

Working Title: Alan's transitional processes: Exploring the importance of *embodying cultural artefacts* within BTEC sports qualifications

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Abstract

This paper offers considerations on the role of cultural artefacts in shaping forms of student transitions within BTEC qualifications in the United Kingdom (UK). In this paper, cultural artefacts are understood as material and embodied structures that crystallise the social and educational relationships within the BTEC qualification. To illustrate the role of cultural artefacts, we draw upon the experiences of Alan (all names are pseudonyms) who was a student at, Rural Further Education College (RC). The findings highlighted how within RC, cultural artefacts had significant power to influence the positions, identities and the development of forms of capital, specific to the experience of Alan. Importantly, the artefacts that were valued within the sports BTEC at RC were heavily shaped around the instrumentality of the sporting body and field; including trainers, tracksuits and basketballs. For Alan trainers emerged as the key symbolic, practical, and experiential artefact; creating, merging, and sustaining structures of power, whilst simultaneously positioning him and other students within the social and learning spaces of Rural College. These processes enabled Alan to gain social prosperity and control of the social and educational positions within his transitional experience. The paper concludes by highlighting how the dynamic interactions between material and embodied structures (cultural artefacts) mediate and frame both social and educational transitions within and beyond the BTEC qualification into the fields of sports-education and industry. It is hoped that such insight begins to further transcend official discourses and rhetorics that are under-questioned in research concerning transitions within vocational sports-education.

Introduction

The expansion of the United Kingdom (UK) Further Education (FE) and vocational sector, has led to an exponential increase in the number of vocational qualifications (Wolf, 2011). Such increase in provision, alongside constant reforms and policy developments (Bathmaker, 2013) has established a context in which the types of students able to access these courses has increased, leading to a wider variety of transitional experiences. It is in this current context in which transitional experiences have become fragmented (Cashmore, Green & Scott, 2010; Aldous et al 2012) and vocational trajectories have become increasingly non-linear, more complex, and messy (Atkins, Flint & Oldfield, 2010).

One course, which reflects these wider changes to the vocational sector can be illustrated within the BTEC extended diplomas (BTEC). The BTEC qualification is a cornerstone of the rapidly expanding sector of FE (see, Wolf, 2011; Basis, 2011) and relative to other vocational courses, is viewed as a model vocational course. Person Education Limited (2014) has claimed that the qualification is a “highly respected route for those who wish to move into employment in the sector,

either directly or following further study” (p.2). Such respect is evident through the qualification being worth up to 420 tariff points available (UCAS, 2013). As such, as well as enabling individuals to make the transition into employment the BTEC is also a stepping stone into university. Consequently, BTECs are increasingly recognised at governmental levels as being one of the most popular vocational route into HE (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009) whilst offering substantial employment boosts (Conlon & Patrignani, 2011). However, these educational and employment opportunities fluctuate between subject areas and industry sectors.

In relation to this, traditionally vocationally-orientated qualifications such as sport, are being designed and delivered in close collaboration with both education and industry stakeholders (e.g. SkillsActive, 2010; Edexcel, 2010a; Pearson Education Limited, 2014). The purpose of collaborations have been to ensure that learners become occupationally ready for skilled work in the sport sector. To do this, BTECs are comprised of modular units that are notationally linked to specific professions and to the field of Higher Education,

“The specification has been structured to allow learners maximum flexibility in selecting optional units, so that particular interests and career aspirations within the sport and active leisure sector can be reflected in the choice of unit combinations.” (Edexcel, 2011, p.5)

For the BTEC in sport these units are tailored towards careers in the sports industry. These modules include sport and exercise massage, sports nutrition, sport development, and sport coaching (*ibid*). The porosity of the parameters set by the awarding body Pearson/Edexcel, enable FE institutions to have the agency to choose, and interpret how they deliver these units,

“Optional unit choices should be made with care. Check the specification and unit content to ensure that your resources are adequate in terms of physical equipment and appropriate technology.” (Edexcel, 2010a, p. 20).

Accordingly, the delivery of BTEC qualification is strongly dependent on college facilities and material resources. Inevitably, these vary across the UK, and as such each college will offer students a different mixture of sporting and educational opportunities. Moreover, the flexibility of the programme creates a situation in which the delivery of the course becomes framed by the knowledge, dispositions, skills and practices of the course organisers as well as the resources and facilities of the college.

Although a dearth of policy research has highlighted the changing nature of VE in the UK (see Wolf Report, 2011), contemporary research has not explicitly focused on the the complex social and educational processes that contribute to the lived experience of the BTEC qualification. This is in despite of Willis (1977) powerfully demonstrating the importance of these ‘cultural processes’ in expiring how “working class kids get working class jobs” (p.1). Moreover, the policy perspective forwarded from some research corners fails to take into account the complexity of the

micro environments of student transitions, and the lived experiences of the young people (Atkins, 2009; Atkins et al, 2010; Jephcote, Salisbury & Rees, 2009).

