'IT'S EITHER MACCAS OR UNI': A BOURDIEUSIAN ANALYSIS OF WORKING-CLASS YOUTH IN NEW ZEALAND

BY

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# Abstract

*School to work transitions is often presented as a binary choice. You either pursue a university education that is framed as a sure-fire pathway to both social and economic mobility, or you pursue a 'lesser' form of industrial and vocational training, with little of hope of advancement. However, this thesis argues that this assumption must be contested, as it obscures the complexity of all school to work transitions and the potential for social mobility in these 'lesser' forms of education. Through interviews with young men and women who are training as an apprentice or have recently completed their apprenticeship, this thesis hopes to provide a more complex snapshot of school to work transitions, focusing on how apprentices find and adapt to their new trade.*

*My overall argument centres on Bourdieu's theory of practice which is often discussed concerning the specific class-based outcomes of education for students from different class conditions (Bourdieu 1977). While this approach is useful to showing the complexity of school to work transitions from supposedly 'lesser' pathways, this approach is overly reliant on habitus, presenting a type of individual agency that is primarily reproductive and non-conducive to any potential transformation. Instead of focusing on just habitus in understanding this transition, a greater emphasis is placed on Bourdieu's concept of 'field'. Specifically, how field conditions can influence both the degree and the type of agency within a field, presenting a more complicated conception of agency that can be simultaneously reproductive and transformative.*

# Introduction

It is a common assumption that a university education is a sure-fire pathway to both social and economic mobility. This assumption shapes many school-to-work transitions, narrowing the public perception into a false dichotomy. Either pursue a university degree in the hope of becoming socially mobile and financially stable, or, pursue 'lesser' forms of industrial and vocational training, or under-paid service work, with little hope of advancement. In recent years however, this assumption is being contested. In fact, one of these supposedly 'lesser' pathways, specifically the trades and their associated apprenticeship schemes, is in the middle of a boom in New Zealand. For the first time since its heyday as the most favoured career choice in the early 70's for students transitioning from school to work, the number of students in industry and apprenticeship training now currently exceeds those pursuing a university qualification (Industry Training Federation 2016).

This sudden shift in the perceived value of vocational education, specifically apprenticeship schemes, needs to be examined in greater detail. In fact, there is very little research on what experiences in school, lead to the decision to pursue an apprenticeship as opposed to tertiary education. In the context of this study, the apprentices who I have interviewed were often perceived as 'taking care of themselves', with schools not actively encouraging their students to pursue a trade and if trades bound kids are already set on their apprenticeship through connections outside of school. As this is considered a 'taken for granted' assumption for students who do not fit the dominant discourse around tertiary education, not a lot of research has been done on the specific ways in which these students transition into a trade in New Zealand, and nor has there been any consideration of how students transition into a trade from outside this narrowly defined understanding of apprenticeships in the context of school-to-work transitions.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide empirical data on this very issue, following the specific journeys of apprentices who decide to pursue an apprenticeship at the expense of a university degree. To help unpack this topic, this thesis will draw from Bourdieu's theory of practice to help explain respondents' decisions to pursue in trades. Through this specific lens, it becomes apparent that this understanding of apprenticeships 'taking care of themselves' undersells the complexity of the field, as apprentices from different backgrounds with varying

experiences and social connections, challenge this narrowly defined picture of apprenticeships in New Zealand. To capture a more representative picture of this 'challenge', picking apprentices from a range of different trades and educational backgrounds was an essential part of the data collection process.

## Methodology

This study conducted a total of fourteen interviews. Twelve of these participants were men and two were women. All the participants' interviewed in this study identified as New Zealand European/Pakeha, except for one who identified as Māori. Ten of the participants were either an apprentice at the time of the interview or had completed their apprenticeship in the past five years. The remaining four interviews were key informant interviews, business owners who each provided their perspective of apprenticeship training, alongside a general picture of the state of the trades in New Zealand. The participants were from a diverse number of trades, both in and out of the construction industry. The trades covered in this study were plastering, painting, electric, joinery, engineering, digital print and forestry.

To gather my data, I used a snowball sampling method. I started with old high school contacts, with the aim of moving to people I had no connections to at all. However, one of the difficulties I had very early on was that rather than 'snowballing', going further away from that initial known contact, it became more of a circle in that I was just pointed to people I had already interviewed. Instead of leading me to other apprentices who I had not met, my initial contacts always suggested an apprentice who I already had a prior connection with. I am not sure why this was the case, perhaps they thought it would be easier for me if they suggested someone I already knew, but regardless, it meant that I had to pursue alternative methods for finding apprentices to interview.

I started by contacting local businesses, asking through local employers, for apprentices who might be interested in talking to me about their journey into an apprenticeship. Unfortunately, I could not go through the apprentices themselves as the business owners approached them on my behalf. I soon stopped pursuing this type of recruitment because it was hard to gauge if there was a genuine interest from the apprentices, or if I was unintentionally profiting from the power dynamic between a tradesman and their apprentice.

Instead, I went through training companies or ITO's (Industry training organisations), as they did not have as much of a stake in the individual apprentice compared to a business owner. ITO's put me in contact with some of their past apprentices who form their 'ambassador' programs. These were apprentices who had achieved at a very high level and had been successful in their chosen trade. Fortunately, I was able to snowball more effectively from these apprentices than I was from those I knew back in high school. Through this, I was given a very specific slice of the apprenticeship scheme in New Zealand, with apprentices who had achieved at a high level and been successful in their transition into a trade. It is important to add that this presents an overly positive view of apprenticeships in New Zealand, as it only highlights those who have successfully found or completed their apprenticeship, it does not include any apprentices who either dropped out of their apprenticeship or failed to find a full-time position afterwards. I could not find anyone who had completed an apprenticeship and decided not to continue with their chosen profession.

**Organisation of the thesis**

Now that I have laid out the context of the data and how it was collected, it is important to establish the current position of apprentices in New Zealand before proceeding with a detailed analysis of these apprentice's individual transition into an apprenticeship. As such, the first chapter of this thesis sets the scene of apprenticeships in New Zealand, tracing its history from its position as part of a strong industrial working class in the 70's, to its more precarious position now. The second chapter provides more detailed summary of Bourdieu's theory of practice, specifically focusing on his concepts of habitus and field, which will form the basis of the theoretical analysis in this thesis. As well as highlight these concepts use in other vocational education studies. Once this theory is established in more detail, the following chapters will put habitus and field to work, both as a methodological and theoretical tool for analysis.

The following chapters will categorise each apprentice based on how much they 'fit' into their apprenticeship. Some individuals find themselves to be like a 'fish in water' with their habitus, seamlessly inhabiting their new social field, while others actively work to change their 'habitus' to help fit into the system or actively contest the boundaries and try and change the

make-up of the field. The structure of each of these chapters will focus on two very specific objectives that are at the heart of this thesis. The first objective is to explore the social and cultural mechanisms that allow for these 'fish in water' moments in each apprentice' respective trade, while also exploring how apprentices cope in their trade, in the absence of these moments, as is the case when a habitus does not necessarily match the field. The second objective of these chapters is to assess the level of reproductive and transformative agency apparent in these transitions into a trade. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is often criticized as being overly reproductive in its conception of agency, but through the differing levels of engagement with this idea of being a 'fish in water', the transitions of these apprentices appear simultaneously reproductive and transformative in their agency, each exhibiting various levels of transformation and reproduction as their own perspective of the field in which they are situated in, overlaps with the wider, structural rules of the field.

Each chapter will gradually complicate this transition from school to work. The third chapter will describe the journeys of apprentices who fit succinctly within the trade, those who I would deem that have come from a 'traditional' background, orientated around family ties to a trade. The fourth chapter will introduce apprentices who have had a more complex journey into a trade, coming from a non-traditional background, finding their apprenticeship by 'luck' after their time in secondary school. The fifth chapter introduces apprentices from a similar background, as chapter four, but who must contend with a trade in the middle of a rapidly changing industry that creates questions around what an apprenticeship means in trades that heavily integrate technologies and alternative training pathways to a broadly traditional industry. The sixth and final chapter will assess the possible policy implications of this research on future apprenticeship training, as well as provide a critique of future directions for further study in vocational education studies and Bourdieu based studies in general. This thesis is an attempt to cut through the false dichotomy of school to work transitions being either 'uni or maccas', to provide a more nuanced and appropriately complex take on school to work transitions for working class youth in New Zealand.

# Chapter one: The state of apprenticeships in New Zealand

It was not until my second interview of this project that I thought I had made a huge mistake. He was a plasterer, a guy I had played hockey with in high school whom I had not seen in nearly eight years. At the time of this interview, I was 26, living with my mother and had no assets to speak of, living off a government loan and the good graces of my parents alongside any part-time job I could find that would suit the life of a post-graduate. Whereas he, also 26, was married, had kids and had just set out on his own and was expecting his first six figure year in profits in only his second year as an independent contractor. In terms of measuring myself against him in reaching self-sufficient 'adult' status, I felt like I was coming out second best when comparing our life journeys. Now of course, post-graduate study is long, and it does not necessarily translate into a steady rate of return outside of education and I was aware of that, but at the same time, I could not help but wonder if along the way I had missed a beat compared to my high school friend in that I went on to tertiary education instead of an apprenticeship.

When I reflect on this, my time growing up and transitioning into 'work' never once considered doing an apprenticeship. For an academically centred child like myself, university was the only pathway presented to me and this choice was affirmed by family, school and society as being the most 'successful' choice for becoming socially, and more importantly, economically mobile. As each interview mirrored the last, it made me question the relative success of university versus a trades-based education in terms of economic and social mobility. It made me want to know, why, an apprenticeship was never pitched to me in the first place? This question is the crux of this thesis. How do working-class kids like me end up taking the supposedly 'lesser' path of an apprenticeship, rather than university? And what do their struggles and joys tell us about working class identity in New Zealand today?

To begin with tackling such a complex question, the first thing that needs to be defined is what it means to do or be in an apprenticeship. Although the understanding of an apprenticeship is constantly evolving (as I will elaborate on in later chapters), this summary from Gospel (1998) will be used as a working definition. Gospel describes an apprenticeship as:

a method of employment and on-the-job training which involves a set of reciprocal rights and duties between an employer and a trainee (usually a young person): the employer agrees to teach a range of skills, usually of a broad occupational nature; in return the apprentice agrees to work for an extended period at a training wage which is low compared with the qualified workers' rate, but which rises periodically as the apprenticeship nears completion ... productive work and on-the-job training [may] alternate with off-the-job training in an educational institution often partly financed by the state (Gospel 1998, 436).

An apprenticeship involves a close connection between a trainee and an employer in which a range of skills are traded in exchange for agreeing to work at a 'training' wage. The bargain here is that once the training is completed, the apprentice would be earning a higher wage than would have been impossible without the skills being passed down by a mentor. I want to emphasise this idea of a 'mentor' in this description, as I will refer to it throughout the thesis as the focal point for assessing a successful apprenticeship.

## Apprenticeships in New Zealand

Where do apprenticeships fit in the development of the trades in New Zealand? A full history of apprenticeships from its early settler origins to contemporary society is larger than the scope of this thesis (See Murray 2001 for a more detailed account of the history of apprenticeships). To contextualise my study of apprenticeships I will start when they were at their height, as part of a strong industrial working class during the post-war boom, through to the slow decline of the industry in the 80's and 90's, before the recent upsurge in the last few years.

A big reason for the success of apprenticeships during the post-war years was due, in no small part, to the dominance of Keynesian economics. This approach rejected neo-classical economic theory, which held an economy would automatically reach a 'general equilibrium' when supply of goods and services equalled demand, meaning that all economic resources were being used effectively (Humpage 2017, 121). Ideas like this had led to governments reducing spending to combat inflation, without regard to the significant hardship placed on citizens. Against this approach, Keynes advocated that governments should increase spending

to aid the unemployed, and to create public work programmes that would ensure that citizens had a decent income. In turn, this maintained demand by giving citizens the ability to purchase goods (Humpage 2017, 122-123). The trades, being a big part of the industrial working class in New Zealand at the time, benefited from this push for full employment. As such, apprenticeships within New Zealand boomed, with it often being described as a 'golden age' of apprenticeships. The proportion of school-leavers going into a trade were as high as 33.7 percent in 1957, one of the highest rates in the world at the time (Murray 2001). Growth in apprenticeships stayed relatively consistent until the late 70's and early 80's as the economy in New Zealand shifted from a Keynesian based model to a neoliberal model.

