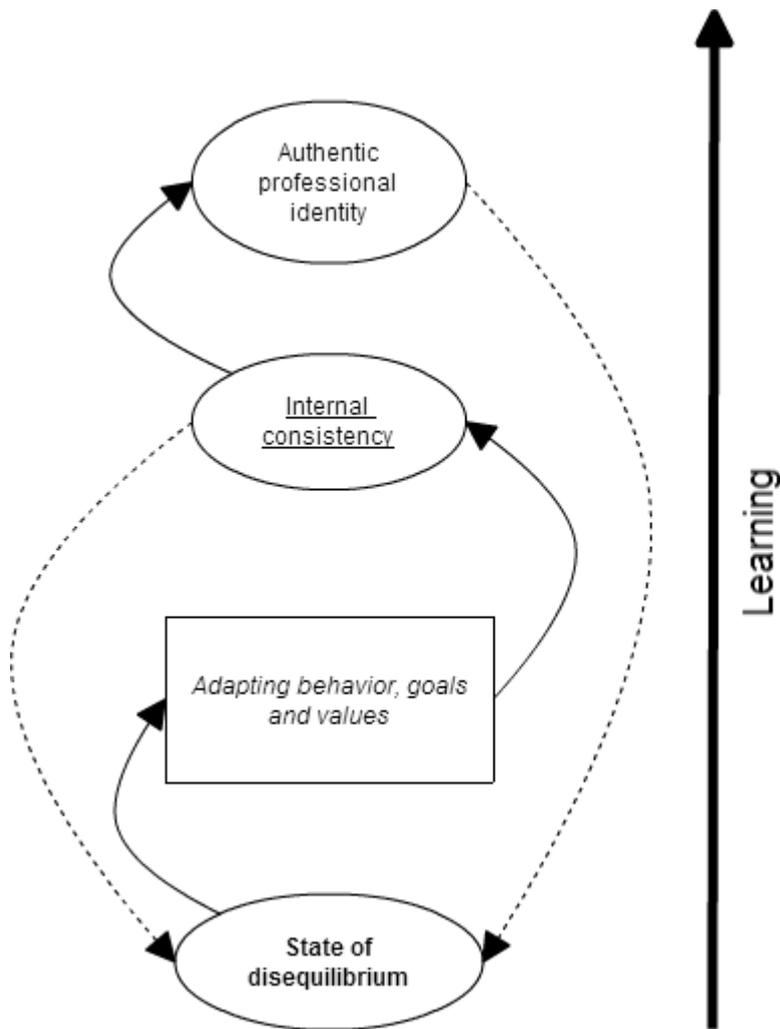
Personal characteristics such as self-belief, a need for achievement and a willingness to take risks are important (Chiaburu, Baker, & Pitariu, 2006). It is likely that those who feel a greater sense of agency and self-efficacy within a task will be more likely to take risks. An

individual will need to feel some degree of control over the potential outcomes of a behaviour and a belief that the risk is worthwhile. External commitments impacted upon participants' willingness to take risks. Some participants were able to take the risk to study full-time as they had no long-term commitments. However, mature students tended to feel more restricted in the risks they felt able to take, and their decisions involved a compromise between their goals, the expectations of others, and the need to make a living. Once individuals have gained a regular income and a family to support it can be more difficult to give this up for different opportunities (Super, 1957). It is also likely to be more difficult to balance the identities and role requirements for each when one has made previous long-term commitments. In relational circumstances such as this, individuals may be expected to act in certain ways and therefore exploration is unlikely to be promoted (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Studying could therefore prove more challenging for those who have more commitments, and therefore more to risk. Those with careers and families outside of the degree chose part-time study so that they could continue earning and prioritising their other commitments whilst studying.

8.6 Development during the career transition

The current findings corroborate past literature which has shown the unpredictability of career paths for postgraduate students (Bowman et al., 2005). Upon graduation, only Jodie and Fiona were working in the jobs they had expected to before starting the master's degree. The period of the career transition involved a constant manoeuvring between disequilibrium and equilibrium in an attempt to develop effective career plans and an authentic professional identity, as highlighted in figure 1 below. The circular boxes refer to states of being whilst rectangular boxes refer to actions. The arrows represent movement from one state or action to another, as the individual undergoes learning either formally or informally in everyday life. Dashed arrow lines represent movement towards disequilibrium, whilst continuous arrow lines represent movement towards internal consistency.

Figure 1 Disequilibrium during the career transition



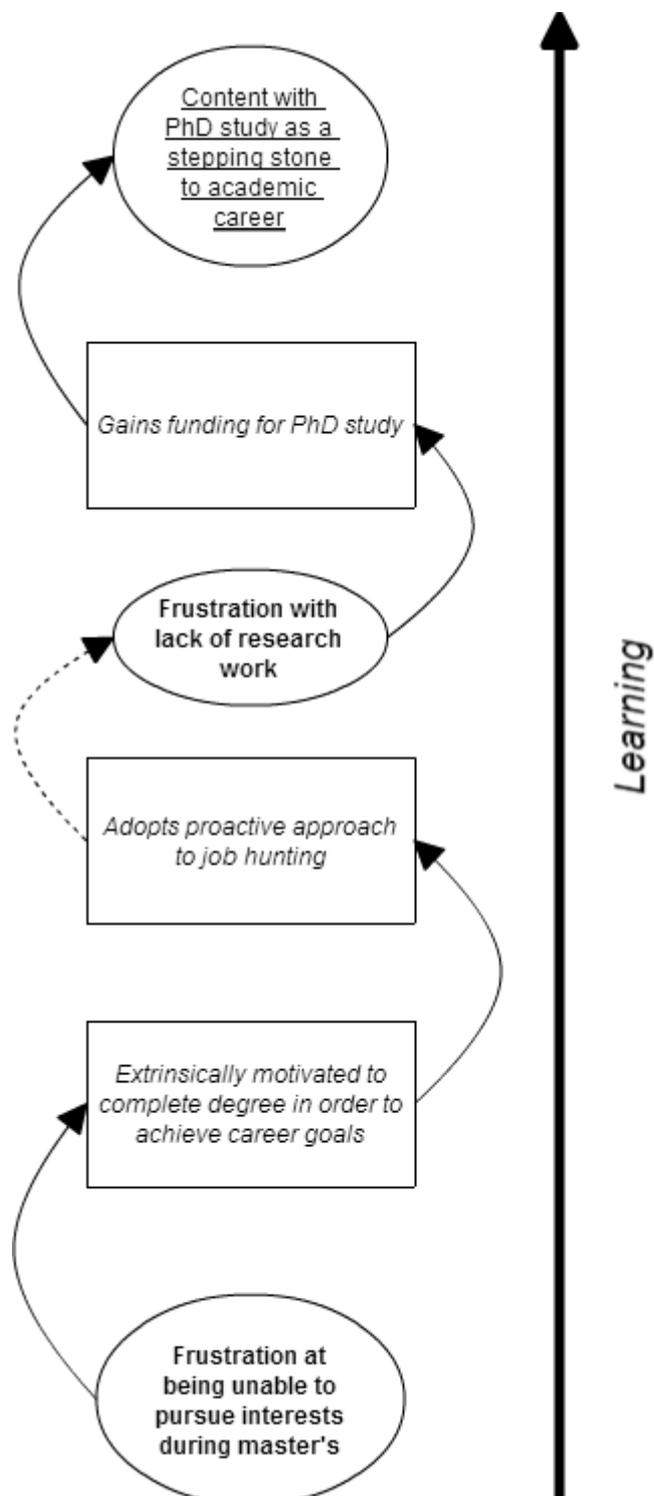
Disequilibrium (or dissonance) is common, emanating from nearly every situation in which a decision is made between a number of options (Festinger, 1962). Within the current study disequilibrium was caused by a number of factors including: unexpected events which challenged or changed an individual's role; feeling a lack of fit within a certain role; perceived obstacles or opportunities; feeling a lack of validation or recognition from others; developing knowledge; and becoming increasingly self-aware. Disequilibrium therefore arose from a combination of personal and social factors. Personal factors (including sense of self, personalities, motivations, coping methods, attitudes, beliefs and values) and social factors (including obstacles, opportunities, significant others, societal norms and expectations) impacted upon the process of identity development and were reciprocally influenced by the same process. The extent to which social factors impacted upon the individual was dependent upon the individual's appraisals and perceptions of their environment, therefore

they retained some agency over their experiences. Disequilibrium can threaten individual's self-concepts and psychological well-being (Markus & Wurf, 1987) therefore participants were driven to take action to reduce this dissonance, either by changing behaviour or changing thinking patterns, in an attempt to move towards a coherent self-concept once again. Throughout the results chapters the ways in which this supports Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance have been highlighted. Festinger's theory states that individuals will strive to achieve consistency between their actions and thinking patterns, and when this is not possible psychological discomfort is felt and the individual will be motivated to reduce this by adapting in some manner (Festinger, 1962). The theory can be used to understand the student's drive to achieve authentic identities and coherent self-concepts. Ultimately individuals were moving towards hoped-for selves and professional identities which enabled them to feel more personally fulfilled and autonomous. In order to smoothly transition out of the master's degree it was important that individuals felt a sense of progression, whether towards future career goals or within their current roles.