Against this backdrop, we offer insights into how the resources and practices of one BTEC qualification come to shape the transitional experiences of students. To do this, we draw upon insights developed through a 12 month ethnographic case study which focused on students lived experience within the BTEC in sport. The findings of the study exposed the role of artefacts played in shaping the corporeal practices of the BTEC.

By utilising existing perspectives of cultural artefacts, from Wenger (1998), Bourdieu (1986) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), the paper offers considerations on how embodying particular cultural artefacts began to shape the experiences of students enrolled within the *in-situ* reality of the BTEC in sport at RC. Drawing on examples from one student, Alan, dual processes of artefact creation and embodiment will then be discussed as being inextricably connected to the power relations in RC and the students positions within these networks. The paper concludes by offering insights regarding the role of cultural artefacts in shaping the transitional experience within the BTEC in sport, and forming trajectories beyond into HE and industry. In demonstrating and understanding the mediating role of cultural artefacts in shaping the futures and experiences of students in transitions this paper reverberates messages that transcend official stances and rhetorics that are under-questioned in the UK's vocational system.

The dynamic role of cultural artefacts within BTEC qualifications

The role of artefacts in shaping the experience of being within a community has long been recognised within educational theory and research (for example, Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998; Barton & Tusting, 2005). However, while these theorists offer perspectives of both how students participate with material objects and the processes in which objects accumulate cultural value, little emphasis has been placed on exploring *the dynamic interconnections* between artifactual structures and embodied students. Neither have these interrelationships been examined in relation to their experiential consequences (unintended and intended) for students.

Wenger (1998) laid the foundations for a reflexive exploration of embodied and material structures, by introducing a duality of participation-reification to speak about the material and human in learning and transitions. In outlining this reflexive position Wenger noted that "in terms of meaning, people and things cannot be defined independently of each other" (p.70). Such a focus makes clear that understanding artefacts as either purely material or embodied is limiting. Therefore, reducing material and embodied structures into isolated fundamental elements is counterproductive in coming to understand cultural artefacts role in crystallising the social and educational relationships within the BTEC. Relationships that might be responsible for transitions within the course, and between further forms of education, work, and training. In light of this

reflexive understanding, the theoretical schematic illustrated within table 1 follows what Elder-Vass (2008) refers to as an emergentist framework,

Level of ontology	Processes that create the value of cultural artefacts
Artefact Macro (AM)	Artefacts created through historical fields of practice. Additionally, these artefacts are valued on wider gender, generation and class discourses; as well as the specific sporting and educational fields from which they originate from. These set abstract parameters for the objectified, reified, value of an artefact at conjunctionally specific and in situ levels. Their value is created beyond the consciousness of agent but informs the value of other artefacts at meso, micro and in-situ levels.
Artefact Conjunctural-specific (AcS)	Artefacts whose construction and value is specific to the institution-in-focus e.g. those specific to the BTEC sport programme within RC and within particular interpretations of the BTEC units (gym space, sports-hall, computer suite). The spatiotemporal location where the artefact is situated frames the AM value and narrows the parameters of the value of the artefact.
Artefact In-situ (AiS)	These artefacts shape the position and practices within the <i>in-situ</i> reality of the learning environment. Artefacts at this level are also those that embodied the value of which is based on the general dispositions of the those present. The interactions between agents internal structures and the cultural value of the object have an 'outcome' (Stones, 2005) where the objects in-situ value will be altered; whilst agents constructs identities, engage in interactions and practices. These new embodied structures and relationships can be transmitted into the conjecturally specific environment and macro levels of ontology.

Table 1: Table to illustrates processes that create the value of cultural artefacts across levels of ontology.

Conceptually dissecting the various types of artefacts within and across what Stones (2005) has illustrated as levels of ontology enables links to be made between artefacts that exist at an abstract and meso-level [artefacts in-general (AM)] and those that exist within specific substantive in-situ realities [artefacts in-situ -AiS]. Coming to understand that artefacts are constructed at different levels of ontology is important in raising particular questions regarding how agents experience and form transition within and between particular educational and industrial cultures.