In 1984 the Labour government at the time used the crisis to eliminate its planned social democratic programme and instead implemented a neo-liberal market model. Low inflation was the new focus, alongside less public expenditure, with most of the trade regulations and controls protecting domestic industries being removed. This triggered a massive change in New Zealand's economic landscape. Where the Keynesian approach prioritized social rights that ensured a decent standard of living, the new neoliberal regime focused on property rights which establish ownership – and thus the ability to profit from – as a resource (Humpage 2017, 125). The number of apprentices, while steady in the first half of the 80's, dramatically declined in the second half, plummeting from between 25,000 and 30,000 contracts, to only 16,000 contracts in 1990. The reason for the decline was because the lack of flexibility in the industry and the unwillingness to adapt to changing skills requirements in the industry, which had been glossed over thanks to full employment and a robust economy. These deficiencies were suddenly exposed as the domestic trades were opened to more competition from abroad (Murray 2001). The apprenticeship system had been highly regulated and bureaucratic, making it difficult for new industries to enter the system. The apprenticeship system was also occupation based, and there was a desire from some industries that straddled more than one of the apprenticeship occupations for a more integrated approach to training (Ministry of Education 2015).

In response to the demands for a more flexible system of training, combined with the sudden drop in apprentices, apprenticeship training underwent a fundamental shift in New Zealand. Up until 1992, the Government subsidised workplace-based training mainly

through the apprenticeship system and was more involved with training. The apprentice was one corner of a triangle, the other two points being the government and the business offering the apprenticeship (Murray 2001). Effectively, the government subsidized training for an employer, but there were no guarantees or quality assurance around this training, with the business owner being ultimately responsible for ensuring training. Replacing this system, the Industry Training Act 1992 set up industry training organisations or ITOs to take over apprenticeship training (Ministry of Education 2015). The traditional apprenticeship contract was replaced with a training agreement between the trainee, the employer, and the ITO. ITOs, run by individual sectors of industry, set national standards for training, arranged the training, and assured its quality (Industry Training Federation 2016). The government's new role was to encourage industry to take up the new system, promote efficient forms of training, and help fund the training process. Initially this reform worked as the industry focused specifically on growth. More ITO's, more apprentices and more trainees were the catch-call of industry, as that sector ballooned and started bolstering the losses felt in the late '80s (Industry Training Federation 2016).

And while neo-liberal policies that pushed the individualisation of employment relations gave employers greater flexibility in how they engaged and remunerated workers, it weakened the collective organisation and bargaining power of workers, and constrained wages and work conditions. This had especially severe consequences for the most vulnerable workers – the low-skilled, the casual workers, those in small and non-unionised workplaces – in a market where the supply of low-skilled labour greatly exceeded demand (Ongley 2016, 90). When the 2008 financial crisis hit, it was those in vulnerable, low paid apprenticeships that bore the brunt of the crash. The number of apprentices and industry trainees had halved by 2010. Further, qualification completion rates had dropped to 31%, as many trainees and apprentices fell victim to layoffs and were mismanaged by an ITO system that had focused on growth and not enough on developing outcomes for those under its charge (Industry Training Federation 2016). In response to this downturn, the ITO's underwent another shift, streamlining the number of training organisations from over 40 to 11 since 2008, and renewed the focus on 'completion' rather than the quantity of those involved in industry training. As such, ITO's have recorded high rates of completion, now up to 75%, putting it in line with most other tertiary providers. The number of industry

trainees sat at 138,000 in 2016, with just under 42,000 of those working as apprentices, a slightly higher proportion of the workforce compared to 1987 (Industry Training Federation 2016). Interestingly, as much as growth has been touted as important, the numbers of actual apprentices have only just caught up to the number in 1987 (Industry Training Federation 2016).

The key takeaway in this very brief history of apprenticeship of the past 40 years, is to highlight the various cycles of 'boom and bust' in terms of enrolment and retention of those in apprenticeship schemes. As soon as the market bottoms out the first jobs to go are apprenticeships, because of their relative lack of power compared to business owners; this is coupled with the commitments necessary to nurturing an apprentice over a long period of time, which creates risks for an employer during an economic downturn. It is important to bear the 'cyclic' nature of apprenticeship numbers in mind, because we are now in a 'boom' phase again. The ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment reports that the demand for the trades is increasing. Carpentry, building, and plumbing are all showing an increased demand for their services from 2008 through to 2020 in New Zealand. The number of online job vacancies for these professions has steadily increased since 2008, with some having grown by up to two and a half times in this period. A lot of this growth can be attributed to the Christchurch rebuild and the current housing shortage in major city centres like Auckland and Wellington, but employment growth has greatly improved for most trades since the 2008 financial crisis. However, just as there were no guarantees during 2008, the same is true now, so while growth in the trades is booming, it is important to highlight the inherent precarity for all apprentices regardless of economic conditions.


**Apprenticeships and Social Class**

How do apprenticeships and the trades tie into conceptions of social class in contemporary New Zealand? It is not easy to fit these categories together, as there is some difficulty in placing class within New Zealand society in general (Ongley 2016). In fact, many people do not consider class to be a significant part of their own identities, nor an important dimension of New Zealand society (See Haddon 2015 and Ongley 2016 for a more detailed class analysis from a New Zealand context). This is partly due to our settler history and our tightly held

historical ideal of egalitarianism that held New Zealand as a country of opportunity where class boundaries are less rigid than elsewhere (Ongley 2016). Space constraints mean this thesis cannot explore class in any real depth, but as noted above, apprenticeships and trades originated in a strong industrial working class that was in its height after the Second World War (Ongley 2016). A lot has changed since then, especially following neoliberal reform in New Zealand. The term 'working class', as in the world over, has become an increasingly contested term. The working class has evolved from its traditional roots of factory work and manual labour, as jobs have left this sector with deindustrialisation and been replaced with more precarious employment in service related industries. As such, more of an emphasis has been placed on working class educational outcomes and job attainment in contemporary society, as the traditional working-class pool of jobs has been rapidly depleted.

As noted above, the trades are in the middle of another boom. In fact, the number of apprentices and industry trainees exceed the numbers of students currently at university as of 2016 (Industry Training Federation 2016). How are we to understand this contemporary surge of trades-related jobs, which are so deeply connected historically to the industrial working class? Given deindustrialization and the massive shift in New Zealand away from Keynesianism, the growth of apprenticeships this time must be different. But how? To help contextualize this, I will use the works of Standing (2011) and his concept of the 'precariat'. His class analysis focuses heavily on occupational status and is a good to explain the newfound fluidity of apprenticeships and the trades industry in general, in that they have survived de-industrialisation to a certain extent[1].

Standing (2011) describes contemporary capitalism from the point of view of the 'precariat', an emerging class position that has minimal trust relationships with capital or the state and is categorised by a lack of security in income, training, and representation. Being part of the 'precariat' comes with a peculiar status position, one that does not map neatly onto either high status professionals or middle-status craft occupations but is relatively fluid in that the boundaries between professional and precariat is often blurred, with individuals easily falling

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[1] As a Bourdieusian scholar, you do not normally treat class in a strictly economic sense, like Standing does with the Precariat. I mention this specific class theory to establish the current economic position of apprenticeships, as well as draw attention to how apprenticeships are defined by periods of transitional precarity. Bourdieu involves thinking from a social and cultural dimension in relation to class, and this will be discussed in greater length in the following chapters.

in and out of precarity and professional/middle class occupation (Standing 2011). In some ways, this describes the position of apprentices, in that they occupy a potentially precarious position, reliant on their business for adequate training with minimal interventions from the government who subsidise training but have little to no connection with apprenticeship schemes. But this does not fully explain their class position, as this precariousness is coupled with an identity that is still relatively stable. According to

Standing, besides labour insecurity, and insecure social benefits, those in the precariat lack a 'work-based identity.' When employed, they are in career-less jobs, without traditions of social memory, a feeling they belong to an occupational community steeped in stable practices, codes of ethics and norms of behaviour, reciprocity and fraternity (Standing 2011). This element of the 'precariat' does not fit the experience of apprenticeships, in that one of the things they do have is a stable occupational community with the promise of a clearly defined career ahead of them. So, while this term is initially useful, we need to add some caveats and point out where the 'precarious' tendencies in apprenticeships intersect with Standing's other class positions.

While the 'precariat' symbolises a growing group of individuals at the very bottom of society, which arguably apprentices fit within, Standing's overall class structure mentions multiple different class positions in western society. From the top to the bottom, these include the elite, the salariat, the profician, the diminished 'old' working class and the precariat (for more, see Standing, 2011). One of these positions above the 'precariat' in this hierarchy is the 'profician', a group that combines 'technician' with 'professional', which includes a bundle of skills that they can market, earning higher than average incomes on contract as independent workers, moving from one project to another at a high rate of return (Standing 2011). Standing also refers to the shrinking core of working class, manual employees, the 'old working class', the industrial labourers who once formed the backbone of an industrialised economy.

Based on the boom and bust cycles of the trades in New Zealand's history, and the fragility and precariousness of apprenticeships in New Zealand, the 'precariat' partially describes their unique class position in society. However, this only partly describes the class position of an apprentice as they are still grounded in the tradition and practice of an occupational

community that has stretched out for over 100 years in New Zealand, so it is 'precarity' grounded in the social memory of the industrial working class. As well as that, the trades also demonstrate qualities of the 'profician' in that trades-based workers can be socially mobile and financially successful. The draw of the trades is the potential of becoming a 'profician', an individual owner and operator who works on 'contract' and possesses some autonomy in their profession and how they conduct business. This is a big part of the trades in New Zealand in that apprentices are actively 'encouraged' to go out on their own, to either join up with a new business, or start their own. So, while some elements of the 'precariat' can explain the economic position of apprentices, the apprentices class position, if we are to call it that, is, all going to plan, a transitional one. The acquisition of their trade means, in a growing economy, that they move to a more stable economic position like the 'profician'.

Let me give you an example of what this hybrid precariat/profician identity looks like. Thomas, 24, who was initially made redundant after only his first year in his apprenticeship told me he was lucky to be laid off because he always wanted to 'work for myself and run my own business' and he sees himself as upwardly mobile because of his position as a young business owner:

> I would probably consider myself working class, but I have seen enough tradies enough that have done well that you would probably put them in the upper class. I mean my previous boss he had a nice million-dollar property and he started with nothing, so I have always seen it as that I am probably working class at the moment but that is only a stepping stone to moving up in the world and that. It is more of a case of if I work hard and that I can move up and get what I want.

His response typifies the sentiments of most apprentices I talked to who have come from construction-based trades' backgrounds. For Thomas and other apprentices like him, the trades are a socially mobile profession once you enter that level of a 'profician' as a potential new business owner. But until that happens, they are extremely vulnerable to booms and busts.

If we consider this from a purely economic perspective, there is actually very little difference between the economic outcomes of trades' educated students and tertiary educated

students in terms of overall earnings. In a report from the ITF (Industry Training Federation 2016), it is argued that, against the common assumptions around the power of the university degree in competition with apprenticeships, the earning potential for someone with a university background versus a trade's background is negligible in New Zealand:
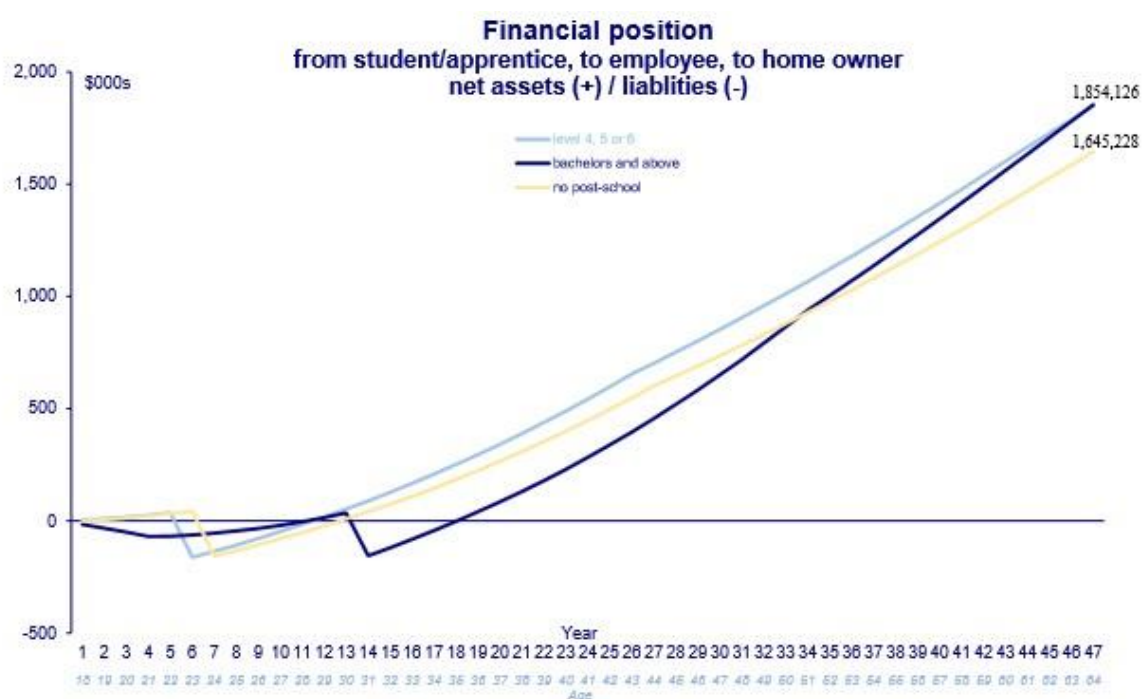


Figure 1.1: Financial position of New Zealanders over the life course from various educational backgrounds.