The process in figure 1 was a continuous cycle experienced by the participants as they struggled to develop and maintain a coherent self-concept and professional identity. The development of a professional identity and coherent self-concept takes place between life spheres at work, home and university (Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz, & Dahlgren, 2011). The process in figure 1 corroborate Bennett's (2012) findings that musicians' learning and career development are continuous, as required by the multifaceted nature of their careers. The younger students tended to be moving towards young adulthood and were hoping to gain independence and explore their fit within the working world. The mature students moved towards cementing, or reclaiming meaningful personal identities. Two case studies are now presented below in order to highlight the process of identity development during the career transition for a non-mature, and a mature participant. Text in **bold** is used to denote periods of disequilibrium, *italics* indicate changes in behaviour, goals or values, and underlined text indicates periods of internal consistency.

8.6.1 The nature of the non-mature students' career transition: Laura

Figure 2 Disequilibrium during Laura's career transition



Music was an important part of Laura's personal and social life. She had hoped to study an undergraduate music degree at a local university, however, this restricted her options to either music education or performance degrees, neither of which suited her interests. Instead she enrolled upon an arts degree and majored in psychology. After graduating she felt her degree was meaningless in itself, as the majority of people continued into postgraduate study. Whilst searching for master's degrees, Laura found a music psychology course which she felt would enable her to combine her musical interests with her past academic experience. Laura held a dual nationality passport and lacked obligations within her home city, therefore she felt able to commit to a year studying in England. Before starting her master's degree she worked for a year as a waitress to save up for her tuition fees.

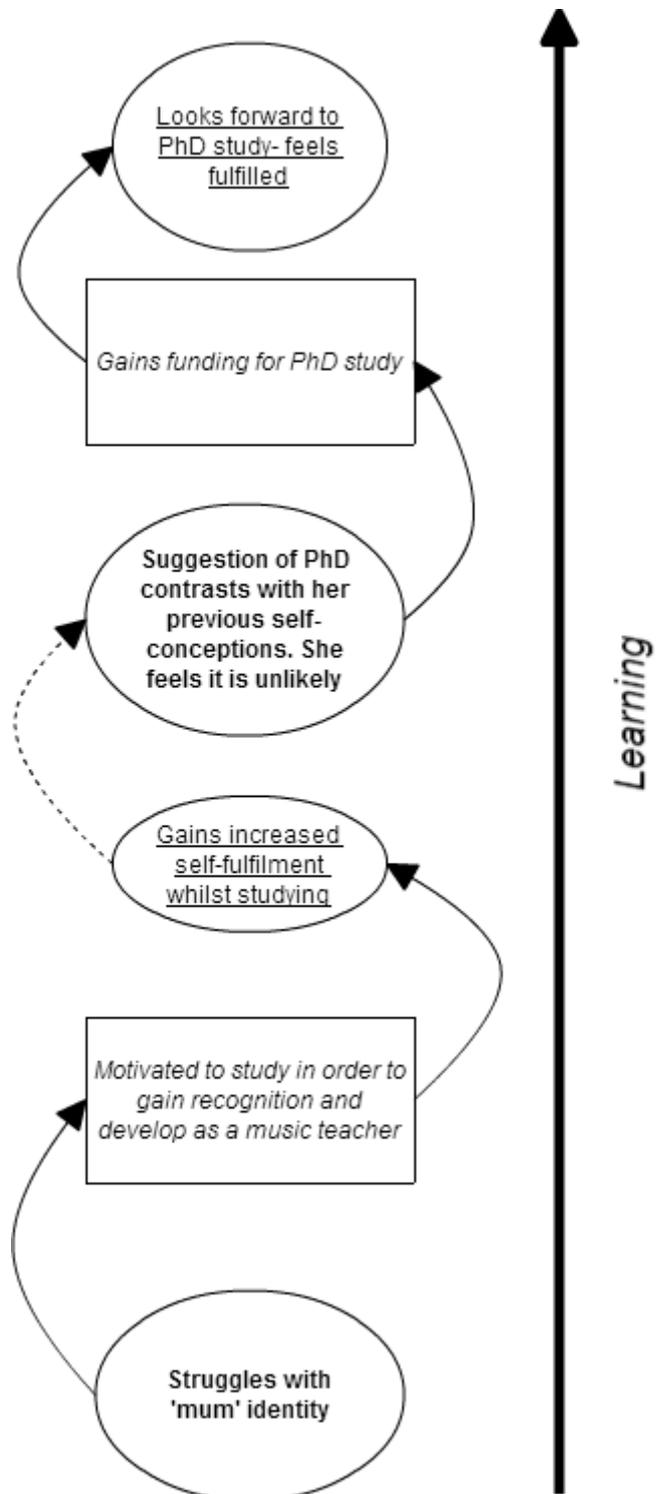
During her degree Laura struggled with the restrictions regarding dissertation topics, especially as they meant she was unable to study her topic of interest. Her motivation fell during her dissertation as she struggled to perceive the value or relevance of her topic. Initially, Laura was interested in developing an academic career, although this appeared to be partly due to uncertainty about what else to do. She was attracted to the lifestyle of an academic. However, she hoped to gain work as a research assistant before beginning PhD study. Whilst studying she realised there was less research assistant work advertised than she had previously expected. She therefore decided to be proactive and approached local music education research projects regarding possible work experience and managed to gain some work as a research assistant. However, after finishing the degree Laura struggled to gain additional research assistant work and was forced to take a number of other jobs including waitressing. Laura's psychological well-being was negatively affected as she felt she was not progressing as she had expected.

By phase 4 Laura had accepted a funded PhD position in her home country. Her topic was loosely related to music, however, by this point Laura's musical involvement had declined and it appeared that she was more focused upon maintaining music as a leisure pursuit rather than a profession. Despite initially planning to work for a number of years before her PhD study, Laura's plans had been brought forward. She was now focused upon making a home and settling down, including the possibility of creating a business with her partner. Laura was in a period of emerging adulthood during the start of the study which meant she felt able to explore a new area of interest in a new country without a clear idea of

where this may lead. Her initial expectations regarding the potential for research assistant jobs were unrealistic and led to her facing disappointment and disequilibrium as she was forced to return to a previous job in order to make a living. In order to take control of her identity development Laura focused upon PhD study which would allow her to progress further towards the lifestyle of an academic and settle down with her partner. Ultimately, Laura was looking towards making long-term commitments in order to move towards adulthood.

8.6.2 The nature of the mature students' career transition case study: Steph

Figure 3 Disequilibrium during Steph's career transition



Steph initially worked as a performer, but soon realised that this did not fit her personality as she disliked the isolation of the work. She therefore began to focus upon teaching in order to continue working as a musician in a way which better suited her. When she became a mother Steph struggled with a perceived submerged identity, and felt negative connotations were associated with being 'just' a mum. She strove for something more in order to be recognised as the musician she felt she was. However, having been turned down for a teaching job and told she was under-qualified, Steph chose to study a master's degree in order to develop a greater understanding of the value of her teaching methods. She studied part-time in order to balance her degree alongside her teaching practice and childcare.

Steph did not feel academically capable and her initial motivation to study the master's degree was to become a better music teacher. However, she gained high marks whilst studying and self-fulfilment which helped her cope with the stresses within her life. Studying increased her theoretical knowledge of music and cemented her beliefs in the values of her teaching methods. Steph reclaimed her musical self and enhanced her personal well-being which had been challenged by motherhood. Steph was determined to complete the degree and finish her assignments on time for fear of otherwise being seen as just a mum. Therefore it was not only actual disequilibrium that motivated Steph to act, but the fear of disequilibrium. After her supervisor suggested she consider PhD study, she was forced to re-evaluate her sense of self and acknowledge her academic potential. Towards the end of the current study Steph felt more confident in her teaching practice, but was also seriously considering the potential to continue into PhD study. However, despite her husband being supportive about PhD study, Steph was still cautious about combining this alongside her childcare responsibilities and managing to contribute financially to the household. She therefore decided that she would only consider PhD study if she was able to gain funding, a prospect which she felt was unlikely. Steph then managed to successfully gain PhD funding and decided to pursue her research further.