As illustrated by table 1, at the abstract level of ontology the value of artefacts are constructed and transmitted from (but are not limited to) the interrelated fields of education, technology, sporting cultural practices and industries (AM). From the ongoing life and struggles of these macro fields “reproduction cycles... leave a historical trace of artefacts - [in] physical, linguistic, and symbolic [form]” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.58). As such, artefacts created at this level come to embody a cultural history and legacy that make them especially important for participation in learning environments (Wenger, 1998). As a consequence, the value of AM begin to the set conditions for the acquisition, embodiment and transmission of artefacts within micro environments. In these situated exchanges, artefacts also have a conjecturally-specific dimension (AcS), in which the value is specific to the objectified material resources of a spatiotemporal

location (setting), as well as fields situated at AM. At the in-situ level (AiS) of reality, artefacts value is congealed with the dispositions and practices of the agents. It is at this level in which the processes of transmission and embodiment become analytically visible. At the point of embodiment the artefact is both part of the person and part of the material reality. This is illustrated in figure 1,

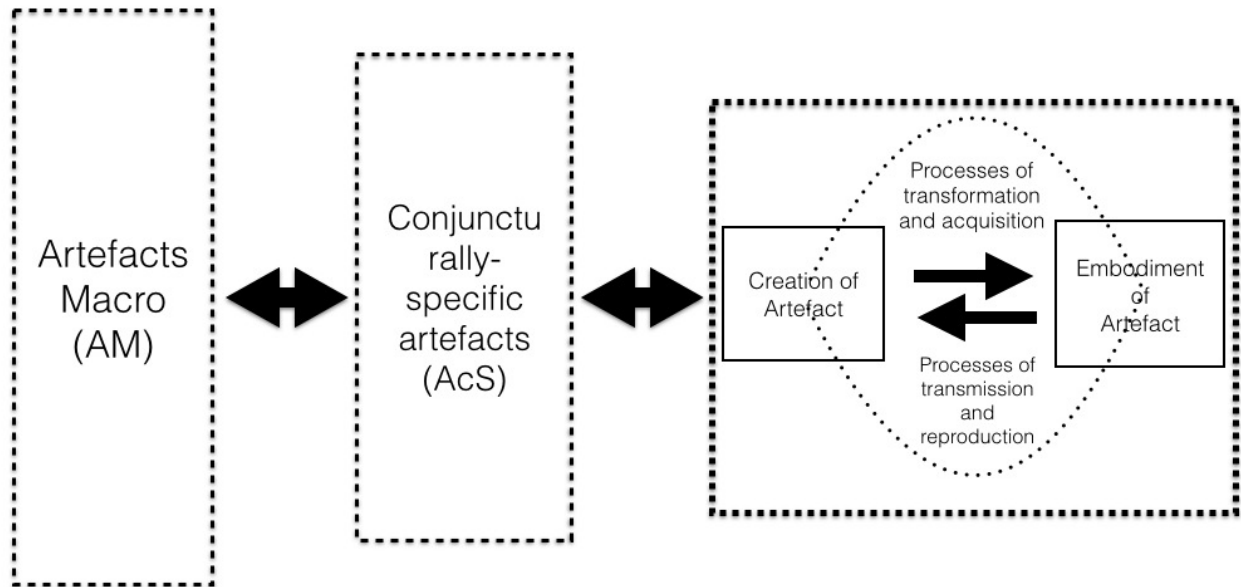


Figure 1. Diagram to illustrate the duality of cultural artefacts within in-situ ontologies.

As figure 1 illustrates, rather than a reductionist model that connects artefacts to agents, by viewing the connection as fluidic enables us to understand how artefacts are both transformative and transform to develop forms of value (capital) of the artefact and the positions agents adopt within this interaction. These in-situ processes reflect the thoughts of Wenger (1998) who noted that artefacts begin to “take a different life of their own, beyond their context of origin. They gain a degree of autonomy on the occasion and purposes of their production” (p.62). Furthermore, drawing upon the thoughts of Leder (1990) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), the embodiment of cultural artefacts also implies further, more agentic processes, from which an individual ‘feels through’ the object as it becomes ‘incorporated’ into their extended body. This embodiment process is encapsulated through Merleau-Ponty’s example of the blind man’s stick,

The blind man’s stick has ceased to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch, and providing a parallel to sight (1962, p.165)

As such it is these types of in-situ processes that disintegrate dichotomies between the material and embodied states of artefact. This, in turn, leads to “the world of objects” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.91) acquiring and transmitting different forms of embodied value; illustrated in this case as what Bourdieu highlights as cultural, social and physical capital,

Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialised form or its “incorporated”, embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private i.e. exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the field of reified or living labor. It is a *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures but it is also a *lex insita*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. (Bourdieu, 1986, p.280)

Given the centrality of corporeal practices within the BTEC in sport, it is useful to consider how embodying certain cultural artefacts can mediate transitions and enable agents to transform forms of social energy to appropriate value reified in cultural artefacts. This illuminates how the dialectal embodiment processes of particular artefacts can help position students within the in-situ spaces of the social learning environments of the college. This is reflective of Bourdieu’s assumption that there is an intimate relationship between cultural capital in its objectified and embodied states,

Cultural capital, in the objectified state, has a number of properties which are defined only in the relationship with cultural capital in its embodied form. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 285)

Based on this assertion, in conjunction with Bourdieu’s (1984) examination of trajectories, a BTEC students’ transition is partly dependent on the cultural capital that they can a) recognise and acquire and b) embody and assimilate with dispositions in the habitus and c) mobilise and transmit back into the in-situ reality.