The net financial position of degree holders and apprentices at the end of their careers is almost the same. This result is driven by the apprentices earning more, earlier, and buying a house earlier and contributing to Kiwisaver earlier (Industry Training Federation 2016). Of course, this does not consider the nuance and the complexities of each apprentice and their specific journey from a wide variety of different trades, but it does highlight that a trade is 'more' than just a working-class job and that you can be socially mobile in a profession that can compete with tertiary education in a strictly economic sense, which has often been the anecdotal argument for tertiary education over vocational education. Of course, this is an oversimplified view of the intersection between class and the trades in New Zealand, but it does help us see how the trades are both economically precarious and enticing; and how they

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have developed from their early working class, industrial roots into something that, while still tied to those roots, has a very different conception.

On the surface, apprenticeships are a fascinatingly complex but understudied social phenomenon as an alternative transition into the work. In New Zealand, like the world over, the opportunity for upward social mobility has taken a hit as high levels of unemployment, increased levels of inequality, and the higher cost of education and housing have limited an individual's ability to be socially mobile in New Zealand society. What was once the prescribed pathway of social mobility has eroded, and now the number of people in industry and apprenticeship training exceeds those currently in tertiary education. All of this begs the question of if we are perhaps seeing a turn in the perceived value of tertiary education in providing positive outcomes in job acquisition and retention as people realise that the 'degree' alone is not enough in securing a job after education? If so, what would that change mean for occupations like apprenticeships, which may hold the promise of a pathway to success that can skirt around tertiary education?

It is impossible to understand how the value of an apprenticeship may be changing, without first understanding the many cultural factors that make it difficult for working class kids to succeed in tertiary education. To be successful in tertiary education requires a very specific set of social and cultural information outside of getting a degree. This has been documented in numerous studies (Silva 2013, Bathmaker et al 2016, Clark & Zukas 2016, and Ingram 2011) that identify the numerous strategies that are deployed by middle-class families to ensure successful educational outcomes for their children. The way middle class students can 'play the game' with their privileged access to valued social and cultural capital in education is invaluable in an increasingly congested and competitive graduate labour market. Silva and Corse's (2017) study on the learning outcomes for working class and middle-class students elaborates on these strategies that lead to successful outcomes in tertiary education, describing them as a way to construct an 'agentic self'.

This 'agentic self' is built overtime through taken-for-granted mechanisms and constant interaction in their day to day lives, which promote a type of self that imagines itself as effective in its actions with an institutional environment that is responsive to that action. Actors who are capable of exerting control over the outcomes of their future. The middleclass

respondents Silva and Course interviewed comfortably inhabited this 'agentic self', but those from working-class backgrounds often struggled to convey a sense of themselves as being able to act meaningfully into the future, expressing a sense that external constraints limited their future choices out of high school (Silva and Corse 2017). Relating this back to apprenticeships in New Zealand, there is not the same level of focus on the strategies or experiences that make up an 'agentic self' that would apply to apprentices and their transition from school to work. We need to apply some sort of 'agentic self' analysis for people who do not go into tertiary education, to better understand what taken for granted mechanisms and interactions contribute to the successful acquisition of a type of 'agentic self' in a trade, rather than portraying this pathway as the result of a failed transition into tertiary education. This is especially important from a New Zealand perspective as this pathway is becoming more prominent in discussions around transitions from school to work, as more people fresh out of school are seeing apprenticeships as an opportunity to be upwardly mobile in contemporary society.

# Chapter two: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and its use in vocational education studies

In the prior chapter, attention was drawn to the need for some sort of analysis based around the idea of an 'agentic self' for apprenticeships in New Zealand. The intent of this chapter is to formulate a strategy to assess the 'agentic self' but from a bourdieusian perspective. To do this, I will draw from Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field to assess the extent to which an apprentice can appear as a 'fish in water' in their respective trade, establishing the specific experiences, be it cultural or social connections, that contribute to their successful transition into the field. As such, more needs to be said about Bourdieu's theory of practice, specifically how each of these concepts interrelate with each other and how this theory has been used in education-based studies.

Habitus is an embodied way of thinking about someone's social actions or behaviour. How growth and development build from previous growth and development and how external forces like culture, economic welfare or social networks can affect one's strength or stability of character, and how privilege and certainty, or precarity and doubt can be reinforced through socialisation to become embodied ways of acting and thinking, such as how a person holds or sees themselves (Dean 2017). Bourdieu (1977, 72-73) describes habitus as the property of social agents (These are either groups or institutions) that involves 'structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures.' It is 'structured' by one's past and present circumstances, which can include things like your family upbringing and educational background. It is 'structuring' in that a habitus shapes your current and future practices. It is 'structure' in that this system is not random, but is rather, a system of dispositions which are used to generate perceptions, appreciations, and practices (Maton, 2008). These dispositions are described as a set of 'durable, transposable' values. Durable in that they last for a long time, and transposable in a way that means they can be used across a wide variety of social fields. Therefore, the habitus is structured by conditions of existence which generates practice and beliefs and so on, according to its specific structure (Maton, 2008).

These dispositions are not something consciously realised or controlled by a social agent.

Rather, they are a generative property inside social agents that act independently of the social agent who is unconscious of his habitus, which in conjunction with the field around them, produces practice. Bourdieu refers to habitus more accurately as 'embodied' dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977). In effect, turning our lived-in experience of socialisation into an embodied concrete structure that is unconsciously accessed by the individual. According to Bourdieu, the power of habitus is in an action becoming defined by its thoughtlessness of habit, rather than consciously learned rules and principles that are then acted out. Social performances are produced routinely, without any reference to a body of knowledge, and without the social agent necessarily knowing what they are doing, becoming 'second nature' to the social agent (Jenkins, 1992). Because of this embodiment, the habitus develops a momentum that can generate practices for some time even after the original conditions which shaped it has vanished. While the habitus is shaped by ongoing contexts, this process is slow, and the social agent is not conscious of the fact (Maton, 2008).

Some theorists (King 2000, Jenkins 1992, Yang 2000) argue against Habitus, stating that this concept is still overly deterministic because of this 'second nature' aspect to it, where dispositions or actions are accessed out of routine, rather than through conscious thought. However, this is not how Bourdieu envisions habitus, rather, he sees it as:

> Not the fate that some people read into it. Being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures... Having said this, I must immediately add that there is a probability, inscribed in the social destiny associated with definite social conditions, that experiences will confirm habitus, because most people are statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 133).

Habitus is, in fact, many things: it is history made real, it is dispositions modified or solidified in our everyday experiences, but this is only one puzzle piece to Bourdieu and his theory of practice. Habitus is the embodied dispositions of the field, so to understand habitus, a discussion of field is essential.

According to Bourdieu, fields operate similarly to a game (Thomson, 2008). The game is played on a field that is marked with internal divisions and an external boundary, with set positions in pre-defined areas, with set rules that all players must follow. The condition of the field, whether it be wet, dry, snowy, full of pot-holes and so on, also affect how the game is played. He suggests that, just like football, the social field consisted of positions occupied by social agents (people or Institutions) in a boundary which limits and shapes their actions (Thomson, 2008). The terminology of a 'Game' is also used to indicate strategy and indicates 'unofficial' rules. For Bourdieu, strategies are not considered fully inscribed in the logic of the situation or in the habitus of the agent but emerge through processes of adjustment that are located neither entirely in the unconscious nor entirely in conscious decision making. This is an important distinction to make, because strategies in social situations allow for and emphasise 'misfires' in social interactions where attempted practice fails because of some 'mal-adaptation' to the situation (Steinmetz 2011). Habitus is not just used to explain reproduction, but also change insofar as the systematic mismatches found between one's habitus and field, that is, between habitus and the requirements of the situation.

As well as a field representing potential change for individual actors, the 'game' analogy also implies a commitment to the value of the activities and the capital of the field, that is, a belief that the investment is worthwhile (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2007; Warde, 2004). An important distinction to make about field theory is that when using this game analogy, the field does not just represent the terrain on which the game is played, in the form of a given set of structural conditions. Rather, the field is a social space that involves negotiation between participants in processes of positioning both the self and others and being positioned by them (Bathmaker 2015). This negotiation does not just occur within the rules but is also for defining the rules of the field. In this respect, fields are not just fixed in space and time, but are 'historical constellations that arise, grow, change shape and sometimes wane or perish over time, based on the capital and habitus of its participants and how they strive to maintain or alter the rules in any given field' (Wacquant 2007, 268 as quoted by Bathmaker 2015).

As well as negotiating for the right to define the rules of the field, individuals also compete for capital, which is a resource that helps define your social position within any given field. In everyday talk, the word capital is typically associated with the economic. However,

Bourdieu wanted to 'extend the sense of the term 'capital' by employing it in a wider system of exchanges whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields' (Moore, 2008, p. 102). Bourdieu argues that rather than just the economic, there are two other forms of capital too: the economic (money and assets); the cultural (e.g. forms of knowledge, taste, cultural preferences; language, narrative and voice); and the social (e.g. affiliations and networks; family, religious and cultural heritage) (Moore, 2008). If we now consider the place of capital in social fields, then contrary to Bourdieu's game analogy there is no level playing ground in a social field. Players who enter the game with certain forms of capital are advantaged because the field depends on, as well as produces, more of that capital, and as mentioned above, those with economic capital are in a more advantageous position when it comes to this accumulation, considering the value Bourdieu assigns to it in this theory of practice. So, the importance of capital stems from its purpose as being the main reason for the game, it is what individuals strive to achieve, but it is also used to define the social, cultural, and economic resources one possesses to achieve the acquisition of more capital.

Bourdieu's intent with his theory of practice is to eclipse the supposedly 'compulsory' choice between subjectivism and objectivism. Rather than becoming dragged down by debates around what side to choose, Bourdieu argued for a methodology that would bring together an inter-dependent system– field, capital and habitus – a self-regulating system in which no part is causal or dominant (Moore 2008). 'In rejecting the determinism of mechanistic explanations of social life, however, he does not want to fall into the other trap, as he perceives it, of viewing conscious and deliberate intentions as a sufficient explanation of what people do' (Jenkins 1992, 65). Bourdieu is wary of an understanding of social interaction that is posited on a model of human behaviour as rational and calculative. His objections to this are numerous, but his main concern is that in 'locating the dynamic of social life in individual and conscious decision-making it ignores the individual and collective histories which unconsciously generate the ongoing reality of social life' (Bourdieu 1977, 65).

For Bourdieu, a theory of social interaction must consider the historical and its current context on the present and the change it produces over time. Habitus is an attempt at bridging the gap between these two extremes, the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism. In presenting this model of strategy and strategizing, Bourdieu is trying to communicate a

mixture between structure and agency which characterises social interaction (Maton 2008). It is true that there is a distinctive set of rules that are attached to his 'field of struggles' and these do to a certain extent determine what the social agent can and cannot do, but the field itself can also be volatile and change drastically; so 'the practices produced by the habitus, as the strategy-generating principle enable agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations' (Bourdieu 1977, 72), rather than being a deterministic structure, habitus is meant to leave room for some degree of change. The extent to which this concept has achieved this quality is hotly contested and will be explored in more detail in relation to studies based in the field of education.

Up to this point, I have laid out the elements of Bourdieu's theory of practice and shown how it is meant to be understood. I would now like to discuss Bourdieu in the context of education and why so many researchers draw on his theories to understand the learning outcomes of students across all levels of education. A lot of Bourdieu's early work was focused on education, with one of his more well-known texts focused on the learning outcomes of working class and middle-class students in high school. In this, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977b) address why social agents from middle-class backgrounds are more likely to attend university, and those from working-class back- grounds are less likely. Rather than the educational system restricting access from those who come from non-traditional backgrounds, these individuals relegate themselves out of the system, seeing university as 'not for the likes of me' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977b). Conversely, middle-class social agents are more likely to consider university education as a 'natural' step (Maton 2008, 58). This interpretation is tied to Bourdieu's theory of practice, in that the correct habitus fits in a field like a 'fish in water' which, in relation to Bourdieu's study, saw middle class students as being like a 'fish in water' when it came to their transition to university as opposed to working class students who felt a disconnect between their habitus and their entry into the field of higher education. As such, there have been countless studies on the learning and occupational outcomes of working-class students who enter higher education based on those interwoven ideas of habitus, field and capital mentioned above (See chapter one for more information).