Steph's experiences show a series of periods of disequilibrium and movements towards equilibrium as Steph adapted to different challenges and opportunities. Steph's experiences were impacted by personal and social factors. Steph was motivated to study in order to continue her musical development and ensure that she could continue working within music with a young child. Others instigated the motivation to act after questioning her abilities (lacking a PGCE therefore being unable to teach and suggesting she continue onto

PhD study). This questioning led Steph to reconsider her future and develop new possible selves. Steph's confidence and sense of self developed during the degree and her general well-being increased as she felt fulfilled by following her interests and succeeding academically.

8.7 Summary

Disequilibrium was important in encouraging individuals to adapt, change and develop. Therefore, those who failed to approach the master's degree with an open-mind, make the most of available opportunities, or engage in self- and career- exploration tended to struggle to adapt and move away from periods of dissonance. Identity development took place across life spheres, and within the contexts of personal and social factors. Academic and professional identities were not formed in isolation from the rest of the individual's lives, but rather were formed as a result of their past experiences, social support, environment, and self-concept.

The nature of the students' career transitions showed unpredictability. Even those students who entered the degrees with a firm set of goals for master's study faced a sense of dissonance when they showed an open-minded approach towards the course content and possible opportunities. Although both of the examples above finish with the participants being relatively content in an area they enjoyed, other students were not yet working in areas which were congruent with their hoped-for selves and life goals. The stages depicted in figure 1 were not age- or time-dependent, and were evident within both the mature and younger students' experiences. However, those who had entered adulthood and held long-term commitments may have struggled more to adapt to the presence of dissonance due to the external (and internal) pressures placed upon themselves to act in a certain manner.

9 : Discussion: The product of the master's degree

Alongside the individual stories of the participants, broader themes regarding the structure of the master's degree were highlighted and developed. The following section discusses the master's degree in terms of: the students as consumers; supporting the needs of learners; the challenges of interdisciplinary courses; marketing the degrees; and students' employability. The issues discussed here relate to the impact of broader institutional and social factors upon students' experiences and motivations.

9.1 *Students as consumers*

Students are often considered to be consumers, especially at postgraduate level where they are expected to pay their fees upfront and in turn receive a service (Otter, 1992). Rising tuition fees have tended to lead to higher student expectations regarding issues such as feedback, access to resources and contact time within universities (Temple, Callender, Grove, & Kersh, 2014). However, this can lead to tension between students hoping to gain a service in return for payment of fees and course tutors holding more idealistic views about the role of higher education. Ultimately, universities need money and students in order to survive, therefore it is important that they provide a service that students feel they have benefitted from in some way. Students' evaluations are presented in the National Student Survey results which are reported across newspapers as evidence of satisfaction within universities (Ipsos MORI; HEFCE, 2015). These results may directly impact upon the reputation of institutions and prospective students' choices. There is therefore a pressure upon universities to respond to student views within such surveys in order to remain competitive and attract students (Temple et al., 2014). It is against this background that course tutors' ideological views regarding the role of the university may be lost and a discrepancy can exist between student and staff expectations for higher education (Segal, 1999). The potential difficulty of adopting a consumerist approach to higher education is that it may lead students to act passively during their time studying, in effect expecting to *receive* a service. Such an approach is likely to mean students will not take full advantage of opportunities whilst studying, therefore reducing the outcomes and values of master's study.

Within the transcripts there are a number of examples of participants describing the master's degree as a way to differentiate themselves from the norm of undergraduate study. Despite a relatively faster growth in the numbers of people undertaking postgraduate study compared to undergraduate study in recent years (Smith, 2010), the norm after

undergraduate study tends to be employment (O'Neill, 1995). Master's study therefore appeared to be a lifestyle choice for the students requiring investments in terms of time, effort and finances. The participants wanted to feel a return on their investment, and when they were unable to perceive any positive outcomes this led to dissatisfaction with the course. The students appeared to be undertaking study in order to self-actualise and realise their potential, however, due to change taking a long time some did not realise the benefits of the degree whilst studying. Further, due to the degree impacting upon their identities, what it meant to self-actualise tended to change. This led to feelings of conflict and uncertainty, which needed to be addressed before the students could feel confident in themselves and develop an awareness of the beneficial outcomes of their study.

Individuals are unable to experience a particular degree before they enrol upon it, therefore they must evaluate the quality of courses in a number of alternative ways, including through endorsements from trusted others (Donaldson & McNicholas, 2004) and pre-enrolment information and guidance. It is only after enrolling upon a course that the student is able to evaluate the degree in terms of how appropriate, successful and enjoyable it has been, and to what extent it has matched their expectations (Donaldson & McNicholas, 2004). Decisions to study and subsequent evaluations of the courses are likely to be made with other key individuals. For many, the relevance and value of course content only becomes apparent after graduation (Drew, 2001). This may be related to having more work experience, which has been associated with a more positive view of degrees (Blackwell et al., 2001). The period between purchase and evaluation of the master's degree is therefore long and complex. This can create difficulties for tutors who may face negative feedback during a degree, only to have graduates express their gratitude later for the benefits of their master's study, or vice versa. Examples within the current study were Hannah and Tina, who both struggled to perceive the relevance and outcomes of their master's degree whilst studying. By the final interview phase neither participant was working within a career they had initially planned, but both had realised the positive impact of the master's degree upon their personal development. For others, such as Amy, the full impact of the master's degree is yet to be seen. Tutors (and students) would likely benefit from continued contact with alumni in order to better understand their long- and short-term satisfaction with the degrees.

For some the final satisfaction of the degree was related to realising new opportunities and possibilities. Therefore, satisfaction was not only linked to the degree fulfilling participants' initial expectations for master's study, but also for the realisation of

their potential and interest in previously unexplored areas. The students' satisfaction with the courses was also dependent upon their working styles and attitudes. Those who were proactive and engaged in a process of exploration tended to have more positive outcomes from their studying due to making the most of the opportunities available to them. Those who adopted more passive and helpless approaches tended to have less satisfactory experiences due to relying upon the course itself to impact upon their career plans. Perhaps this relates to the idea of developing a sense of autonomy in order to achieve an authentic professional identity. Those who were proactive may have been more able to adapt and achieve an authentic professional identity by taking control of the exploration and formation process (Flum & Blustein, 2000). Therefore, whilst higher education is increasingly being described in terms of consumer models (Glover, Law, & Youngman, 2002; Otter, 1992), students' approaches towards their study directly influence their experiences, and therefore the satisfaction of their degrees.

9.2 The contrasting needs of learners

The experiences of students differed depending upon their mode of study, age, and external commitments and priorities. Two mature students were enrolled upon the onsite part-time courses and five participants studied as part-time distance learners, of which all but Tom were mature (being over the age of 25 years old at the start of the degree). However, at the age of 24 Tom already had a mortgage and full-time career which prevented him from studying onsite. Tom could therefore be classed as mature in the sense that he had already developed the self-sufficiency and long-term commitments typical of a young adult (Arnett, 2000). In comparison, the full-time onsite students were all aged 25 or under at the start of the study and lacked the kind of long-term commitments held by the mature students. This meant that the full-time students were able to focus upon the degree (in terms of it being full-time and living close to the institution) due to initially lacking the long-term commitments associated with entry into adulthood. These students were therefore in a period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is culturally constructed, and tends to be more common within western industrialised societies where individuals can afford to delay career decisions and extend their time in education. However, even within these societies the opportunities for individuals to extend their time in education and delay adulthood relies upon a significant amount of capital due to the need to pay for fees upfront (Arnett, 2006). This was highlighted by a number of students who received financial contributions from their family (Ben, Amy, Ruth, Hannah, Matt, Tina). An extended period of

emerging adulthood and full exploration is therefore only made possible by socio-economic factors.