Analytically distinguish the ontological dimensions of artefact ($A_m=A_cS=A_iS$) allows the exploration of the interconnections between material and embodied structures, and the experiential consequences of this for students in transition. While our focus lies at understanding those processes at the in-situ level (see figure 1), it is important to acknowledge that such processes and interaction are continually shaped and re-shaped by the other artefacts illustrated. Such a position has its orientations within Giddens (1984) ‘duality of structure’ whilst at the same time, attempt to avoid what Stones (2001) illustrated as the inseparability of agency and structure. In analytically deciphering objectified and embodied structures as also illuminates agents position-practices within specific moments of transition, whilst avoiding the reductionist account of transition by

separating experience to the reality in which it is created. Based on this, we use the emergentist framework to highlight the artefacts that shaped, and were shaped by, the experience and dispositions of Alan. In what follows, we use findings of the ethnographic case study to illustrate these processes within the BTEC programme at Rural College. To do so, we outline the setting and context of the study.

An ethnographic case study of transitions within a BTEC in sport

Methodology and themes of analysis

The data drawn upon in this paper was collected over a 12 month research project that aimed to investigate student transitions within the BTEC in sport. In a similar light to previous research by Aldous (2012) this study adopted an ethnographic case study approach. In attempting to understand the lived experiences of the students a number of data collection methods were implemented. The majority of the data from which the discussion is based, originates from field observations; in which field-notes were produced, diagrams drawn, and photographs taken. In addition to this, a series of informal conversations, six formal interviews with three students-in-focus, inspection of document sources and reflexive diary entries provided a large corpus of raw data and initial interpretations from which the both the developing conceptualisations and discussions are grounded.

With initial fieldwork open to the possibilities of a myriad of transitional devices, the corpus of data was not entirely specific to cultural artefacts. However, the authors desire "to engage with and report the complexity of social and educational activity" (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011, p.53) ensured that the focus of the ethnographic case study responded to, and explored, three emerging themes in depth. These themes revolved around cultural artefact creation and embodiment within the BTEC in sport:

1. Key artefacts: a number objects, such as, trainers, tracksuits, grooming products, iPads and sports equipment were central to the everyday practices of the BTEC.
2. Role of artefacts: particular students used these artefacts differing ways. Their engagement with, and embodiment of, these artefacts appeared to crystallise their identities and positions within the group.
3. Importance of artefacts: the way in which these artefacts were created, and then embodied by certain students, framed perceived levels of skill, and started to help students form trajectories beyond the course.

Over the multiple drafts of this paper, the focus was streamlined around these themes, and throughout the writing process the iterative inductive analysis continued (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007), with both authors frequently returning to the raw data and discussing their interpretations.

The textual product of the ethnographic approach adopted in this paper works across three points of focus: (i) the key artefacts of the BTEC in sport are mapped out and examined. Their

significance within the BTEC is made explicit and their ontological origin of construction is discussed. (ii) examples of ways in which Alan (un)knowingly interacted with, and embodied, these artefacts in order to secure socially advantageous positions, construct identities and participate in practices are provided. (iii) the way in which these processes mediated Alan's transition within the BTEC in sport is discussed with relevance to artefact's efficacy in constructing potential trajectories beyond the qualification.

Selecting the Setting and agents-in-focus

The case was situated at Rural College (RC), which is located approximately 10 miles from a city in the UK and is set in an expanse of countryside. RC was chosen due to its vocational orientated ethos; reflected in the plethora of BTEC courses in a range of subjects and apprenticeship programmes. In recent years, the college has begun to expand in its popular areas of study (including sport) to deliver foundation degrees through partnerships with local universities.

RC boasts a superb sporting facilities including a modern and fully equipped sports centre, air-conditioned gym, third generation rubber crumb pitch and an indoor tennis centre. This mixture of modern sporting facilities, vocational opportunities, and an orientation towards widening access, alongside running a number of sports academies, has attracted young people with an eclectic range of sporting and academic experiences. RC's use of their abundant sporting resources in delivering the BTEC qualification provided spaces from which AcS emerged.