However, the same cannot be said about vocational studies. It is only recently that there has been an interest in vocational pathways within education studies. As Lehmann and Taylor state, there is often an assumption that

'vocational forms of post-secondary (and secondary) education are the logical and uncontested alternative for those who fail in academic education. Yet, if the relationships between habitus and field affect individuals' experiences in academic higher education, they should be equally important for understanding experiences in vocational education' (On the role of habitus and field in apprenticeships 2015).

This 'uncontested' assumption is likely the result of the imbalance in status between higher education and vocational education. The importance of vocational education is obscured because it is often framed as a pathway that on the surface is not a site of contestation and inequality like the field of higher education but as the result of a *failed attempt* at higher education. It shows a bias in the literature on what scholars have previously discussed about vocational education and the authority or prevalence we place on econometric based analysis of the benefits of higher education in comparison to vocational education. As such, there is a relatively small sample of research on vocational education, even fewer when looking for a Bourdieusian based analysis of vocational education.

One of the major contributors to this field, who focuses on the interplay between habitus, field and capital is Lehmann and Taylor's (2015) study on the pathways into apprenticeships in Canada. They found that apprentices are less likely to become members of a community of practice or develop a vocational identity unless that identity is already shaped through their habitus. Therefore, those who bring to an apprenticeship a 'natural feel for the game', those with a habitus situated in a family familiar with the trades and apprenticeship training, will likely find it easier to transition in apprenticeships and be successful in them (On the role of habitus and field in apprenticeships 2015).

The reason for success was found in the alignment of habitus and field.

'If habitus and field are aligned, players have an intuitive sense of the game and are more likely to do well. If they are not aligned, players are less likely to understand the purpose of the game, its rules and its intricacies. There are opportunities to assist those whose habitus does not fit the field; however, the negative consequences of this mismatch are exacerbated in fields that are very complex or very unfamiliar. (Lehmann and Taylor 2015).'

The importance of habitus is heightened in Canada because the apprenticeship field there is largely unregulated, and whatever rules exist to protect apprentices in their learning needs are poorly enforced. That means that the 'right' habitus works as a form of protection and fosters agentic behaviour during the apprenticeship. An understanding of the trades protects the apprentices from unfair/unsafe work practices that can occur for some apprentices (Lehmann 2005; Taylor, Lehmann and Raykov 2015). While this approach is valuable in identifying educational inequalities within the field of vocational education, it is heavily reliant on 'habitus' as an explanatory concept, and does not engage enough with field theory, and whether or not the boundaries of that field, or the rules of the game, are being actively negotiated by apprentices, to 'make up' or 'challenge' these habitus-based inequalities.

One of the reasons agency is often characterized as strictly reproductive in critiques of field theory, is because of the lack of a consideration of temporality and how positions within a field can change over time. Grenfell, Grenfell and David 1998, do a good job of introducing aspects of temporality in Bourdieu based studies in education with their concepts of 'turning points' and 'routines'. At a turning point, a person goes through a significant transformation in identity. Career development can be an uneven pattern of routine experience interspersed with such turning points. Within each turning point, career decisions are pragmatically rational and embedded in the complex struggles and negotiations of the relevant field (Grenfell, Grenfell and David 1998). They could discern three different types of turning points in their data. The first are *structural turning points* which are determined by external structures of institutions that are involved. One such turning point and the most important turning point in this thesis will be the structural change that comes at the end of compulsory schooling. Some are *self-initiated*, as in, the individual is instrumental in precipitating the change, in response to a range of factors in his/her personal life in the field. Finally, some turning points are *forced* by the external events of the actions of others. As a person lives through a turning point, the habitus of the person is changed (Grenfell, Grenfell and David 1998)

These turning points, where a habitus and field are initially agreed upon, are then tested by routines. A *confirmatory routine* reinforces the career decision already made so that this new identity develops broadly along the way in which the subject hoped. A *contradictory routine*, by contrast, undermines the original decision. The person may become dissatisfied and decide

that the current situation is no longer adequate or appropriate. The result can be a self-initiated turning point, a development of coping strategies to deflect attention away. Turning points are the site' of change, while routines can either solidify a position or spark another turning point over time. As people act, as others around them also act, and as positions within which they are located change, habitus can be modified (Grenfell, Grenfell and David 1998). This analysis is like Yang's (2014) interpretation of agency and how the disconnection between habitus and field, can be a mechanism for conscious change within a field.

Yang argues that instead of looking at hysteresis as a structural gap between habitus and field, we should be looking at the 'mismatch' when social agents enter a field that is outside their class or field trajectory. Bourdieu typically referred to this as a 'deviant' trajectory, in contrast to what he typically called the collective trajectory of the social agent's original class (Yang 2014). Yang's (2014) idea is that in circumstances such as this, regular expectations and chances fall out of line with their usual field and habitus. Through this, a margin of freedom is created for the interrupter. The greater distance between the individual habitus and that of the current field, would require the social agent to develop from an unconscious mastery of practice, into conscious awareness and strategic calculation which would then lead to a transformation of their primary habitus. The idea is that the social agent would become more sensitive in this new field and would consciously correct their 'inappropriate' behaviours, until they had inscribed the social structures of this new field into their bodies and created embodied dispositions which form their new habitus (Yang 2014). While this does hint at potential change within a field, in that change is consciously as well as unconsciously handled, it ultimately does the same thing as much of the interpretation of Bourdieusian theory in overemphasising reproductive agency which is conceived as either confirming to the field or transitioning out of the field.

I think Bourdieusian theory can capture forms of agency that are not merely reproductive of the conditions of the field or that simply push the actor out of the field because of a lack of fit. Field theory can, I argue, acknowledge that all individuals in a field, regardless of position, actively struggle not just for the preservation of a field, but for the transformation of it as well. This is what seems to be missing in the current analysis of vocational studies. It is not to say that reproduction is not important and that it does not happen, but that the

> 'Reproduction process, however, is never fully stable or absolute and, under particular circumstances, the structured choices that agents make can have a more or less transformative impact on the nature of structures themselves. Human agency and social structure, then, have a simultaneously antagonistic and mutually dependent relationship (Hays 1994, 65).

Structured choices by agents are always being managed and contested, and what an agent does is just as important as what a structure tells, either consciously or subconsciously, how an agent should act. Structures, in this sense, are in the process of constant readjustment and in this constant readjustment, though infrequently, it can lead to the possibility of change at a deeper level (Hays 1994, 64).

To bring a more transformative element into vocational studies, more of a focus needs to be placed on field theory and the ways in which individuals not only reproduce field conditions, but actively seek to contest and change them. It is not to say that field is not present in the studies I have highlighted so far, but that field as a concept often takes a backseat to the more prominent concept of habitus. And because of that choice, transformative agency tends to take a back seat to reproductive agency. Earlier in the chapter, I described field in the analogy of a game, but the most important factor of a field which seems to be absent from the aforementioned research is that a field is supposed to:

> 'contain people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which various actors struggle for the *transformation or preservation* of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (Bourdieu 1990, 40–41, emphasis added).'

Contrary to how Bourdieusian theory has been received, Bourdieu himself seems to emphasize transformative and reproductive agency in equal measure. This was the focus In Watt-Malcolm & Barabasch's (2010) work, as they looked at how wealthy stakeholders, notably non-union associations, continue to lobby the government to reduce the qualifications for skilled trade certification to promote 'inter-provincial mobility' and encourage skilled labour from abroad in the field of apprenticeships in Canada. They

emphasised the relational elements of the field and how stakeholders in certain positions, can influence or change the state of play for others if they possess the right configuration of capital (Watt-Malcolm and Barabasch 2010). Stakeholders are essentially

> '[B]earers of capitals and, depending on their trajectory and on the position, they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or the subversion of this distribution (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 108-109 as quoted by Watt-Malcolm & Barabasch 2010)

In other words, some stakeholders can shape the field, rather than passively adjust to the market situation at the time. This interpretation presents a field that isn't static as the 'rules of the game' but, as mentioned earlier, as a site where these rules are constantly contested by various shareholders in different positions that challenge who defines or sets the boundaries of the field. It is in this contestation that of 'definition' that allows for moments of reproductive and transformative agency (Watt-Malcolm and Barabasch 2010).


Up to this point, I have provided a small snapshot of bourdieusian theory and how it is used in vocational education studies. This thesis and the following chapters in it, will use a synthesis approach to help explain the pathways of apprentices in New Zealand. Bourdieu's theories of habitus, field and capital will remain the same and form the basis of this analysis, but the theoretical direction going forward will be to deepen the analysis of Bourdieu in vocational studies, by adding more complexity to the discussion around agency and how it can be simultaneously reproductive and transformative within a field. How much agency is 'reproductive' or 'transformative' is relative, and rather than being conceived as a binary choice, it works more as a continuum, with each of these labels on the opposite ends of a spectrum. Regarding the importance of this research about the field of vocational education, there is value in this research purely because there is a lack of empirical data on apprenticeships in New Zealand that focus on the pathway from school to work. The context of this research is very similar to the extensive work that has been done in Canada on apprenticeships, but by focusing more closely on field theory and moments of

transformative agency, this research hopes to simultaneously add to both vocational studies and bourdieusian studies in general by attempting to address some of the more reproductive criticisms of Bourdieu's body of work.

# Chapter Three: Reproductive transitions into apprenticeships

*I just knew straight away. Even in senior year I knew straight away. Teachers would ask 'Oh, what are you going to do with your life? Where are you going to go? Are you going to uni? Do you want to get UE?' And I pretty much said 'Na, I'm going to go into the trades.'*

*Thomas, 26*

In this chapter, I will be sharing the journeys of three specific apprentices who best exemplify an 'ideal' habitus for the trades' industry. Each of these apprentices interact with their trade close to the ideal of being a 'fish in water' in their respective fields. This 'ideal habitus' is heavily influenced by their families, who are instrumental in setting up the apprenticeship, as well as providing the skills and knowledge to succeed in their field which often sets them apart from their contemporaries. These early experiences and expert knowledge has made them successful in their apprenticeships, but, this expertise comes at a cost as it also leads to a disinterest in school because of how prepared they already were before their transition from school into a trade.

I met Peter, 24, now a joiner, in his newly constructed home on a weekday after work, conducting our interview at a beautiful Macrocarpa table that he had crafted at his dad's factory during his off time. Soft spoken and practical, he told me that his decision to enter an apprenticeship in joinery after his father was made well before he even started high school:

> Ten? Yeah, I wanted to be a joiner when I was ten. Because we used to go to Maidstone [College] over in Upper Hutt, and after three o'clock we'd go to the factory. So, I'd always wanted to be making stuff, but I was never allowed to make stuff or even sweep the floors, yeah and just dad did it, so I wanted to do it. Yeah, just always around it. Used to go in the school holidays and work there, and clean up and make the odd thing, and just enjoyed it.

For Peter, always being around it was important. After school, school holidays, any spare moment, he was immersed in that space and wanted to be active in it. It was the same for Sam, also 24, a forestry worker who agreed to meet me at the local McDonald's after his shift had finished. Sam spoke animatedly and eloquently about his job, manoeuvring salt and

pepper shakers around our tiny McDonalds table as he tried to explain the finer points of his job. While not working with the same crew as his dad, who had retired from the forestry industry, that connection got him his first start in the industry and was a big part of his after-school activities growing up:

> Yeah, when I was at school, or younger times, I'm talking about primary school, I used to go out onto [dads] jobs and I always thought it was cool, seeing all the big machinery, like a 30-tonne digger, 16 tonne bulldozers, it was big machinery, and it was cool.

What ties all these apprentices together are early, formative experiences within the trade itself. Being involved with the job outside of school, going out on jobs, having inside knowledge of what the trade is and what it requires. As well as this, each of these apprentices did not just move into a trade, but they moved into the trade of their father who first introduced them to it. This is one of the more important aspects of their pathway as this establishes a connection in a similar field and provides access to a repository of expert knowledge that has led to their success in their respective trades. Peter reflects on this very aspect when thinking about how lucky he was that he ended up working in his dad's factory for his apprenticeship, compared to the other apprentices with whom he trained briefly at mandatory block courses:

> Peter: …. I always would have preferred it because I knew that I would've got looked after and got proper training. But, I didn't mind too much where it was, as long as I got one. Got an apprenticeship.
>
> Orin: So, was that a big concern about proper training?
>
> P: At the time I didn't, not too much, but once I got to, because I had to, every year, I had to do a three week polytechnic courses up in Palmy and you could see how far ahead I was in amongst all the other boys and so then it really hit me that I was in good hands because otherwise, yeah, I was at such a high level than all the other guys, just cause their bosses haven't trained them properly almost.