Upon making the long-term commitments typical of entry into adulthood individuals were expected to behave in certain ways in order to fulfil their obligations. For instance, parents were expected to continue contributing to childcare, whilst mortgage payers were required to continue their payments. Such commitments meant that mature students were less able to embrace the 'student' identity to the same extent as the non-mature students. Feelings of isolation and declining motivation ensued when students were unable to be as involved in the departmental activities as full-time students (Gardner & Wallace, 1997). Within the current study part-time distance learners were mostly involved in an online community which helped them deal with the isolation of studying away from university. However, this was still difficult and time consuming for those with external commitments and was not felt to replace in-person contact. Studying was an additional commitment in the mature students' lives and was used to enhance other areas, such as gaining a more secure professional identity, or increasing self-fulfilment. However, the results suggest that individuals face challenges of attempting to fit study into an already full life, in what is termed 'work intensification' by Scott et al (2013, p. 39). It is important that individuals are made aware of the time commitment that the course is likely to require from them. Jodie provided an example of the negative impact which can be caused by an unrealistic estimation of the number of hours needed to complete a course of study. Jodie repeatedly described her belief that the suggested three independent working hours a week were not realistic⁹, especially as she was a mature student who was required to adapt to new technology in order to be successful. Jodie's studying placed a strain on her marriage and relationships with friends and family. Providing a more realistic guideline of the number of study hours required may lead to some students not considering a degree in the first place, but is also likely to lead to greater completion rates and psychological well-being as individuals can prepare before starting their degree (by organising childcare for example). Course tutors need to be aware of difficulties caused by timetabling for individuals who have childcare commitments including avoiding, where possible, late afternoon and evening sessions, and setting deadlines during school holiday periods.

⁹ The course information states that whilst it is difficult to state accurately the amount of time which will need to be spent on the course, students are likely to need at least one evening or afternoon a week and that this will increase whilst working on assessments.

9.2.1 Widening participation

Widening participation is a key goal for higher education both nationally and globally (Scott et al., 2013), and involves enabling all parts of society to participate within higher education (O'Donnell et al., 2009). Part-time modes of study can enable those with external commitments to feel able to continue learning. Part-time degrees were shown to be particularly beneficial within the current study due to providing individuals with an opportunity to continue their professional practice whilst studying. However, the majority of tutors did not recommend part-time study, with one tutor in particular feeling that the part-time course was not well structured. Failing to provide carefully designed part-time and flexible modes of study may obstruct approximately a quarter of the overall market for taught postgraduates (Soilemetzidis et al., 2014). Some tutors felt that part-time study was less beneficial for students as it meant they tended to be less involved in the departmental activities and community. However, if more care was put into the design of such programmes a greater number of applicants might lead to a more developed part-time community, in turn negating this fear. Further, the desire to get involved with the student lifestyle and department may not be a goal for all students. Whilst the author agrees that involvement within departmental activities should be encouraged, those who have already built lives elsewhere may not feel motivated to get involved in a new community. Due to the potential benefits of gaining work experience alongside studying, departments should be careful when focusing upon full-time modes of study and neglecting part-time. Doing so is likely to restrict a number of highly motivated individuals who hope to study in order to inform their professional practice.

9.3 The challenges of interdisciplinary degrees

The variety of different stakeholders with a range of expectations and requirements is likely to pose challenges for interdisciplinary degrees. The music psychology cohorts included students with both music and psychology backgrounds, who had contrasting experiences and backgrounds within education. These students differed in their levels of knowledge and values regarding outcomes of study. At times this led to challenges, for instance, in institution A many of the students struggled with a statistics module. Due to their resistance to this module, it is unlikely that the students at this institution would have dealt well with the more quantitative degree at institution C. Whilst staff members were aware of their role in ensuring students developed their knowledge more broadly within the subject area, this caused tension when students were more interested in continuing within a specific topic.

Staff have a requirement to ensure that master's courses are of an appropriate standard to qualify individuals to a more advanced level than undergraduate study. By doing so, tensions can arise between the students' hopes for postgraduate study and the reality. Again, clear information and guidance is required to ensure students' expectations are managed from the pre-enrolment stage in order to avoid disappointment caused by unrealistic expectations.

Ensuring that the course content and structure of interdisciplinary music psychology courses is optimal can be particularly difficult during the intense period of a one year master's degree. During this period individuals from music backgrounds will be required to learn about new areas of study within music psychology alongside new research methods. These modules provide the training needed for success within the dissertation. However, the nature of the degree means that dissertation proposals may need to be written before a student is fully aware of possible methods and areas of interest. This can be challenging for students (like Amy) who feel unprepared for beginning their dissertation. The career transition could therefore be seen as two transitions: within the course itself, and beyond the degree. Individuals need to be able to transition from undergraduate study/working life to being a competent postgraduate student in order to successfully achieve their master's degree. Therefore, course structure needs to be carefully considered to ensure individuals are able to develop and build upon their previous experience and knowledge. The full-time courses in interdisciplinary areas are generally going to involve learning curves for the majority of students who lack specialist knowledge within one or other area of the degree. This is likely to mean that students will still be developing interests and skills after starting their dissertation and is not something that can be avoided. However, course designers can still attempt to ensure that students are gradually building upon their knowledge and that by the time they are required to submit a dissertation proposal they at least have a firm grounding of the methods and areas of research which interest them. Part-time study can provide a greater opportunity to advance knowledge before students plan, conduct and write their dissertation. Part-time degrees may therefore enable individuals to utilise their dissertation more effectively to conduct a valuable piece of work which fits their developed interests and skills.

Differences in approaches to course content were observed between the interdisciplinary music psychology degrees based within music departments, and the course based within a psychology department. The majority of courses observed provided

opportunities for individuals to follow their own areas of interest, alongside broadening their knowledge in new areas. This was done through a combination of taught course content, fixed-choice and free-choice assignments. However, one course was more restrictive regarding choice. Institution C did not include any free-choice modules as part of the course in order to ensure that individuals were all at a certain level by the end of the degree. Whilst the other institutions highlighted the importance of free-choice assignments for developing independence, the course tutor at institution C felt that the master's degree should be observed as a type of apprenticeship, whereby individuals can develop the skills they need for the next level of study:

the advice is learn from the people who are here, try to get as much learnt from their skills and their knowledge, and then for a PhD that's a different question, there you really want to make sure that you're happy with the topic that you're working with for three or four years and you can build and you can develop your own research question, but it's only one year, it's a very short span of time and you're better to collaborate with experts that are in place in the field here and try to get as much out of that (Institution C, music psychology tutor)

This difference in approach may be related to the fact institution C was the only course based within a psychology department rather than a music department. The course itself was not accredited by the British Psychological Society [BPS], but many of the other undergraduate courses within the department were. It is likely therefore that the departmental attitude towards degree content was influenced by the requirements for such accreditation. The BPS offer accreditation for psychology courses and aim to ensure ongoing quality within programmes (British Psychological Society, 2014). In order to achieve accreditation institutions are required to develop well-defined learning outcomes and display how these are achieved and supported. A number of psychology-specific and transferable skills are expected to be developed within accredited courses in order to ensure a benchmark for success is maintained. This process helps to ensure that psychology graduates from accredited courses will reach a certain standard regarding knowledge and skills. The accreditation system therefore may lead to departments focusing upon developing certain skills and outcomes in order to achieve certain levels (and therefore be able to continue onto the proceeding level). In the case of institution C, the tutor's description of the course as being an 'apprenticeship' year highlights the perception that the course is a period during which certain skills and knowledge are achieved in order to progress further and ensure all students reach a certain level. If institution C were to adopt the more flexible

approach towards course assignments as seen within the two other institutions, they may be less able to specifically highlight the successful achievement of the learning outcomes. The course at institution C therefore appears to be more focused upon the achievement of a number of learning outcomes, with the means to do so being less important. Contrasting with this, Institutions A and B appeared to be less focused upon achieving a specific set of skills, and more upon an overall sense of personal development, including independence. Perhaps the freedom to create new ideas and interests is valued more strongly within music departments where creativity is prevalent. The values and approaches of the courses therefore may have been influenced by the departments in which they were based. The departmental approaches will in turn impact upon students' identity formation which incorporates discipline-specific knowledge and the surrounding social and historical practices and discourses within the discipline (Rowley, Bennett, & Dunbar-Hall, 2015). Students may have little awareness of the nuances and differences between music and psychology departments' approaches towards the programmes of study, and this may need to be highlighted within marketing material for such interdisciplinary subjects.