The cohort for this case study consisted of nineteen students that shared an interest in physical activities and sports. The BTEC's social learning environments was visibly subdivided into three different interactional spaces: the five dominant males, the five girls, and the remaining nine students. From these divisions, three agents-in-focus were purposively sampled (Amy, Grag & Alan). The students-in-focus were representative of each of these groups. The social position of the student is the current destination of their transitions within the BTEC.

This paper foregrounds Alan's transitional experiences. Alan's transition within the BTEC positioned him as a privileged, powerful member of the BTEC. Before arriving at RC, Alan was on the periphery of 'the popular lot' and was never that 'high-up' [Alan, interview 2], but now he was typical of the dominant male group in the class. In addition to this, young male staff at RC perceive him as a skilful student, as they frequently select him for prestigious roles such as captain in practical lessons. Alan is a footballer that invests in, and manages, his outward appearance; trainers were his specialty.

Discussion

AM Levels of artefact within the BTEC culture in RC

Similar to Brown's (2005) description of Physical Education settings in UK Schools, the BTEC could be described as a *weekly autonomous field*, in that it is highly permeable to the influences of

other fields. Therefore, in relation to Brown, “the cultural goods that [the BTEC in sport] produce are not entirely its own” (2005, p.6). This was evident in the types of artefact that permeated the BTEC space. The common artefacts within RC contain cultural capital that might be traced back to their production within a range of educational, technological, cultural, sporting and industrial fields. These are artefacts that exist at a macro level of ontology (AM).

Data highlighted a number of ways in which AM shaped the culture and practices within RC. For example, consistent observations within fieldnotes highlighted how the social interactions were shaped both around a monopoly of football culture and artefacts, and the modern technologies available. In particular, student conversations were heavily informed by football boots, specifically there were many discussions around the leading brands and styles of boots. These discussions were led by, but not exclusive to, the group of dominant males. Over the course of the research football boots were never physically present in learning environments; however, access to the internet provided the interactions with virtual stimuli.

With the images on football boots appearing on screen, students (mostly male) compared and discussed the quality and style of these cultural artefacts across the classroom. [field note 01/03/13]

In addition to this, RC was permeated by artefacts from the fitness industry within the gymnasium. The gymnasium was both open to the public but also a space for educational practices. As a consequence students acquired both cultural capital from learning how to be gym instructors but also cultivate forms of physical capital based around the muscular ideals of the masculinised vocational-sporting body. AM situated within these wider fields of practice have an abstract value, that sets the parameters for transmission and embodiment of cultural capital within particular in-situ spaces. This interaction between AM artefacts and the spaces of RC leads to artefacts value being mediated by conjuncturally-specific levels of ontology.

AcS Levels of artefact within the BTEC culture in RC

The cultural artefacts of the BTEC did not exclusively exist at the macro level of ontology, but enjoyed a life of their own outside of its origin of production and cultural history (Wenger, 1998). There were artefacts (AcS) that were conjuncturally-specific to RC resources, to the learning activities, and specific to the requirements of the BTEC.

From interview data students-in-focus perceived the course to be split into two distinct components, ‘practical’ and ‘theory’. This dichotomy was simply converted into perceptions of space for the three students. Each of these elements, practical and theory, were seen to be catered for in different settings. From the observations two distinctly different spaces were identified and categorised: classroom versus sports hall. Although, in a literal sense they were

additional settings, (lecture theatres, computer suites, and astro-turf pitches) these categories delineate the two common types of learning environments in which artefacts were acquired and embodied by the BTEC students.

Both spaces (classroom and sports hall), and activities (theory and practical), lent themselves to placing different levels of capital on particular artefacts. In the classroom artefacts such as pens, laptops, paper, sport clothing, posters displaying elements of the wider RC culture all contributed to the sense *being* a BTEC student. In classrooms the interaction between artefacts and people were more structured. For example, the divisions of social groups were much more visible and situated around specific artefacts such as seating and table plans. Additionally, personal laptops, smartphones, and tablets were brought into the classroom by the majority of students to work on coursework. These AcS created outcomes of contestation between students and authority due to their educational and non-educational function.

‘When students were out of the lecturer’s surveillance, technological devices would easily switch to a platform for social networking and viewing sports websites. Some teachers make students hand in these objects at the beginning of the lesson; whilst others would shout throughout the lesson “no messing with iPads”. [field note 15.3.13]

In contrast, the nature of the practical environments of the BTEC programme did not rely on these forms of technologies. Moreover, within practical units delivered in sport hall settings there was an erosion of some of the social divisions that were evident within the classroom. This contributed to a process in which bodies and objectified artefacts interacted in a more fluidic manner. With the absence of artefacts such as seating and tables, the students were required to interact with the environment and each other differently. Consequently, within this practical space artefacts were both more mobile and had different value placed upon them.