O: So, what were some of the things that you were just better at? Was there anything in particular?

P: Just everything.

O: Everything?

P: Yeah, just cause I'm one on one with Dad he could just teach me anything and everything and I think too because I wanted to be there. I think there was only one other guy that I reckon will stay in the trade and who is actually a bit passionate about it.

Peter is acutely aware that he is different, and that his knowledge, skill, and passion is not the norm among apprentices at the time he was doing his apprenticeship. He was initially concerned about training when it looked like he would have to apprentice elsewhere, but that was dismissed when he did secure the apprenticeship with his family. Considering the massive gulf, he encountered between his skill level and the other apprentices in his training block, does hint at how broad the skill levels of apprentices are and how varied the training they are receiving in New Zealand. It is difficult to conclude his description of the other apprentices and their struggles, as I was unable to do a follow-up and interview those who were part of these polytechnic courses, but it does suggest how crucial it is to secure the right employer when it comes to an apprenticeship. The reason for this assumption is that much of training for an apprentice is 'on the job' and polytechnic courses, which are mandatory, are too short to make up the deficit for poor on-the-job training. In fact, when speaking to key informants, they often stressed how highly individualised training schemes are and how often, they must retrain or 'reprogram' their new workers/apprentices to work within their system.

But, in working with his father, Peter knew that his employer was invested in his training. In a sense, he was able to avoid any potential precarity regarding his training through being trained by his family. However, he might have been okay in a potentially precarious work situation if he had found an apprenticeship outside of the family business, because he would still have the cultural capital to identify a case of that type and be able to navigate the dangers in that field. For Sam, when reflecting on his job training, he mentioned how he leaned on his

Dad's knowledge of the forestry industry to help navigate a potentially precarious situation with his first logging crew:

> Orin: So, depending on the company, it can be quite hit and miss regarding how much training you do and how valuable it is? Is that a big reason why you were changing?
>
> Sam: Yeah, I wasn't getting anywhere. I was just a number; I made up a number for them. I worked my heart out, and the pay didn't really reflect it well for what I was doing, and it wasn't benefiting me at all.
>
> O: So how did you realise that you were being taken advantage of? Is that a good word for it?
>
> S: Um, just, from my parents, my old man has been around it for years and years and it was hard for him to say as well because, you know, my boss being one of his real good mates but at the same time he had to look out for me.
>
> O: So, his knowledge really helped you out?
>
> S: Yeah and me knowing that I'm going to work and I'm doing the same thing every day, day in and day out. I'm trying to do other things, jumping onto the loader, giving up my smoko [smoke break], every day, day in and day out. Just wasn't really getting anything back from it.

For Sam, his first crew was taking advantage of his 'apprenticeship' status. He understood this because he had an inside understanding of the path of progression within the forestry industry, and his experiences with his first crew were not meeting his expectations of the job. However, instead of changing himself to fit the situation and the current work environment better, his dissatisfaction within the job had a defined cause and was linked to his prior knowledge of the field, provided by his father who has extensive experience of the field. As has been stated in previous studies in apprenticeships, specifically in Canada (See chapter 2 for more details), apprentices like Sam possess cultural capital that allows them to navigate the complexities of their current job environment. It enabled him to not only navigate a precarious situation but to outright shift his employment trajectory by moving out of his former crew and into one better equipped to train him and advance him in his field.

However, there is variation amongst these apprentices in terms of achieving good outcomes, even when possessing such a favourable habitus for the current field. To elaborate, there is a big difference between being able to 'recognize' precarious situations and an ability to actively change these positions for oneself. Thomas, the plasterer who I introduced in the first chapter, had experienced this first hand. His transition to a trade was much more precarious than Sam's or Peter's. His initial plan after school was to become a builder like his father, but after his father had to make him redundant because of a lack of work, he chanced into a plastering apprentice with someone from his football team. After having completed his apprenticeship, he again had to be let go because of a lack of work from his plastering mentor. His next job put him in a difficult situation, which he had to weather until his old mentor had built up enough of work to hire him back to continue plastering:

> When I went first to that company, the boss there said he would put me through the training, 'I'll set you to an apprenticeship, I'll get you all your qualifications in aluminium joinery', and I thought sweet-as, this sounds mean-as, hopefully I can get another qualification. I already had plastering as a qualification, so I thought sweet, I'll go out and get another qualification and do plastering again. But, I got nothing, often he would have said we would get trained up and qualified, but I wouldn't get one qualification while I was there.

So, like Sam, Thomas's training and education were hampered by a lack of tangible qualifications that recognised his skill. While he was incredibly skilled, he had no formal qualifications that would allow him to transition out of a difficult working situation. While cultural knowledge is incredibly important in recognising potential dangers in the trades, having social connections is just as important in navigating these moments of precarity in the lack of any tangible cultural currency in the form of credentials and qualifications. Thomas, even with a habitus ideally suited for his position in a trade, was still at the mercy of his current employer, and his lackadaisical and exploitative approach to training, while Thomas waited for his old mentor to provide him with more work. So, on one side, Sam and Peter are both socially and culturally equipped to navigate an apprenticeship that, in their cases, had some potential precarity by circumnavigating that difficulty by leaning on the expert knowledge they had accrued through their time growing up around the trade, and from social

connections to their specific trade through their family members. To a certain extent, Thomas is just as successful in navigating this precarity, but his experiences highlight the importance of not just cultural knowledge, but social connections in providing working situations that are beneficial for apprentices. Thomas's father, while a tradesman, was not in the same specific trade, so while his experiences with his father contributed to the correct habitus, the lack of social connections to the trades through that link, led him to a slightly more precarious transition than his counterparts.

Each of these apprentices possess a habitus that allows them to fit into a trade like 'a fish in water' and this feeling of 'fitting' or being 'suited' for a trade, comes at the expense of other facets of life, namely their time in school. Both Peter and Sam expressed a lack of engagement with class because high school did not meet their expectations for their future career path. So, while their upbringing had them ideally suited to pursue a trade, it also closed off other pathways that did not match with this apprenticeship identity, like high school. For Peter, this lack of engagement or enjoyment in school started early. As well as not making it to the end of the seventh form, Peter described his experiences of school in no uncertain terms:

Orin: So, going back to school, what was it about school that you hated so much?

Peter: Uh, just everything. Sitting in a classroom. Um, a lot of it too was not understanding it I think.

O: So, understanding like?

P: Especially English. I didn't really get what we were trying to achieve. You know some of the different, yeah, I just didn't- and I've always been an outside, hands-on tools sort of person so I just hated it in the classroom.

O: What do you mean by achieve? Do you mean there was no clear end goal as to what this was producing?

P: Yeah and I didn't get the point of what we were doing most of the time. Um, yeah, I just didn't understand it, so I lost interest quick.

For Peter, there is a disconnect between what he is studying and his future as a joiner. He has always been an 'outside, hands-on tools person', and what was taught in school never connected to his preferred future as a joiner. More importantly, the 'objective' or the product of education was not clear regarding what it was trying to produce. It was abstract compared to the practical world of the trades. As the school environment was too obscure, or too different, from his experiences of his chosen future as a joiner, it only served to reinforce his decision to leave school earlier than his peers. For Sam, his interpretation of school was slightly different, in that what he rebelled against the authority of the school, rather than the specific content of what was delivered:

Orin: Okay, so maybe we will go back to your time in school, so when you were in high school did you ever think about going on? Considering some other form of education? Did you ever think I might go to uni or something like that? Was that ever an option?

Sam: Probably not, no. I can't ever say it would've been. I didn't really like school that much, I wanted to go and do an extra, 3 or 4 or 5, years at uni or however many it is.

O: So, what was it that you didn't like about school?

S: Probably getting told what to do every day.

For Sam, he had already perceived that his time at school was a waste for what he planned to do and the rules of the field he was about to enter. So being told to do something that appeared to be utterly irrelevant to his future career path was frustrating for him to manage:

O: But you're all good with that at work?

S: Yeah, I don't really get told what to do. I already know what I'm doing.

O: Even earlier though?

S: Na but, I wasn't really because it was your old man's mate, it's kind of, you're trying your hardest not to let him down, and you're asking the questions, what can I do? But

you're asking everyone the questions like, what can I do now? What can I do now? Um, yeah, I don't know. It's different; I was getting paid to be told what to do I guess. I was going to work; I wasn't going to school and doing shit I didn't want to do and not getting paid because I feel like I was wasting my time.

There is a specific context in which authority could be respected in which he had learned through his time around the forestry industry. As well at that, he was more invested in it because of the family connection and the link to his Dad's mate, but at the same time, he is getting paid and doing work in something he had already earmarked for the future as something vital to him. What is being described or alluded to here is the distinct process of a 'trade' and how that is differentiated from the school environment. It is not only the logistics of acquiring apprenticeship schemes, which are admittedly a major factor in the acquisition and the ease in which they make their transition, but the fundamentals of what is 'enjoyed' about their apprenticeships, that help explain this decision to pursue a trade and why school never held their attention. It is the process of the job itself, the practical nature and the material markers of progression that appeal to the apprentices I have talked to:

Orin: So, what was it about joinery that you enjoyed? Can you try and describe why you enjoy it so much?

Peter: I suppose it's doing something that someone will have, or hopefully have for a long time. Its productive, and at the end of the day you can look at something and see what you've been working on for the past week, you can see what you've been working hard on, and one of the best things is when you look at a drawing and you make it, from the drawing to being built and everything all fits and it's all just tidy and nice.

As well as this, Sam also expressed the same desire regarding what he enjoys about the job:

> The variety and stuff I can do. Seeing a job from start to finish. Like a block of trees. You see it start, all standing, then all being cut down and then see it finished, and then you're packing the hauler up and then moving on to the next bit. That's quite cool.

Seeing a job from start to finish is a huge part of the allure of the trades. It is important to add that this desire was commonplace across all the apprentices I interviewed, not just with this specific group. The allure of the job is in that the process of their work is not fragmented or abstract. Unlike school, where their labour in education had no perceived connection with the work they envisioned in their future or any future, their trade provides a physical representation of their progress through the production of material goods that they get to oversee every step of the way.

This process by itself is only part of the picture when it comes to determining these young apprentice's outcomes. When comparing these early experiences within trade and their main enjoyment about the job with their time in high school, there is an apparent disconnect that needs to be explored. And it is in this process, and the divide between the 'practical and productive' mindset of the trades, versus the more abstract and general delivery of their high school education. Their prior experiences in the trades and the family connections that make a trade the 'common sense' choice for a career, drive a wedge between them and their time in secondary education. This 'wedge' bears similarities with the concepts of 'head work' and 'hand work' introduced by Braverman, to describe the rapid changes to labour relationships, forced by scientific management in industrial capitalism. Braveman's (Braverman 1974, 78) main critique of scientific management was related to the forced separation between 'conception from execution', where mental labour is separated from manual labour and then itself is sub-divided rigorously according to that same rule. Linking this back to this idea of a 'process' amongst apprentices, the value that is attached to that 'process' is that it represents a joining of conception and execution. Say we focus on Peter specifically, he can design a piece of furniture and he follows the entire process through until it is completed, his physical labour is not sub-divided or piecemeal. These apprentices have, in part, picked a trade because to them it represents their labour as being part of an entire process that encompasses this ideal of conception and execution. If we contrast this with their time in school, while they

experience moments of 'conception' in high school's more abstract delivery of education, this education has no connection to something that can be used or 'executed' in their narrowly defined habitus, that is heavily shaped by their early experiences in the trades. In a sense, these craftsmen feel the legacy of industrial capitalism, as the choice between the trades and school appears zero-sum and at odds with a job that has a tangible, but incomplete, understanding of that process of conception and execution.

Like in other research on apprenticeships (Lehmann 2005), there is a clear choice made here between school and work, participants can rationalise their options and discuss why it is that they have 'chosen' a trade. However, this 'choice' is heavily influenced by their grounded knowledge of the trades through their social and cultural connections which have narrowed the potential choices they could have made post-high school. Concerning agency, these apprentice's journeys exemplify what Hays (Hays 1994, 64) calls 'reproductive agency,' in that they reproduce their material conditions which are only exacerbated by the lack of connections in education, to their future within high school education. It is not to say that this 'choice' is wrong, or that the students are being disadvantaged by reproducing their material conditions. In fact, each of the apprentices I have talked to in this section were happy, content and earning a good wage, were on an early pathway into home ownership, and were progressing towards owning/operating their own business or the family business. The point of highlighting this though is to show the strength of these early childhood experiences, with the right connections to that field, and how structured (but rigid and inflexible) that pathway into a trade can be for some apprentices.