9.4 *Enhancing students' employability*

Destination statistics tend to suggest that master's students have a clear advantage in terms of salaries and employment rates. However, these statistics are likely to show a partial picture:

If you look at [destinations data] very superficially for various master's courses erm the employability rate is always better than for undergrad courses, I think that you know that's, it's a very messy thing because often the students come with other experience etc. etc., you know it's not necessarily just about the master's (Institution C, advisor)

Master's students are likely to be older than those with only a first degree, which may increase the likelihood of them developing a more mature approach and having more work experience than others (O'Donnell et al., 2009). It is therefore difficult to understand the extent to which master's study itself impacts upon students' employability. Participants faced difficulties when they relied upon the master's degree to lead them towards a future [undecided] career path. In much the same way as reliance upon a single role model can be detrimental to an individual's ability to develop a coherent sense of self (Ibarra, 1999), reliance upon the master's degree to develop a professional identity may be challenging. Master's study can provide individuals with a safe environment in which to explore interests

and identities. It can therefore be quite detached from 'real life'. Without gaining relevant work experience alongside the degree many participants found it difficult to relate their course to their wider and future lives. By gaining experiences and making the most of opportunities outside of the course whilst studying, individuals were better able to explore their interests and develop career plans. Students may benefit from encouragement to gain experiences outside of their degree in order to develop stronger professional identities during the period of study.

Employability support can pose challenges due to the wide range of experiences and needs of postgraduate students (including the fact some may hope to study due to interest alone and reject the need for employability support). However, there is an obvious need for postgraduate relevant careers support due to the motivations of some students (to extend time in education), the challenges faced by those who lack a coherent identity, and the difficulties for those who lack the confidence to seek advice. Additionally, the findings have highlighted the potential for further study to impact upon an individual's initial motivations and career plans, ultimately leading them to feel less confident in their chosen career path and more likely to need careers support. Within the context of portfolio careers an individual is involved in a constant reorganisation of self and work, therefore even mature students may find personal and employability support beneficial to ensure they maintain the ability to gain enough work to make a living. In order to continue gaining work it was important that these individuals recognised their skills and attributes and how these may relate to a range of jobs. Employability support should therefore be an important component of postgraduate courses.

Due to the tendency to provide student-centred careers support, none of the advisors within the study had unique methods for working with postgraduate students (compared to undergraduates). Perhaps the role of careers advisors for postgraduates does need to be defined and made clearer so that individuals can develop more realistic expectations and understand the potential benefits of using this resource. Whilst it is clear that postgraduates may face similar problems to undergraduates, it is likely that defining the benefits for this older age group will increase the perception of the careers service as being relevant for all the students. Generally the focus for careers departments appeared to be on undergraduate students. Whilst careers services receive funding to develop provision for research and undergraduate students, this is often missing for taught postgraduates (Bowman et al., 2005). Within at least one institution a gulf existed between the types of training provision

available for PhD students and that for taught postgraduates, with the former having opportunities for academic and personal development training outside of their PhD, and the latter being unable to access such provision.

Since 2010 every English higher education institution has been required to state their position on student employability in their 'employability statement' which is available online for all current and prospective students to view (Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, & Lawton, 2006). However, the actual application of employability within the degrees differed depending upon individual tutor's perceptions and beliefs surrounding the subject. The extent to which careers support should be embedded within the master's courses was debated. All of the careers advisors felt that a more embedded approach towards career advice and support would be beneficial for students and emphasise the importance of early preparation. One added that the course tutors' approach towards career events had a large impact upon the number of students attending sessions. This is likely explained by the potential for lecturers to act as role models, who may validate or refute the value of career preparation for the students (Krumboltz et al., 1976). The advisors had experienced difficulties with course tutors who felt that master's degrees should not contain compulsory employability sessions, as in the quote below:

I try to stay out of that [employability] because that seems erm a fashion at the moment, erm and it might be an argument if you're eighteen, you don't know anything about the world, nor about academia and your parents are paying the £9,000 for your studies [...] because we're such a niche course people have an intrinsic motivation to study [*course name*], you're not going to get rich if you study this course (Institution C, music psychology tutor)

Contrasting with the above quote, the advisors suggested that employability was important for all students as everyone needed to survive somehow. There was therefore a certain tension between advisors and some course tutors regarding the position of careers support. This is likely to be a reflection of more general debates surrounding the role of higher education institutions in preparing students for working life (Rowley et al., 2015). Courses need to be balanced so that students can prepare for working life, without frustrating those who wish to remain within academia (or are no longer working).

Holding contact details for alumni students and keeping track of their progress allowed careers advisors to observe the career destinations and put current students in contact with graduates. One institution provided a resource in which individuals were able to

search case studies to find out about past graduates' careers. Although this may provide useful information it may not be as informative as another institution's plans to develop a network where alumni students will mentor current students in order to better prepare them for working life. Mentoring can be useful in helping students to self-reflect, recognise their own skills and take control of their career decision-making (Gaunt et al., 2012). Contact with past graduates could help individuals to better understand the range of possible careers available to them, what these careers involve, and increase the students' confidence in being able to effectively transition into working life. However, student engagement with such provision is dependent upon the extent to which individuals are aware of it and value it. The music departments observed were based within their own buildings, which is likely to lead to isolation from the rest of the campus and a sense of 'us' and 'them' (Roberts, 1990). Provision based outside the department may therefore be seen as less personalised, whilst that based within the department may be perceived to be more relevant to music students. Additionally, online contact with others may be seen as impersonal and disconnected, especially when it is a generic institutional resource.

9.5 Summary

Institutions have a responsibility to ensure that their course marketing and branding is clear and that students' expectations are being managed and met. Providing clear, concise information detailing the course before enrolment is valuable for ensuring students are prepared to make an effective decision regarding which course is best suited to them. Such information is particularly important due to the impact that the institution will have upon the identity development of the student. Interdisciplinary courses such as the music psychology degrees present their own difficulties for course designers due to the need to balance the expectations of a range of stakeholders. Due to departmental cultures having a large impact upon the course design it may be beneficial for such implicit factors to be made explicit within course literature. This would help to manage students' expectations before starting their study. Institutions need to focus upon flexible provision within their courses in order to ensure students are supported to achieve, being mindful of the different motivations and needs of students at different stages of life. Doing so will ensure students are supported during their career transition to develop positive academic and professional identities.

10 : Conclusion and Evaluation

This thesis has contributed to the literature on higher education by observing postgraduate students' experiences. In particular, the study is unique, as far as I am aware, in its consideration of the experiences of music students on non-vocational courses which focus on theoretical music matters rather than music making or teaching. The focus has provided an insight into why students choose to study musical degrees which do not focus on music making. All the participants were interested in music in some way, and hoped to gain stability within their future lives. Master's study enabled individuals to adapt and adjust the place of music within their lives whilst moving towards careers which suited their sense of self, values and life goals. The non-vocational master's degrees involved a process of learning which influenced the students' self-awareness and abilities, in turn impacting the development and formation of positive professional identities. Master's study motivated individuals to develop their knowledge further than they would have otherwise by providing structure, goals, a support network and the resources needed to realise and fulfil their potential. In order to fully utilise the period of master's study individuals needed to engage in career- and self-exploration which was supported and facilitated by significant others. Such exploration was particularly important due to the non-vocational nature of the degrees which meant that it was not always easy for students to make a connection between the course content and working life. The different needs of mature and non-mature students have been highlighted and the following chapter discusses the possible implications of the study.

10.1 Implications

10.1.1 Understanding the outcomes of non-vocational postgraduate degrees

There has been a tendency to rely upon questionnaires and statistics in order to evaluate degree outcomes, for example through the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey. Such resources are likely to only show a partial picture of the outcomes of studying by focusing upon factors such as employment status and income levels. This may be due to the assumption that the majority of undergraduate students are studying full-time during a transitional period between school and working life (Callender & Little, 2015). In doing so the focus is upon tangible outcomes of studying which may be less relevant to part-time and mature students who already have a career, or work experience before starting their studying. The current thesis supports Callender and Little's suggestion that there is a need to look at broader degree outcomes in order to fully capture the benefits of higher education

(2015). The students who were working alongside their study used the theoretical knowledge gained during their degree to develop their professional practice in order to explore new approaches, increase their confidence in their methods, and form stronger professional identities. Such an outcome would be overlooked in literature which focuses upon tangible outcomes of higher education, such as promotions, wage increases and changes of job. Additionally, studying the degree provided a sense of personal fulfilment and increased many students overall well-being, despite adding to the stress within their lives. Finally, students also gained social capital, as they began to be viewed as the expert within an area by their colleagues and peers (Callender & Little, 2015). These outcomes together highlight a broader impact and potential benefit of postgraduate study in music for part-time and mature students. The outcomes of studying the music degrees cannot be reduced to financial gains, instead they involved a more transformational personal development when students were engaged and developed effective coping methods. The ability to participate in music in a way which was felt to suit their needs was particularly important due to the close relationship between music and many of the participants' self-concepts. The tendency for past surveys to group together music students with arts and humanities programmes is likely to have led to the delicate interaction between studying, musical selves, personal well-being and identity development being overlooked.