In ‘practical team sports’, the learning activities were mostly centred on the use of one artefact, basketballs. Basketballs were used by staff and students in practicing teamwork, sports strategy and leadership. In relation to this, the students of RC were required to “demonstrate appropriate skills, techniques and tactics in... team sports” (Edexcel, 2010b, p.4) in order to pass the unit. As such, in order to successfully pass the unit, students in RC were required to demonstrate a level of skill with the artefacts of the practical setting. However, the value created through students ability to master these AcS extended beyond the formal grading criteria of the course, and into the way educators perceived the students, and how students positioned themselves against each other,

All the formal content of the unit has been worked through. The lecturers decided to use the time and equipment available to initiate a ‘skills competition’. Students were

ceremonially judged by the lecturers for their 'skill' with the basketball in an 'X factor style' format. Here students that received the highest scores and accolade were those that had control over the basketball, and could manipulate it in novel ways. [field note 22.3.13]

As a consequence of these differing conjunctural positions, the AM have been refined causing the value of the AsC to become influential in the distribution of capital in-situ. Such distribution relies on the ability of the agent to recognise and embody legitimate forms of capital and artefact.

AiS Levels of artefact within the BTEC culture in RC

Artefacts in-situ (AiS) were those artefacts that were created through the interaction between the AM that permeated the course, the AcS of that immediate environment and the objectified-embodied structures of the students. AiS were artefacts that set students apart from one another. Some of these AiS were brought into the programme in the form of embodied practices and dispositions of the student. For example, Greg frequently talked about his motocross bike which had large cultural value within the working class population of the local area. This artefact, and Greg's ability to ride it, was part of his alternative identity not specific to the BTEC programme and also shaped the value he placed on the AsC within Rural College. This is in contrast to Alan who drew upon his families wealth and offered course friends rare and normally expensive sporting experiences.

Alan 'said to the boys I want to take you sailing over the summer...We have 10 weeks off, most of us have got a job, we have got the money...I will get my granddad's boat, and we will go to the private [name of location]'... [Alan Interview 1]

The cultural capital Alan embodies from his family and practices away from the programme begins to shape his position to other students within the BTEC course. The cultural capital deposited in these objects had transferred to the embodiment of students-in-focus, from a long process of engaging with those activities. The importance of these AiS to the trajectory of students like Alan is also evident within his potential and interest to utilise his level 3 sailing qualification to become an instructor.

Alan's position was also enabled and established through the existence of artefacts that were always present on his person and within the BTEC in sport. This could be seen in Alan's management of his outward appearance. He dedicated a large percentage of his *economic capital* to enhance his style and identity. He purchased hair products, tracksuits and trainers for purposes of maintaining a certain appearance for college. Once the new year started he 'needed things like

college kit... needed new trainers for college... like new clothes and everything' [Alan interview 1]. As such, Alan was always pristinely presented when at college.

A male student that is not normally a part of the five dominant males is sitting a few meters away from Alan. He turns to start conversation and opens with "may I compliment you on your lovely hair?" in a comical but serious tone. Alan replied "well, yes, of course you can". From this a new conversation flows. [field note 01.03.2013]

Alan was aware of the position he held over others in the class, and was not surprised by these symbolic gestures. As such, he was a knowledgeable (Giddens, 1984) actor. He recognised that he had 'got more power' in the BTEC and as a result he feels that he can 'speak his word' [Alan interview 2].

More importantly, at the in-situ level, Alan was able to fuel the creation of a valued market of capital in the class based on trainers. This AiS was the key vehicle for Alan, allowing him to make upward transitions within the BTEC. The embodied capital he generated and activated from this market was vital for him to achieve and maintain his position in the upper-echelons of the dominant group.

AiS: Trainers, Alan's vehicle for transition within the BTEC

From our interpretations of the data, trainers were one of the cultural artefacts that contained most efficacy to position students within the power networks at RC. Some styles of trainers contained large amounts of cultural capital across the in-situ environments of the BTEC. This abundance of cultural capital was activated by some students and therefore, the artefact was an enabling mediator of student transitions. Alan, was the principle instigator and beneficiary of this cultural artefact. Alan had some knowledgeability and control over the in-situ processes of creation and embodiment in relation to trainers and the objects cultural worth. Alan's strategic practices in relation to trainers, at times, lead him to embody and create legitimate forms of cultural capital in RC. He did this in a number of ways; including, public and private conversations, inflating the cultural worth of certain stylistic and performative tastes, profitable trading of capital and artefacts, and in activating this capital in defusing social challenges to his position.