In speaking to this idea of 'disadvantage' being partially inherent in discussing reproduction in education, especially from a working-class context, I will focus on the various reflections each of these apprentices had on high school education and their decision to stay in a trade after completing their apprenticeship. A large portion of the chapter has been based on how the abstractness of school, in contrast to the apprentice's practical knowledge of the trades, drives a wedge between the individual apprentice and their engagement with school, ultimately leading to the reproduction of their material conditions. But as they reflect on education after their apprenticeships, each had a very different perspective on the value of high school, both in how it has affected their apprenticeships and if it was the right decision not to continue into tertiary education. Sam probably had the most different take on his time

at school compared to the other two apprentices in this section. He sees his time at high school as a missed opportunity, but not as a missed opportunity to be socially mobile or to pursue a different profession.   In fact, he only saw the potential value of his high school education, after being involved with the work for a long period:

 Yeah, it all is problem-solving you know. You only got the options you've got right there. You can't move stumps, you can't change what the hill looks like, and you can't do anything you know. If you've got that, you've just got to deal with it, and it's just problem-solving. If the trees starting to extend up and down, and trees are all blowing everywhere, all left right and centre, that's your problem, and you've got to solve it. So yeah, if I could try harder at school, I would've.

For Sam, the more abstract nature of high school education became more apparent as he was exposed to the variability inherent in the forestry industry. It is interesting that he is attributed his time at school as applying to this idea of 'problem-solving' in a general sense and not just with identifying subjects like physics, English, and graphics that have a more direct correlation to the tasks within the industry. Peter, probably the most conventional of the three, made a more direct connection to his graphics class as being valuable in making him a more precise worker, but only engaged with it because he already knew it would be valuable to him when he compared it to his other classes:

I think too with graphics it was something I was interested in because I knew what I wanted to do, it was something that I was interested in learning because it was part of my job. But na, nothing else really guided me towards a trade. That is probably why I hated it so much.

So, while the pathway into an apprenticeship for each is similar, there is variability in how they reflexively appraise their education in high school and its potential value in a trades-based environment. How to navigate each sub-field and the value of capital within each field fluctuates depending on the specific type of apprenticeship, even if the pathway might be the

same. More importantly, Sam's narrative or understanding of the field has changed as he is actively transformed his position within the forestry industry to incorporate parts of his academic learner identity, albeit in slightly regretful terms, but it is a U-turn from his initial understanding of forestry and what it involved:

> No, I never thought I would've needed school doing forestry. I didn't know what I was doing, you know? I didn't know what it involved. I just thought, fuck, I don't know? You cut trees down, and they go into a logging truck. Until you do it and get stuck into it, then you start realising there is a lot more involved than what meets the eye.

Before going into forestry, Sam only saw the surface level of what his future pathway would involve. It was not until he got 'stuck in' that he understood the nuance of the trade itself and was able to draw connections between the more physically demanding forestry industry and more abstract forms of education in high school. His understanding is abstract, in that he cannot provide any tangible connections from his subjects in school to his work in the trades, other than school providing him with the ability to think on his feet, enabling him to work and think faster in his job, which he could only see once he had gotten 'stuck in' to the forestry industry, seeing how variable the job conditions can be for those working in the forestry industry. In a way, Sam had only partially penetrated the objective conditions of the field of forestry, pursuing the apprenticeship with a slightly flawed understanding of what the job would entail. It is not to say his prior knowledge through his early experiences was not valuable because it was, and if it was not for his father's understanding of the paths of progression within the forestry industry this might be a very different story altogether.

However, by incorporating other parts of his experiences that initially did not have a factor in his understanding of the profession, Sam has, in a way, reflexively transformed his position and the value placed on education within the field of the forestry industry. Positions within a field are always being managed and contested as individuals like Sam actively work to define the boundaries of their fields, for others and themselves. So, while his initial entry into his field was reasonably reproductive, his ongoing management of his identity within the field, and the way in which he bridges the gap between his work and school experiences, which initially were considered as entirely distinct from each other, is just an effort in more

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transformative types of agency. By 'just an effort' I mean that while he is reflexively incorporating other bits of education into his sense of self, that were previously at odds with his understanding of a trade, this 'recognition' doesn't necessarily have much of an effect beyond his own understanding, as there are no structures in place to allow him to take advantage of this newfound desire for education within this field. If Sam tries to change his habitus to incorporate a learner identity akin to what was required in school, it would undermine what made him successful in his trade in the first place, hence why his position is one that acknowledges the value of education, positions it in his understanding of the forestry industry, but is also shaped in retrospect, in something he 'should' have worked harder in' rather than something that is available to him now.

For these apprentices, a combination of cultural and social capital is a critical factor in enabling them to succeed in relative ease in their transition from school to work, compared to some of their counterparts in this study. While this journey is described as a 'choice', it is inherently reproductive, in that the strength of their connection to the trade inadvertently closed off any other avenue that they might like to pursue. But even though the outcome of this choice was ultimately reproductive, the lived experience of it is more complicated. Even though the initial choice heavily influenced their decision to enter a trade, later they were able to reflexively appraise their decisions and integrate their experiences and knowledge at school into their current work identity, such that they could both affirm their initial decision as the right choice but also acknowledge the benefits of education at the same time. As separate as these fields were initially perceived to be, the boundaries and interplay between the two are a lot more contested than they initially appeared. Each apprentice had a lot more say in constructing their own narrative within the field by incorporating previously dismissed skills and experiences. This is something that will be explored in more depth in the next chapter where we follow the transitions of a group of apprentices who achieved at a high level academically before transitioning into a trade

# Chapter Four: 'A foot in both worlds' reproductive and transformative agency in transitions to an apprenticeship

*'…when you're at school you've got to-like, you're in year 12 and you've got to put your hand up to use the toilet or something, and then in year 13 you've got to make a decision in a few months of what you're going to do in uni and your whole life, you know, you've got to prepare for your whole life, but a couple of months ago I was putting my hand up to go the toilet because you wouldn't even let me go to the toilet.' Bradley, 19*

The prior chapter discussed the three apprentices who took to a trade like a 'fish in water', each having a unique set of experiences and social connections that allowed them to easily flourish in their trade after finishing high school. However, the earliness in which this trade identity was established had a negative effect on their participation in high school and inadvertently cut off other opportunities in favour of this established trade identity. As reproductive and successful as this pathway was, it was not the norm among the apprentices in this study. In fact, over half of the apprentices in this study found their apprenticeship outside of any family connections and had already succeeded in getting UE (university entrance) before either transitioning to a trade or going on to spend some time at university before heading to a trade.

These numbers are very different compared to the destinations of most school leavers who have achieved NCEA level three or above during their time in school. The main activity of the 2015 leavers' cohort in New Zealand within one year of leaving school was enrolment in a formal qualification (71.9%), with the remainder in targeted training/modern apprenticeships (2.4%), or not in education (25.8%) (Ministry of Education 2018). Of course, the apprentices who I have talked to are at a variety of different stages in their careers and some did try university within one year of leaving school before transitioning into a trade, but why do such a small percentage of potentially university bound students forgo that normative trajectory and decide to pursue a trade?

This chapter will follow three such apprentices who have chosen to forgo tertiary education in favour of trade's-based learning. Like the prior chapter, I will look at how they have

transitioned into a trade and whether they have become like a 'fish in water', even when coming from a trajectory that initially pointed them away from the trades. In contrast to the prior chapter, the apprentices in this section had a more difficult transition, because of the different expectations they had around their potential future shaped by their success in high school. However, while their time and success at school has shaped a certain level of expectation for their future, this expectation is subverted by their experiences of 'hands on' labour outside of school. It is these 'hands on' experiences that begin to shape the desire for a trade-based environment.

This was the case for Bradley, a 19-year-old electrician's apprentice, who spent a year at university before moving to an electrical apprenticeship. Unlike the earlier chapter where their apprenticeships secured through word of mouth, he had found his apprenticeship in an online ad and decided to take a punt. When asked if there were any difficulties with his transition from university to a trade, he responded by saying that his experiences outside of high school set him up to be successful in a trade:

[T]hroughout my school years I worked three jobs as well as school, so I was like, my parents made me get a contract job which I just did at Burger King, just as a sign-up job, and then I also did work for a bloke that, like private contracting, where I chopped down trees for a bloke, split the wood, laid gravel on his drive and that kind of thing. But yeah, I was always doing a lot of hands-on stuff, I was always in the shed building things, you know, after school cutting down trees, doing gardening, and lots of hands-on stuff. Then, when I went into uni that kind of followed me because I love cars and I was doing engineering with a lot of blokes that had the same mind-set, so quite often we were going out and buying cars and fixing them up and selling them off. So, I was still getting that practical experience and then, so, it was a pretty smooth transition, moving up from doing like petty little stuff, like cutting down trees, to more technical stuff with cars to even more technical things like a trade with electrical. So, it was quite a smooth transition for me to be honest.

Rather than attributing his success to his time in school and university, the key for Bradley's comfortable transition into a trade was through his experiences outside of the field of education. What was more valuable to his transition were his part-time jobs and tinkering in the shed after school, fixing up and selling cars. While his school learning was geared towards a different pathway, his experiences at home acted as a surrogate pathway after he had decided to switch from university to a trade. He had gone from 'petty things', like cutting down trees, grounded in 'hands on' type labour, to more 'technical' things like cars, which he directly compares to technical things 'like a trade in electrical', his current apprenticeship. From the outside it looks like Bradley had an unconventional pathway into a trade by going through university, but in his mind, he followed a clear and progressive pathway, which had nothing to do with education, yet enabled him to transition smoothly into a trade.

Craig, a 25-year-old engineer, met me at the university. Smartly dressed and confident, he appeared more working professional in casual attire than the tradesman of the previous chapter, who all met me in between jobs. He spoke passionately and eloquently about engineering and the trades in general. It is important to add that Craig was part of the ambassador apprenticeship scheme for his ITO, and it showed as he sold me on a trade at the same time as he described his own journey into one. He had a similar experience to Bradley as to what attracted him to an apprenticeship:

> Craig: I mean, I didn't have a passion for the industry when I started my job, I grew to love the industry I'm in. I don't know why that happened. I was always passionate about doing things with my hands, but I just, I fell in love with the industry, I fell in love with the work that I was doing, I liked the learning side of things, I liked the fact that I could progress, and you know, I was always climbing an uphill slope which was great. I like the challenge of it, and that's what we just can't get now, so yeah, it doesn't surprise me that an apprentice's average age is going up and it wouldn't surprise me if it went up higher and higher.

> Orin: So, you just mentioned before working with your hands, so was that a big motivator? Not just learning the theory but being able to apply it?

C: Yeah, so I mean like when I spoke to my ITO, and he was going 'do a trade first and then get into a degree afterwards', because that's what industry wants, they want people who can do things with their hands, they want people with that practical nous, because they make better engineers down the line and that made a lot of sense, and I'd always liked doing things outside, I was always tinkering, I was always working on motorbikes, I was always helping my old man in the garage, I was always doing those things with my hands and so I guess it wasn't a stretch to start engineering, and start welding and, start fabricating things, and some of the things we get to make are really quite neat. So, there is a lot of pride in that as well. Doing stainless steel, it's all shiny, it's all nice, and looks cool, it's quite impressive some of the things we get to do, and so, there is a lot of pride involved. So, when you master those skills, when you learn all those skills and you can produce something you're proud of, I think that helps as well.

Like Bradley, Craig's experiences were similar in that he found a connection to his job through his experiences growing up outside of his time at school. His desire to tinker, working on motorbikes, helping his old man in the garage, developed his practical 'nous' early, which made the shift to his engineering apprenticeship and to welding and fabricating stainless steel quite neat and tidy. At the same time though, he was guided by others in taking an apprenticeship. Instead of training at university as an engineer, as he thought was the correct pathway, he was actively encouraged by his ITO to develop this 'practical nous', which fitted so neatly with his experiences growing up and being a 'hands on' individual. For both apprentices, their experiences outside of high school were some of the biggest contributors to their success in a trade and arguably one of the major reasons why they ended up in a trade. In comparison with the apprentices in the previous chapter, other than lacking social capital that would allow for a predictable transition, they each convey similar 'hands on' based experiences, or cultural capital that has contributed to their success. This is where things start to get complicated in terms of expressing agency in each of these transitions.