10.1.2 Understanding the different needs of mature and part-time students

Until recently, the experiences of postgraduate students have been little researched, perhaps due to assumptions that students are more mature and independent by master's study and therefore require less support (O'Neill, 1995). However, the current thesis highlights the different experiences of postgraduate students due to them being at a later stage of life and therefore having different expectations and priorities. Participants highlighted the desire for stability which meant that they tended to be striving towards developing, or maintaining, long-term commitments. In order to enable individuals to do so flexible modes of study were important. Part-time onsite courses tended not to be recommended by tutors, however, the benefits of combining academic studying alongside wider experiences has been highlighted throughout the thesis. Therefore, it is important that tutors ensure their part-time modes of study are carefully designed in order to encourage and enable students to gain external experiences and maintain other commitments. It is unclear from the current results whether the focus upon stability for the part-time students was particularly prevalent due to the relative instability of musical careers. Many were hoping that the master's degree would enable them to gain some personal and professional

stability. The participants' musical identities and desire to retain a connection to music might have impacted upon their decision to study a music-related degree, rather than attempting to gain stability in other ways (i.e. through gaining non-musical work). It has been reported that careers are generally becoming less stable, as the concept of a job for life begins to fade (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Therefore, the benefits of part-time and flexible modes of study are likely to be prevalent across a broad range of subject areas.

Part-time students tended to feel disconnected from their full-time peers due to living away from university and studying fewer modules each year. In my own experience, whilst studying my part-time master's degree I tended to feel more connected to the one other part-time student, rather than the full-time individuals who were able to meet up more often outside of class time. Online communities were beneficial for enabling individuals to feel a sense of belonging with others who were sharing similar experiences. However, in-person contact tended to be preferred. More careful designing and marketing of part-time courses may enable larger numbers of part-time students and lead to the development of student communities. It should not be assumed that all students hope to remain within academia and therefore would benefit from spending all their time focusing on the degree. Instead, the range of students' motivations and the potential for such motivations to change during the period of study should be recognised and supported.

10.1.3 Designing and marketing of courses

The study highlighted a number of considerations for course designers. First, the need for flexibility appeared to be important to enable students to explore their areas of interest, even when these changed during the period of study. Through a mixture of taught modules in new areas which encourage students to explore new possible areas of interest and flexible assignments, courses can provide an impetus for exploration, and a means by which to develop knowledge in a relevant subject area. Course tutors should be careful not to assume the relevance of course content for the students (A. Reid et al., 2011).

Whilst there were differences between the courses based within the music and psychology departments, these appeared to be implicit. Although the prospectuses showed differences in emphasis within course content, the cultural differences were not highlighted. It is such implicit cultural expectations that appeared to cause difficulties for students when they were misunderstood. For instance, international students struggled with the different marking schemes in the English institutions, which meant they were gaining lower marks than would be acceptable within their home countries. Periods of socialisation are known to

be longer and more stressful for students from different countries (Kelly & Moogan, 2012; Scott et al., 2013). They are also likely to be longer and more stressful for mature students (Roberts & Higgins, 1992) and those entering interdisciplinary courses from either a music or psychology background. The longer period of socialisation is likely to negatively impact upon the outcomes of the relatively short English master's degrees. Therefore it is likely that providing potential students with guidance on the experience of the degree more generally before starting would be beneficial.

Providing dates and details on course content at an early stage in the application process will enable individuals to plan ahead and reduce the stress caused by balancing different priorities and commitments alongside studying (HEFCE, 2013d). HEFCE highlight a number of pieces of information which are thought to be important for prospective taught postgraduate students including programme dates, timetables, working hours, student demographics, staff information, and course content/available modules (HEFCE, 2013d). The provision of detailed information on modules and course content is important to enable individuals to understand what the course entails and ensure it suits them and their interests (O'Neill, 1995). This is particularly important for those with specific areas of interest (eight participants had at least a broad area of interest they hoped to pursue during their master's degree upon enrolling). The expectations and cultures of departments should be made explicit so that students from a range of backgrounds may understand what is required of them and be able to better integrate within the department. It is important that tutors consolidate information relating to courses in order to provide information on the content, outcomes, and potential external opportunities. Providing detailed information on the approaches taken within the department will enable prospective students to evaluate their fit within a course in order to make a more informed decision. Such information is likely to be beneficial for prospective students generally. Participants also suggested the need for more clarity on hidden course costs, which appeared particularly prevalent for distance learners. SCONUL Access enables members of university libraries to borrow from other nearby university libraries (SCONUL, 2015), however, this scheme is not available to those living abroad which meant some students felt the need to purchase their own materials. This proved costly and many students were unprepared for such expenses. Whilst adequate pre-enrolment information appeared to be lacking, this is currently under review by UK higher education funding bodies in an attempt to find ways to improve pre-course information to meet the needs of a range of stakeholders (Butcher, 2015)

10.1.4 Encouraging career- and self-exploration

The importance of career- and self-exploration has been highlighted throughout the thesis. A greater awareness of one's interests and values enabled more effective career planning. Additionally, exploration facilitated a smoother transition out of the master's degree. Career- and self-exploration are known to be important for developing a coherent self-concept (Flum & Blustein, 2000), whilst gaining a career in an area which is suited to an individual is important for maintaining psychological well-being and congruence (Super, 1957). Engaging in career- and self-exploration will therefore assist students during the career transition to develop professional identities and find a suitable career. Such exploration may be particularly beneficial for music students due to the lack of stable, full-time career paths within music (Burland, 2005). The nature of musical careers meant that participants needed to be aware of how they could sell themselves to potential employers in order to gain work (and where appropriate develop a portfolio career) and the range of types of work available to them both within and outside music. Those who lacked clear plans and had therefore not engaged in the needed self-exploration were less able to recognise the benefit of career-exploration. This led to unrealistic career plans and a failure to engage in opportunities external to the degree itself. It is likely that encouraging students to consider their motivations during entrance interviews would be beneficial to the students and the courses. Whilst such consideration may lead some individuals to decide against master's study, those who continue are likely to be more motivated and able to recognise the value of the degree and the opportunities surrounding it.

A guided process of self- and career-exploration may be valuable to encourage students to develop feelings of autonomy, confidence and awareness of their options. Exploration can facilitate the development of a coherent self-concept (Flum & Blustein, 2000) and access to a range of possible-selves which will motivate individuals to behave in ways which make desired futures more likely (Markus, & Nurius, 1986). Such guided exploration may be particularly important in courses which do not lead to a specific vocation, as students need to develop an understanding that this does not mean these courses are unvocational, but rather that they have outcomes relevant to a broad range of possible careers. In order to encourage exploration, personal contact with students might be necessary. Such personal contact would enable students to feel valued by their tutors, and build up a trusted relationship with a staff member with whom intellectual risks could be taken. Tutors may impact upon the extent of exploration undertaken by individuals by asking relevant questions which encourage students to consider their own futures and lives more generally.

By ignoring such wider questions a tutor may be viewed as caring less about an individual, and may also negatively impact upon the perceived value of such future-oriented thinking and self-exploration. Tools such as Burnard's 'Rivers of Musical Experience' (2012) can be used to encourage self-reflection and help individuals to develop concrete ideas, attitudes and beliefs, and increase self-awareness. This could support students to develop concrete career plans through facilitating the exploration of their thoughts and feelings at a deeper level than may normally be accessible. Additionally, ePortfolios have been used to direct and focus students' gathering, reflection and assessment of their own work, which is thought to be beneficial for identity development and formation (Rowley et al., 2015). In order to effectively guide self-reflection it is important that tutors and their students have established a sense of rapport (Rogers, 2001). Guided self-reflection has previously been suggested to be important for beginner music teachers (Ballantyne, Kerchner, & Aróstegui, 2012). However, tutors may also need to provide support for students to develop effective coping methods to deal with the possible negative self-perceptions which may arise from self-exploration (Flum & Kaplan, 2006).