Classroom conversations were normally private, as in they occurred within the three separate social groups identified in the BTEC. In these closed interactions Alan would promoting the symbolic value of trainers. He had been doing this from the beginning of his time at RC and he had a feel for tapping into the shared sporting habituses of the BTEC students and their tastes. For example, he reminded another male student of induction week when he drew Usian Bolt's trainers from memory. The other student was impressed: 'yeah, that was sick' [field note 04/03/13]. As a

result, classmates often asked Alan's opinion on their trainers, or pairs they were investigating on the Internet. However, in break of normal classroom convention discussions around trainers were also spoken more publicly. There appeared to be hidden intentions behind this publicity, to intrigue, involve, and monitor wider audiences. Alan was especially adept at this,

'Alan is positioned in the middle of the five dominant male students that have commandeered the computers in the centre of the room. From this stronghold they are dominating, censoring, and initiating public conversations that travel across the room. This has resulted in many of the class conversing trainers. Topic included, the feel, the style, the quality, and the sporting performance achievable with the different designer trainers. From these conversations the aesthetic 'style' of trainers was symbolically ordered. With the five dominant males setting the fashion and informing the *tastes* other BTEC students' [field note 01/03/2013]

As this field note highlights, public interactions made the value of artefacts aware to the entire cohort. As such, these conversations are partly responsible for the high status of trainers in RC. In both private and public spheres, Alan was a central figure in setting the criteria from which the value of the material object was referenced. However, this criteria was not a social law and entirely under his control. It was a point of reference that was disputable and alterable; certain powerful members of the learning community co-constructed the aesthetic and practical tastes of trainers. As such, Alan relied on others to promote the cultural value of trainers within RC.

Alan enticed young male teachers into trainer related conversations exploiting their respected positions and endorsements to inflate the value of trainers. For example, one young male teacher would, on occasions, spend time debating and laughing with the table of boys about peoples taste in trainers. In these lively debates there were trade offs between 'practicality' and 'style(s)'. With the lecturer favouring trainers as a piece of engineering, specialised for elite practice. Whilst the students' argued that the style of the trainer is of greater importance. This discussion was humoured and satirising, from both sides. The young male teacher, not dressed dissimilar from the group of males, teased some students for wearing 'brightly coloured, girly football boots' [field notes 04/03/13]. Symbolic exchanges such as these inflated the market value of trainers and the capital of particular trainers within the field. Endorsement from theses respected lectures underpinned the value that the dominant males placed on trainers. These were in-situ processes that objectified the specific cultural capital of trainers.

With the creation of a thriving market of cultural capital that was objectified and deposited within trainers Alan had devised ways to profit. Alan traded many forms of embodied and objectified capital on the trainer market and gained rewards through these transactions,

symbolically speaking. For example, he used his retail job to exchange trainers for discounted rates of *economic capital*. This special offer was restricted to selected staff and students.

Providing the supply and demand for this valuable marketplace gave him power, and aided his transition within the BTEC. His monopolisation and strategic trading of cultural capital generated from trainers enabled him to become a dominant member of the class. This domination can be demonstrated in the following observation:

One male student (not normally a member of the five dominant males), asked to try on Alan's bright yellow trainers. The student walked around, his posture changed. He became more authoritative in his stance, and commented "very comfy, where did you get them?" whilst looking around at the small audience watching him. Moments later he states "I don't like the colour though - why did you get these?". Alan dismissed with no response, and the audience turned their attention away. The student immediately appeared less confident in his posture and shortly after took off the bright trainers, returning them to Alan in silence. When Alan's garish taste was questioned by someone outside of the dominant group or teachers, the opinion seemed to be invalid.
[field note 04/03/2013]

As this illustrated, Alan had gained a degree of control over the distribution of the cultural capital contained within trainers. In order to achieve this position, Alan was dependant on levels of ontology beyond the in-situ environment. In part, Alan relied on the trends and cultural capital of trainers that was set by AM and AsC market prices as well as his own identities and networks. The successful combination of these factors enabled his embodiment of the legitimate types of trainer and his upwards movement within the group.

From this position Alan used trainers to deflect tension when others within the dominant group challenged his motives and position. He was able to do so in a way that was complimentary to his internal dispositions. Alan had a close but volatile relationship with Ed (another dominant male). The turbulent relationship between the two powerful males intensified in practical lessons. This escalated into a physical fight during a basketball match. Describing the event Alan said the incident 'sparked off' over an accidental trip during the match. Alan was about to 'lamp him' when the teacher intervened [Alan interview 2].