In the prior chapter I argued that the 'choice' of an apprenticeship was reproductive in essence, because of how early it invalidated any other potential pathway by creating an early

disconnect with high school, ignoring the potential of education in opening alternative pathways. With the two apprentices we've just discussed in this chapter, the context is slightly different. On one side, it could be argued that this 'choice' is reproductive, in that they have just reproduced their 'home' habitus, rather than their 'school' habitus, which had lead them to achieve at a high enough level to continue into higher education. But what I would like to argue, is that while these early experiences have had a huge impact on their destination and has been a key to them being able to experience a 'fish in water' like habitus in their trade, this decision is inherently transformative in nature.

In the absence of having those familial connections into a trade, their knowledge of the trade is less concrete. Each of these apprentices entered a trade after they were about to leave high school, as opposed to the prior chapter where some knew as early as ten years of age that a trade was going to be their future. In the absence of this choice, each of these apprentices had to 'buy' into the high school culture and the cultural bias that academic achievement leads to a socially mobility. As such, they must conform to the dominant discourse around education and juggle being an academic achiever and the specific pathways that entails. Without the right social capital, transitioning into a trade is entirely off the radar, as a trade was not being mentioned in the context of school, except in infrequent circumstances. In the absence of an alternative, they default on the expected pathway, as Bradley describes below:

> As you know, you either go to university, or you drop out and work at Maccas…. Pretty much, you end up going to uni because you have to make such a quick decision on what you want to do in the next year, and they go 'Oh hey, this is uni, this is the option, if you don't like it then you can do something else, but kinda start with uni first, and I think with year 13 as that critical stage people will just go 'oh okay' and just jump into going into uni because they don't know any better you know? Suddenly they have to make a life decision, and teachers are like 'oh hey, uni is here', so people just automatically go to uni.

For Bradley, there was a lot of pressure in making this choice, a choice that comes very quickly in the context of leaving high school, and this decision is compounded by the expectations

that this will dictate the rest of their working lives. As Bradley succinctly puts it, it is either 'Macca's or University.' In the absence of any alternatives, there is not much choice but to default on this option, especially when in, Bradley's experience, the choice is portrayed as so severe. His future is condensed into a binary of either a life time of poorly paid service work, or a degree and a pathway into a well-paying job. Craig was in a similar situation in making his decision to forgo university in favour of a trade. If it was not for an 11th hour intervention from his engineering teacher, he might have continued his expected trajectory into university:

Craig: Yeah, but don't get me wrong, I mean like I was already to be one of them, I was all ready to go and do that. I didn't care about the student loan; I didn't care about that side of things. I was like, I was going to do a degree because that's.... I mean, high school shoved tertiary down everyone's throats, same as they still do now. Um, but, so glad I didn't. So glad.

Orin: So, thinking back to how much they pushed it down your throat. So, like, other than having that ITO open day, no trades were really talked about in high school that you can remember?

C: Apart from my engineering teacher who came from a trade's background, not a tertiary background. All the other teachers, my physics teacher, my English teachers, calculus, all those people, even the sports science side of things, they were all pushing tertiary study. All of them. That's not their fault, that's just.... I mean, it's just the way things are. We were always taught if you want to progress anywhere in life you went to university, and you got a degree, and then you got a better paying job, and you move up in the world, and you go 'well that's great', but  tertiary study is not for everyone, and it wasn't that long ago I think, I mean, I wasn't even around, when only the top 10% of people went to university, and everybody else did trades, and trades encompassed a lot more things. Now, everyone goes and does a degree, it's like the other way around, but there is a lot of people coming out of university with degrees that don't really mean anything, or that go into a field of work where they don't use their degree, and you go 'well, that was a waste of time, wasn't it'?

This response is particularly loaded regarding the expectations of the field, as well as the overall objective of high school and how he feels now like it has been 'shoved down his throat'. If it were not for the intervention of his trades-based engineering teacher, he probably would have continued to university, as a 'trade' or a trade's pathway into an engineering profession was not on his radar. What is apparent here, for both Bradley and Craig, is that there is a level of expectation for academically successful students to continue to tertiary education. Just like all fields, there is a hierarchy on the value of capital and resources associated within the field, and for these two students, their success in school is more important than their experiences outside of school within the context of their high school education. As mentioned in the prior chapter, these expected, normative pathways within any field serve to control and limit agency by rigidly defining and enforcing trajectories in the transition to work. But unlike the prior chapter, each of these apprentices were able to decide relatively early on and change their trajectory, rather than just realise this position after the fact while reflecting on it in their interviews.

The answer to *how* this might be the case is a little complex and highly individualised. In the context of Craig, his overall objective was to become an 'engineer', and whatever pathway he took he didn't care if he achieved that vocation. So, like the apprentices from the earlier chapter, he was advantaged in having the 'one' teacher who encouraged an alternative pathway. Whereas Bradley, found that the 'process' for university was too abstract for his taste and he lacked for any direction with where his studies were supposed to take him. The contributing factors here are again, those early experiences outside the context of high school. Earlier in the chapter, these early experiences were discussed in that sense that they are contributors to the success of a trade, but I would also argue that they act as a point of difference, outside of that academic pathway. In knowing that work can take various forms, they are able to be a little more reflexive and adaptive given the situation and consider a work arrangement outside of this dominant discourse of high school. It is true that they did not have an easy connection to a trade, and such a connection might have shaped their journey differently, but in having an idea of the 'process' of work outside of their expected trajectory, it provided a type of cultural capital that allowed them to question and contest the cultural expectations of the field.

Thomas, a 26-year-old painter, had a slightly different trajectory than Bradley and Craig. We met at his job site during his lunch break, a large man with a big beard and a deep voice, he spoke slowly and thoughtfully about his journey, often pausing to glance at his work-mate who was still painting inside. While achieving academically, he had already decided to transition into a trade out of high school because of how prevalent it was in his family. It was the 'expected' pathway in relation to his home circumstances. In saying that, he shaped his school experiences very differently compared to the other apprentices in this study:

[A]t school you're always into the routine of getting up at the same time in the morning, getting all ready, and then going to school, so you pretty much just swap school out for work. I mean, I quite liked doing physical stuff at school, doing PE and metalwork and wood-work, and stuff like that, so it just seemed like I was doing more of what I liked to do. So, no, I didn't find the transition overly hard, it was great actually, because you were essentially doing your normal routine, but you were getting paid for it all of a sudden. So yeah, I always found it quite easy. I've always been the person who likes the routine of knowing what to do anyway, so it worked quite well.

For Thomas, the value of school was in the routine it established, and the 'physical' nature of his chosen curriculum that matched with chosen vocation. As we continued to talk though, as he talked about how the specifics of the classes he took in school, he seemed a little more conflicted about its value and hinted at some of the expectations placed on him by faculty did not necessarily match with his trajectory:

Like I remember when I was choosing classes for [the] last year, and that because I had plenty of credits in math, and stuff like that, and I think it was Mr T who asked me what I wanted to do, and I said I wanted to get in a trade and he was quite surprised, because I had a lot of credits in maths and science, so yeah, he thought I'd be leaning more towards something like that. But at school, it is very limited in [the] sort of classes that transfer over to a trade. You had your technology and that, maybe some sciences to some extent, but beside from that, like your Basic English and that…. Yeah,

it probably wasn't too much in class choice, I chose what I enjoyed. I always enjoyed PE, so I always took that every year, quite enjoyed the theory side of things as well.

While initially stating that class was quite valuable, and that there was a lot of crossover to his profession as a painter, he mentions the initial 'surprise' people had when he decided to enter a trade because, he had achieved several credits in both maths and science. Like Craig and Bradley, Thomas felt those same expectations once he finished school, based on his achievement in high school. At the same time though, he was shaping his experiences or his understanding of high school as being a beneficial step in his journey towards his chosen trade. Like the apprentices in the first chapter, having that connection to a trade put him in a better position to perceive connections between school, and the trades because he had a foothold in each field. He already knew what the expectations were of the work day for a trade, regarding the hours required and the level of physical labour necessary for the job.

In saying that, this does not address the conflict within Thomas as he tried to describe the value of his high school experiences. Later, when asked if he would like to pursue more education at some point in the future, he specifies that there is a specific 'time' to enjoy education:

> Yeah definitely. Essentially because this is what I do all the time, so it's more focused on this rather than.... because learning more at school is more for myself, not for anything else, not to go for any other job or anything. So yeah, it is more of a case of just as far as what learning I do now, it's how to do stuff more efficiently at work or how to grow the business more, how to get into other ways of earning money at the same time. But yeah, not so much 'for learning for the sake of learning'

This position on education now helps to explain why he was conflicted in his earlier response. On one level, in conjunction with his school life, and his experiences in a trade, he had co-constructed personal boundaries within the field that made connections between his education at high school and his future as a painter, which is at odds with the dominant discourse around his position as an academic achiever. In a way, he actively engages with the

field and shapes his understanding of it in such a way that he sees his time in high school as a net positive before heading into an apprenticeship. On a personal level, he has established the boundaries of the field of education for himself and emphasised its inherent value for his future.

However, in his transition into a trade, learning is 'shaped' differently than it was in high school. Learning must now be productive, efficient and help grow the business while diversifying income streams. The focus on learning is at odds with his perception of education in school. Learning in school is 'more for himself', in pursuit of self-interest, rather than how learning is now for him, in that it is more utilitarian or instrumental and must have immediate, business related benefits. If we consider these two positions on education in relation to habitus, he has 'conformed' or shaped his habitus to better suit his new position as a business owner in the trades. But, as he states in his interview, he is aware of the progression of this change as time passes, and his position changes as he transitions and stabilises the impression of himself in his new job. Relating this back to agency, on one level he has transformed his journey, or his understanding of his position within the field, by finding and attaching value to his education in high school. But this value is limited in nature and very little of it crosses over into a more rigidly defined understanding of education. So, while on a personal level he is reflexively managed his position as an academically successful student and incorporated this into his worker identity to a certain extent, this 'change' has not occurred on a structural level where it has impacted the overall perceptions of education for others and not just himself.

Bradley also had a moment like Thomas in that he personally transformed his own narrative by incorporating experiences in his first year at university in his successful transition into a trade:

> B: I think it was kind of the perfect combination going from Uni to a trade, in the fact that, because I was surrounded by thousands of likeminded students, and especially since I went down South I was by myself so I had to meet and mingle with a lot of people, and yeah, so, by talking and interacting with people during uni that really helped me with my trade because I would be able, to like, talk to all the builders and stuff, and have yarns with them, and that was good, and I was able to find out lots of

information and the other side of uni, when I was sitting on the computer all the time, also helped me, or will help me with my studies as an apprentice, because then I'll be able to come home after working all day and then just jump onto a computer, and I'll know how to research and do Word documents and Excel, and all that, because I was so used to it at uni. So, it was kind of the perfect transition really.

For Bradley, connection with new people, having moved to a new region in New Zealand and learning real study skills, to his mind, has set up a successful transition to his apprenticeship. Like Thomas, he has incorporated elements from his time at university, which has been structured by his school as 'untenable' with his new position as an electrician.  So like Thomas, Bradley's position on education and its value is constantly evolving as time progresses. His experiences in his home life were the big contributors in finding a 'habitus' that fits succinctly with the field of the trades, but at the same time, he has not discarded the experiences that have made him successful, but rather incorporated them into his new identity as an apprentice electrician as part of what will make him excel in his new field. But again, like Thomas, it is hard to assess if his actions will have an impact on the structural dimensions of the field. He has been active in transforming his position within the field, incorporating various capitals from separate fields that had been set as structurally distinct in his time in high school, but based on his position as a newly minted apprentice, it is hard to say whether that will change and evolve over time and whether this transference will stick in the long term.

The individual agency of each apprentice appears to be simultaneously reproductive and transformative at the same time. It begs the question of what we mean by 'transformative'. Each of these apprentices go against the dominant discourse of high school, in that they are academically successful but choose an apprenticeship rather than tertiary study. But, when assessing their transition into a trade, you could argue that they default back to their experiences outside of school that built up this 'practical nous' which I attributed as being the cultural capital that secured their apprenticeship. At the same time, they can incorporate various types of experiences that have connections in disparate fields to personally transform their positions and boundaries within a field, even if it does not quite affect the overall structures of a field.