Whilst it appeared to be a common assumption that postgraduate students should be in charge of their own careers by this point, this was not always the reality. Advice and information on opportunities whilst studying, and beyond, may be beneficial. Many students described an uncertainty of the outcomes of the degrees, including the types of careers which might be relevant. Those who lacked confidence in their abilities found it especially difficult to understand how their narrow perceptions of the degree outcomes were relevant to any careers outside of academia. Encouraging contact with alumni and providing information on graduates' career paths is likely to emphasise the relevance of the degrees to broader working life. Contact with alumni could be a valued and trusted source of careers advice due to them having experienced a similar transition to the student. Networks developed within the music department, and with music alumni, may be more likely to increase students' engagement by being perceived as more relevant to the nuances of musical study. Such networks should not only be directed towards undergraduate students, but also postgraduates who are also likely to benefit from a better understanding of potential career paths. Contact with alumni working as musicians in residence at the higher education institution could also be beneficial for the development of students' professional identities. Such contact has the potential to encourage students (and tutors) to engage in further exploration, developing a greater self-awareness and understanding of the tacit

elements of the institutional learning culture (Burnard et al., 2015) which will better prepare them for the transition into working life or further study.

10.2 Limitations of the research

The potential shortcomings of longitudinal studies were described in chapter 3 and included possible attrition rates and the Hawthorne effect (Rajulton & Ravanera, 2000). Despite ensuring a variety of contact details were collected from each participant to avoid attrition, a number of dropouts did occur. Two of these dropouts were likely due to the busy schedule of the participants (with one still working on the master's whilst increasing her work portfolio and one returning home to work full-time and plan for a wedding). It was still possible to obtain a large amount of data from these two participants which was beneficial for the study. It is likely that the chosen number of interviews for the study reduced further attrition.

The benefit of the longitudinal method was that it did enable an in-depth exploration of the participants' changing identities and development in a manner which would not have been possible with a cross-sectional study. The Hawthorne effect is likely to have occurred, as some participants stated that the study did encourage them to think more deeply about their master's degree and career goals. This might have resulted in some engaging in exploration to a greater extent than they would have otherwise, in turn positively impacting upon their self-awareness and developing career goals.

Initially, as discussed in chapter 3 I had hoped to conduct a comparison between musicology and music psychology master's students, however, due to the small number of musicology participants such a comparison did not appear appropriate. Both courses were therefore considered together during the majority of the thesis, however, due to music psychology being more practically applicable to musical professions (in the sense that learning the theory of teaching music can impact upon the practice of teaching music) there are likely to be differences between the two cohorts in terms of experiences and motivations. Such differences would need to be considered further in a larger study.

The results are not generalizable as they focus upon the experiences of sixteen participants (Annabel's results were not included in the thesis) studying within English institutions. England is quite rare in its provision of music psychology master's degrees, therefore the results are likely to be contextually specific. However, the results do show the

benefits of music psychology and musicology degrees for music practitioners. The results provide an insight into the experiences of students on musicology and music psychology courses. This may provide a useful starting point for further qualitative and quantitative studies into these subject areas. As discussed during chapter 2, music students' experiences are likely to be unique due to the close relationship between the self and music, musical personalities, the nature of musical careers, and so on. This is likely to mean that the experiences of the music students will differ in some respects from those studying other subject areas. Further investigation into master's students enrolled within different subject areas is needed to better understand the nuances of the experiences during the career transitions.

10.3 Reflexivity

My own experiences as a student within one of the institutions observed are likely to have impacted upon my analysis of the results. Having studied one of the master's degrees myself I had a greater understanding of the nuances and culture of one institution and course over the others. This led to my decision to discount Annabel's results from the study, due to my perceptions that her difficulties were personal and she needed support from others, rather than relying upon the study interviews to relay her issues. I therefore directed her towards pastoral support within the university, and after failing to hear back from her during phase three of the interviews (and discussing the issues with a member of the ethics committee) decided to remove her results from the study.

During my own master's study I developed new interests and realised my own passion for research and the potential to continue further. PhD study had initially become an option for me after being suggested by a former college teacher and my master's dissertation supervisor. Their suggestions made me realise the potential to challenge myself to a higher level. However, it was only after being introduced to music psychology during my master's degree that I felt I found an area which truly suited my interests and in which I hoped to continue. After my own experiences of studying I was therefore aware of the potential for changing interests, values and confidence to impact upon career plans and what is perceived to be possible. I felt some of the participants' experiences resonated with my own, and was able to recognise and highlight the impact of the master's degree upon the whole individual.

The analytical process adopted with the students' transcripts enabled me to remain objective and control for this potential bias. By using the rigorous process of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis I was able to detach myself from the results. Therefore, although the idea for the current study came from my own experiences as a student, this is not felt to have coloured analysis of the results. To further control for bias the themes were verified by an experienced qualitative researcher who was external to the project.

10.4 Future research

Due to the practical implications emanating from this study, and the lack of previous research on this group of students, there are a number of potential areas for further research, as discussed below.

10.4.1 Follow-up research

Despite having initially expected to capture the entire career transition during the period of the study (somewhat naively), many participants had not yet fulfilled their career plans. The study highlighted the difficulty of transitioning into PhD study, which was not as smooth as many of the participants had expected. It is likely therefore that it will be a number of years before some students are able to achieve their goals to do PhD study and then enter academic (or other) careers. It was only those who remained working within their previous careers who appeared to have a smooth career transition by the end of the study. Therefore a follow-up study would be beneficial in providing a clearer picture of the career transition, which as highlighted during the thesis, is ongoing. This research would be important for informing career and institutional support to ensure students had realistic expectations of life beyond university.

10.4.2 A quantitative study

The current study has been significant in using qualitative methods to explore in detail the experiences of postgraduate students. Qualitative methods were thought to provide more insight into the nuances which may have been missed by larger surveys in the area (Leman et al., 2013; Soilemetzidis et al., 2014). However, quantitative data may be beneficial in order to fully capture the variables and developments during the career transition. This would allow a further insight into the changes during the period more generally. Inclusion of personality questionnaires would enable an insight into the ways in which individuals' traits influence their experiences (Nauta, 2007). This would help us to gain an understanding as to whether students on non-vocational music courses can be characterised by particular traits which

may help to explain their desire to continue studying and gain a stable career. Results from the current study would be beneficial when designing questionnaires and quantitative studies as some factors which have not been included in past surveys may be added, such as motivations and lifestyle factors (Leman et al., 2013).

10.4.3 Comparative studies

A number of comparative studies would provide in-depth insights into the extraneous variables which might have impacted upon the students' experiences.

Distance learners and onsite students

The thesis draws attention to a number of differences between distance learners and onsite students. The distance learners were more likely to have external commitments and be at a later stage of life which impacted upon their experiences as students. Comparative studies observing students within the same institution following different modes of study would be beneficial in order to fully understand the differences between the groups of students. Such research would enable a greater understanding of the students' needs and ensure those with external commitments were supported throughout their period of study.

Musicology and music psychology students

As discussed above, despite initially hoping to compare the experiences of musicology and music psychology students, this proved to be inappropriate during the current thesis. It is likely that the motivations and experiences of the students will differ, therefore a larger study comparing the experiences of the two subject areas may be beneficial. This would enable course designers to tailor their degrees towards the students' motivations and needs, and ensure their students' needs and experiences were fully understood.

Non-vocational students

The desire for stability within their working lives led many of the participants to study the master's degree in order to avoid (or reduce) the instability of typical portfolio music careers (Burland, 2005). Changes in career patterns more generally mean that individuals are now unlikely to obtain a job for life, and more likely to need to be adaptable throughout their working life (Hall & Chandler, 2005). This means that many of the attributes suggested to be important for musicians in order to maintain a portfolio career are also now more important generally. Comparisons with the experiences and career transitions of students on other non-vocational courses may therefore provide a more detailed insight into the nuances of music students and their careers. These insights would be beneficial for institutions hoping

to understand the needs of their students and outcomes of their master's degree, in order to develop optimal marketing and support strategies.