After the match the group of five split. A couple of the dominant males went and sat by Alan. They were talking to Alan about what happened, and in mid-conversation, there was a lengthy silence. It *felt* like Alan's authority and account of the conflict was being questioned. After a few moments Alan broke the silence by pointing at his trainers saying, "I have Navy laces". This must have been a style as they were white. This

throw-away remark had the apparent ability to smooth over the potentially troublesome interaction. It had a latent power, it highlighted a moment where Alan and his trainers combined in embodied harmony to navigate the in-situ social reality of the course and maintain this position within the power network of the BTEC. [field note 22/03/13]

Alan recognised that for the rest of the day the group was fractured because “no one knew what was going to happen” [Alan interview 2], he was sensitive to the altering group dynamics preceding the fight. He was also reflective of how internal relations of power and interactional orders in their group became restored the next day after they played football. From this incident, Alan demonstrated that he was learning strategic ways to resolve conflict between dominant males. This strategy was more in line with his internal ethical dispositions; codes that he had internalised over the course of his educational history, where he witnessed physical confrontation in other playground settings and perceive the response ‘wrong’ and ‘childish’. The fight scene at RC therefore demonstrated how Alan incorporated and utilised the cultural capital contained in trainers, his trainers; but also how he used the cultural resource in reference to his habitus. The activation of this capital in moments of challenge or conflict was an important technique for him in achieving and defending his social position. The cultural capital stored in an objectified state for a moment was transferred and became part of Alan’s embodied capital.

The ability of Alan to transfer artefacts from an objectified state to an embodied state and vice versa in RC was important to his transition within the course. Moreover, these in-situ processes of artefact creation and embodiment created levels of agency that empowered him to choose his transitional trajectory beyond the BTEC programme. Knowing a lot about trainers, having the right trainers, and incorporating them effectively when interacting with the social learning environment was valuable social skills in this BTEC space. These skills were important for Alan to effectively survive social threats and to form good relationships with young male lectures. Merely acquiring or having access to the key artefacts of the BTEC in sport, such as legitimate trainers, might not necessarily have resulted in the same transition and identity construction for Alan. Alan benefited from embodying the artefact, incorporating it into his corporeality, make it an object he feels through when negotiating the power networks of the BTEC. It was evident that his ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990) relied on his feel for the objects in the game. Meshing the valuable objects to his ‘extended body’ (Leder, 1990) made artefacts, like trainers, become a structure of his corporeal potentials. Trainers were incorporated by Alan and increased his potential ways to interact with the social networks of the BTEC course. These processes were an embodied skill that mediated his transition; enabling him to climb to the top of the social hierarchy in the BTEC. From this, we tentatively suggest that these processes have already begun to narrow his trajectory beyond the qualification.

Concluding thoughts: Artefacts and the prelude to transitions beyond the BTEC

The paper opened by positioning the BTEC in sport as a qualification that reflects the optimistic vocational rhetoric of an “equality of opportunity for all” (Wolf, 2011, p.141), when the national zeitgeist is one of vocational uncertainty, reform, and concern. Over the ethnographic case study perspectives reflected in the works of Bourdieu (1986), Stone (2005) and Leder (1990) became central in our understanding and illustration of the material-corporeal interactions within in-situ realities. In the inductive analyse of the in-situ environments of RC, processes of artefact creation and embodiment that analytically transcended three levels of ontology AM, AcS and AiS were identified. In focusing on the cultural artefacts of the BTEC in sport across these levels of ontology and the transitional experiences of students-in-focus, we discussed hidden enabling and constraining processes that undermine the course optimistic vision of ensuring an equality of opportunity. Accordingly, future dissemination and discussion should be focused not only successful processes of acquisition and embodiment but also when such processes lead to the experiences of contestation, fragmentation and failure of agents within the BTEC programme.

The transitional experience of Alan highlighted how particular artefacts were embodied and created within RC. In particular, trainers were the key artefact in constructing his identity within the BTEC. Potentially, these processes have important consequences (unintended and intended) for Alan’s sporting trajectories beyond the qualification. This is supported by Wenger (1998) who recognised,

“As we go through a succession of forms of participation, our identities form trajectories, both within and *across* communities of practice.” (*emphasis added*, p.154).

As the realities of transition beyond those of the BTEC at RC have yet to be explored, it is beyond the parameters of this paper to begin to connect Alan’s experience to wider transitional processes (that may lie within industry and professional sectors). As such, further research that extends beyond the confines of the BTEC might help shed light on artefacts role in mediating VE to HE or employment transitions. Moreover, ethnographic informed research has potential to illuminate on these hidden processes of sporting/vocational transitions and to examine the equality of opportunities that the BTEC in sport provide.

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