11 References

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12 : Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1: Interview schedules for stage 1

Phase 1 during the master's degree

1. Briefly describe your musical background.
2. How would you describe a musician?
 - a. Do you see yourself as a musician?
3. Describe your current master's degree
4. What were your main motivations for choosing a master's degree?
5. How has your master's degree differed from your undergraduate degree?
6. How well do you feel the university and your undergraduate degree prepared you for doing your masters?
7. What skills have you needed to display so far in your master's degree?
8. What kinds of advantages/disadvantages, if any, are associated with doing a masters?
9. What are your aims for the next year?
10. What do you plan to do after your masters is completed?
11. How have your career plans changed since before you started university?
12. Describe any ways you have sought information on careers.
13. How do you think your masters will affect your future employability?
14. What skills do you feel you will have gained from your masters that will feed into your future career plans?
15. In general, how well prepared do you feel for your future plans?
16. What are you looking forward to about your future career plans?
17. What concerns do you have about your future career?
18. Do you think music will always play an important part in your life?
19. Is there anything you feel I've missed that you'd like to talk about?

Phase 2 during the master's degree

1. How has your master's degree been going since we last met?
 - a. What musical activities have you been involved in since we last spoke?
 - b. To what extent have you felt integrated into the department?
 - c. How have you managed with pursuing the course alongside other life priorities?
 - d. Has the master's matched your expectations? If not, can you explain how?
 - e. Were there any pieces of work you particularly enjoyed/struggled with? Why?
 - f. Have you found any obstacles during your masters?
2. What do you feel you have learnt during your masters so far? (skills, knowledge)
 - a. How do you feel your masters will affect your employability?
3. Describe your relationship with your lecturers/supervisors/friends during the masters
4. How do you feel your subject area fits within the department?
5. Have you sought any careers advice since we last spoke?
 - a. If yes, how useful did you find the advice? Would you use it again?
 - b. If no, what has stopped you from using the advice?
 - c. What would prompt you to go and seek out advice?
 - d. Have you spoken to your supervisor for any advice?
6. What are your plans for the next six months?
7. What are your career plans for after you finish your master's degree?
8. How do you feel your masters has affected these plans so far?
9. How prepared do you feel for your future plans?
10. Where do you feel the university's responsibility regarding preparing students for a successful career, and the student's starts and ends?
11. What has been your favourite/least favourite part about the masters so far?
12. How has the master's degree affected your relationship with music?
13. Further comments?

Phase 3 most participants have completed the master's

1. How do you feel about having finished the master's degree?
2. How have you found the transition out of university?/ into PhD study
 - a. What have you found the hardest/enjoyed the least about leaving?
 - b. What have you found the easiest/enjoyed the most about leaving?
3. Looking back now, how did you feel the master's degree went overall? (level of work, marks, comparison to expectations)
 - a. What part of the master's degree did you value/enjoy the most?
 - b. What part of the master's degree did you value/enjoy the least?
 - c. Did you find any obstructions during the master's degree?
4. In what ways, if any, do you feel the master's degree impacted upon you as an individual? (identity/confidence etc.)
5. What have you been doing since the last time we spoke? (Career, work, musical activities)?
6. In what ways do you feel the transition so far could have been made smoother?
 - a. How prepared did you feel for leaving university?
7. What skills do you feel you learnt during the course?
 - a. In what ways do you feel these skills will affect you/benefit you? In what ways have the skills you developed already affected you?
8. What piece of advice would you give to others considering masters study?
9. What are your plans for the next six months now that you have finished?
10. In terms of a career, what factors are you ideally looking for?
11. Have you gained any advice about how to fulfil your plans?
12. What place does music have in your life now?
13. Further comments?

Additional questions

Those currently working:

- a. How has the master's degree impacted upon your transition into work?

Those currently studying PhD:

- a. How is your PhD going so far?

- b. How has it matched your expectations?
- c. How have you found working with your supervisor?
- d. In what ways has your PhD differed from your master's degree?

Phase 4 all remaining participants have completed the master's

1. Describe what has been happening since I last spoke to you
2. Looking back over the period of the master's degree, what were the most significant events for you and why?
3. How do you feel about your master's degree now you have finished?
4. What do you feel the outcomes of your master's degree were?
 - a. In what ways, if any, do you feel your experience as a master's student could have been enhanced?
 - b. In what ways do you feel having the master's degree now has been an advantage/disadvantage to you?
 - c. Have your views on the master's degree, i.e. the value of it, your experiences of it etc., changed in any way since finishing the degree?
6. How are you finding your transition from university?
7. Have you had any support from the university/careers/tutors etc. during your transition? How do you feel support during this period could have been improved?
8. How are you finding your current job/role?
9. What attracted you to this role?
10. What have you enjoyed most/least about this role?
11. How do you feel your master's prepared you to gain this role?
12. What other factors (external to the master's) prepared you to gain this role?
13. In what ways, if any, did the master's degree, and your time during the master's, prepare you for doing **well** in your current job?
14. Are there any gaps, in terms of things you feel the master's degree did not give you? Where did you get the other things you needed to do well in your job from?
15. How do you feel your master's affected your desire to gain this role?
16. For those still not in dream job: How do you feel about this period of time as you wait to start PhD study/ find the career you want?
17. What are your long term career plans?
18. What, if anything, are you apprehensive about in your future?
19. What are you looking forward to in your future?
20. Has your view of yourself changed in any way since starting the master's degree?

21. Do you see yourself as a musician?
22. Do you think music will always play an important role in your life?
23. Do you feel that taking part in this study has had any impact upon the way you have approached your career decisions?
24. Further comments?

12.2 Appendix 2: Interview schedules stage 2

Course tutors interview schedule

1. Briefly, what is involved in studying towards a master's degree in [course name]?
2. Why do you feel people choose to study [course name]?
3. What are the outcomes of [course name]?
4. How do you feel these students could be supported to better understand the outcomes of the degree? How do you feel the course highlights skills learnt during it?
5. Where do you feel postgraduate students fit within the music department?
6. In what ways do you feel the [course name] is flexible towards students' needs and interests? (external commitments, interests)
7. What academic and career-related support is available to music postgraduates here?
8. What do you feel the role of the supervisor is in providing support to the students?
9. How do you feel studying a postgraduate academic music master's affects students career choices/ transitions into careers/PhD?
10. How do you feel universities could better support music postgraduates in their transition into careers?
11. How do you feel students could better prepare themselves for their transition into careers?
12. What do you feel is the extent of the university's responsibility to help graduates achieve a successful transition into their careers?
13. Is there anything you would like to add?

Additional questions

- In what ways do you feel the outcomes of distance learning and traditional courses differ/are similar?
- In what ways do you feel the students' attitudes and approaches to study on the distance learning and traditional courses differ?
- How do you feel the distance learning method impacts upon the relationship between the student and supervisor?

Careers advisors interview schedule

1. What is your role within the careers department?
2. How would you describe the ethos of the careers department here?
3. How does the university and careers department view and define employability?
4. What approach does the careers department have for dealing with music students?
5. What approach does the careers department have for dealing with postgraduate students?
6. What advice would you give to someone looking to study a master's degree?
7. Why do you feel students choose to study non-vocational master's degrees?
8. What would you expect the outcomes from a non-vocational master's degree to be?
9. In what ways do you feel a master's degree can be an advantage/disadvantage?
10. How do you feel the careers service can help masters students prepare for their careers?
11. How do you feel masters students should better prepare themselves for their careers?
12. Where do you feel the university's responsibility for ensuring graduates leave with the confidence and skills to gain jobs ends, and the students begins?
13. Where do you feel masters students sit in the employment market?
14. In what ways do you feel the postgraduate specific advice in the careers service is good/could be better?
15. Is there anything you would like to add?

12.3 Appendix 3: Ethical clearance

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Claire Slight
School of Music
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT

**PVAR Faculty Research Ethics Committee
University of Leeds**

Dear Claire

Title of study: Exploring the university to career transitions of UK music postgraduates
Ethics reference: LTMUSC-017

I am pleased to inform you that the above application for light touch ethical review has been reviewed by a School Ethics Representative of the PVAC and Arts (PVAR) joint Faculty Research Ethics Committee. I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion on the basis of the application form, as of the date of this letter.

The following documentation was considered:

<i>Document</i>	<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>
LTMUSC-017ClaireSlightLightTouchEthicsForm.doc	1	16/10/12
LTMUSC-017 recruitment emails.doc	1	16/10/12
LTMUSC-017 interview sample for ethics review.docx	1	22/10/12

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie
Research Ethics Administrator
Research Support
On Behalf of Dr Will Rea
Chair, **PVAR FREC**