There appears to be a high level of hybridity and variance both within and between social fields, where the value of capital is both ascending and descending, based on the temporal positioning of the individual social agent and their unique collection of capitals. By ascendancy, I mean that the value of capital, as in what cultural knowledge made them specifically successful in either field is constantly being engaged with by the individual. The value of specific capital is either ascending or descending as time progresses and their position within the field is changing with it. Early childhood experiences of being 'hands on' rise above the more academically focused tendencies as they transition from school to a trade. However, as we have argued in this chapter, the cultural knowledge that made them successful in academia do not disappear but are incorporated into their new field. The balance of power related to these experiences, has shifted their value and has been reorganised by the individual to better suit their position in their new field. Considering that each has been successful both in their trade and their prior education, it is not to say that these experiences have closed off a potential avenue or disadvantaged them in any way. Rather, these apprentices are incredibly flexible in using the capital available to them in negotiating whatever field they find themselves in, both from school and work.

Relating this to Bourdieu's own understanding of this flexibility, he would argue against such variability, because to him, if adaptation predominates, it tends to cause havoc on the habitus as a whole:

> Habitus changes constantly in response to new experiences. Dispositions are subject to a kind of permanent revision, but one which is never radical, because it works based on the premises established in the previous state. They are characterized by a combination of constancy and variation which varies according to the individual and his degree of flexibility and rigidity. If, accommodation has the upper hand, then one finds rigid, self-enclosed, over integrated habitus, if adaptation predominates, habitus dissolves into opportunism of a kind, incapable of encountering the world and of having an integrated sense of self (Bourdieu 2000: 161).

Contrary to Bourdieu, I would argue that these apprentices are grounded precisely because they are so flexible. Their habitus hangs together because of their attempts to keep a foot in 'both' worlds. Each of the apprentices in this section have straddled the boundary between

being successful in the field of vocational labour and the field of education. The lack of any social connections in the trades, has led them to be grounded in the dominant discourse around education and high school which is the progression into tertiary education. In saying that, their home experiences of 'being hands on' has given them another set of capital to balance out this dominant discourse. Their adaptation between two fields has not impacted their sense of self because their sense of self is grounded in the fields they inhabit. What is missing in Bourdieu's interpretation of this subject, is an understanding of the hybridity or porousness of fields, whereupon under certain conditions, social agents can comfortably switch between fields without feeling a 'disconnect' because they essentially embody the characteristics of both fields.

The journeys of these three apprentices are difficult to describe in binaries, as they each make transformative and reproductive decisions in how they incorporate their experiences and how this shape their understanding of the field. On a personal level, they transform and contest the barriers of the field, creating new meanings that incorporate elements of both the fields that have had a huge influence in their adolescence, piecing together a personalised, hybridized field of education and work that suits their unique position in their specific profession. On a structural level though, they are still confined by the overall rules of the field, and while they can personally transform themselves to fit in a field or their understanding of the field, the actual transformation of the field conditions for others beyond the individual is questionable and not as easily defined. In the next chapter, we will look at the final three apprentices of this study. These two were the apprentices that struggled the most in their transition into a trade, both in terms of the lack of social and cultural capital, and because they entered a field that was in the middle of a rapid transformation.

# Chapter five: Difficult transitions and transformative agency with apprenticeships in transforming industries

*'…I've not let anything make me break and run away…No, I'm not some silly girl that's just going to run away from a job, just because it is inconvenient, I'm my own person and I can be here, and I have achieved my goal of being the head office graphic designer, so*

*you should respect me' Mara, 28, digital print apprentice*

This chapter focuses on the journey of two female digital print apprentices, who not only had difficulties in finding an apprenticeship, but who struggled to 'fit' in the field of their chosen profession. Unlike the construction-based trades explored so far in this research, the digital print industry is in the middle of a significant transition. This transition is due to the changing nature of the field, as digital technology is incorporated into the more 'physical' print production-based industry. As such, the rules of the field, and more importantly what is defined as an apprenticeship in the first place, is in the process of being contested. In a field that is split between 'physical' and 'abstract' labour, how does this de-stabilisation of the field affect apprenticeships? Additionally, this chapter will focus on the importance of gender for the 'fish in water' experience of the trades.

I met Mara, a 28-year-old graphic designer, during her lunch break at her office downtown in the city. Mara was dressed smartly in blue, a matching jacket and skirt with large framed glasses. I immediately noticed the juxtaposition she presented with the other apprentices I had met up to this point; working professional, Like Craig the engineer, as opposed to the steel-capped boots and t-shirts that had comprised all my previous interviews with construction-based tradespeople. Mara had an easy, infectious smile and a bubbly personality as she told me about her journey. She decided in her final year of college to forgo university and pursued a print production apprenticeship at a printing company after a short stint as a receptionist. Unlike all the previous apprentices, who had no challenges once they had gotten their apprenticeship, for Mara this was when her trouble started. Her main complaints concern the training in the apprenticeship, and with the lack of a recognised mentor and any

job-specific training. When asked if any of the skills she was taught in her apprenticeship was useful in her current job, she replied:

> Not really. I think there was only one time in my career where I was very much [told] 'this is a graphic designer, and she will be teaching' and that was only when one of our graphic designers moved from a graphic designer to a sales rep and I was then her graphic designer. So, she was kind of overseeing me, and that was the only time I ever had but, that was just teaching graphic design, it didn't touch on anything about my apprenticeship. Yeah, so I've never really had any one-on-one training or anything like that. It's very much been self-taught, and like, hope it works out okay! I think I had three days of one-on-one training when I very first started and that was like 'This is a printer. This is where you put the paper. This is when you do this. This is how you get to the file. Because I was going in only ever [having] used a school photocopier, and then I was expected to run a colour 8000, like a high-speed colour printer. Yeah, so that was a little bit crazy. They did tell me that they were surprised I came back [laughs].

What is apparent here is the lack of a mentor figure, or someone inhibiting that 'master craftsman' role that would sit in opposition and partnership with an apprentice. This 'lack' in a mentoring role is something I have not mentioned up to this point, because the mentorship for each apprentice so far has been a non-factor in relation to training. In the third and fourth chapters, the apprentices had a unique collection of social and cultural capital that ensured a smooth mentorship into a trade. But in Mara's case, the only time she found a mentor, was by luck, when a graphic designer picked up a position in sales at a studio she worked at during part of her apprenticeship. However, this was a fixed term thing and did not last as she moved to a different studio and continued to work without a graphic designer as a mentor/supervisor. In contrast to the other apprenticeship schemes included in this study, there is a volatility within the functioning of the field in relation to its apprenticeship schemes.

As this is the case, Mara must be a lot more experimental in her training. Rather than following an existing blueprint that is stable and rigidly defined in terms of training, she had to run her training through trial and error, which is unique coming from an 'apprenticeship' where the

mentor and the training that mentor provides is one of, if not the most important parts of the entire apprenticeship. Her only experience with a 'mentor', other than that chance encounter was her student liaison, who would periodically check the after-hours book work which was a required module of her apprenticeship. It was apparent to her very early on that his understanding of a digital print apprenticeship was vastly different to the expectations of placed on her as a graphic designer:

> Yeah, so they had me on very much like print operator, a small amount of pre-press file set up work which I was quite happy with, because it was a good foot in the door, that sort of stuff. So, after doing that for six months, I got my apprenticeship which was cool. Between that three years, I moved offices quite a lot and had different managers, and that sort of stuff, so it was a little bit hard because I didn't have a steady mentor. From works point of view, sadly I was, well, he did his best but, my apprenticeship support person that I got it was literally his very last one before he retired, and he was very much more of a print apprenticeship rather than the graphic design part of it, so I found it quite hard to get support from him, because he was much more interested in helping the guys with their physical like, how do you use the guillotine stuff, and all that kind of stuff. Plus, that actual print side of it was a lot more structured, so I didn't really have any structural assistance so I kinda just got the books and did it which was a bit rough [laughs]. Um, yeah, but got through it which is fine. While working full time, so that was pretty cool.

Unlike the previous apprentices in this study, Mara is experiencing a disconnect between the training she was offered and the skills necessary for her work as a graphic designer. The skills seen as necessary for an apprentice are being contested with the introduction of new technologies, which has led to a separation of the apprenticeship along the lines of 'traditional print' and 'graphic design.' Her mentor is focused on the physical, helping the 'guys with the machines', more traditionally working class and with an established framework around the training and the assistance that can be provided within that framework. However, Mara requires a very different set of skills for her to become a successful apprentice as a graphic designer. In this context, Mara's own disconnection with the field of digital print production, is exacerbated by her older mentor's own

disconnection, as he fails to keep up with the current state of the print industry. His focus on 'traditional' and 'masculine' skills puts him in a position where he is unable to effectively guide within a field that has been disrupted by the onset of digital technology and a shifting focus on what is required for an apprentice like Mara. As such, his personal disconnection with the changes within his field has meant that apprentices like Mara have a difficult time looking for guidance within the field, hence her position as 'self-taught', a label completely at odds with what constitutes the image of an apprenticeship. And though she does not mention it outright, Mara's status as a woman apprentice with a male 'mentor' surely contributed to the way this disconnection played out.

Mara was not the only digital print apprentice who had a difficult time in her apprenticeship. I met Addison, 27, who had done her apprenticeship shortly after Mara. We met at her place of work, a converted factory floor with wood panel floors and wall high windows without a tool in sight. Addison was dressed smart but casually, a black jacket with a loud graphic print t-shirt and slacks with long dark hair. Addison was no-nonsense, with a droll sense of humour. Her journey just as tangled as Maras. Soon after finishing a one-year polytechnic degree in graphic design, she ended up working as a receptionist in a women's gym. By luck, she found her way into a shop-floor printing job after her gym hired a printing company to design and produce some brochures. For three years she worked her way up through the layers of her industry, before finally getting offered an apprenticeship that led to her current role. Like Mara, she initially struggled in her new job environment, but rather than pointing to a lack of mentorship, she pointed to the difficulties that came from having to navigate a production heavy and masculine environment:

> Um, in those first three years of working in a production environment, as you may notice here, there's no production, there's no machinery, this is just sales and design, and then we have our production hub where we send everything to. Those first three years of working in production when we were in town, we had digital production there, and I was the only woman in an all-male production team. That was interesting. Keeping up with the banter, keeping up with the horseplay and Friday night beers, keeping up with the boys. There has been a couple of occasions where I don't know,

I've been offended by some of the shit talk, and it was mentioned to my male manager at the time and it was, 'Ah, if you can't keep up with the jokes, then tell us that you don't want to be a part of it and we just won't include you anymore. If you're going to get offended by it.' Which is a bit shit.

Initially, some of the struggles experienced by Addison were based on the 'rules of the shop floor.' Rather than having difficulty coming to grips with the actual job-related skills, it was the 'banter' and 'horseplay' of the shop floor that was challenging and the unwritten rules of interaction in a traditionally working class, male-dominated profession. Unlike earlier apprentices who all tied their success to experiences in and out of school, Addison did not have any that were applicable to her current position on the shop floor. Instead, she had to reflexively manage her own behaviour to bring herself in line with the expected behaviours of the shop floor. Her habitus did not match the field, so she had to consciously work and 'keep up' with the male 'banter' and the jokes made at her expense.

For Addison adapting to the masculine work culture involved developing a thick skin and conforming to the working-class patterns of interaction, and not pressing to change the system. In terms of agency, Addison's actions are some of the most transformative in relation to her habitus, but reproductive in terms of the structure of the field. In prior chapters, the apprentices were essentially juggling their cultural capital. The quality of that capital would ascend or descend, and they would reproduce what was applicable at the time and incorporate what was not as valuable in a secondary position. They were simultaneously reproductive and transformative in how they personally interacted with the field around them. In contrast, Addison's incorporation with her new field is an extreme form of reproductive and transformative agency. Addison's agency is the most structurally reproductive, as she had to conform to the structure of the field, developing a 'thick skin' for her to keep working on the shop floor, but at the same time she is more transformative, in that she is forcibly and knowingly changing her habitus to suit her current position.

So why is there a difference between these female apprentices and the male apprentices in this study? Unlike Mara, for example, when asked what difficulties they had in their transition into a trade, none of the male apprentices I talked to mentioned having any difficulties with

interacting and 'fitting in' with the job on a day to day basis. Thomas, who was mentioned in an earlier chapter held that 'banter' was a big part of an apprenticeship, but because of his unique position in working with his father, he was able to avoid this aspect of the job:

> Thomas: I think some people do see it as part of the job, but I never saw it because it was just me and Dad.
>
> Orin: So, you don't have to worry about that kind of stuff?
>
> T: Na I think some people, it puts them off the trade, even if I got it I wouldn't be put off the trade if I got a hard time, I would just get on with it. But some people actually leave the trade too, I think because they don't like that hard time.
>
> O: So, by the hard time you just mean like, since you're the apprentice, it's like a label?
>
> T: Yeah and sort of like, the apprentice must make the tea and that sort of thing and the little pranks on you and stuff, but I never saw any of that stuff. So, I was lucky in that respect. I was just learning and working. I didn't have to put up with the other crap. Plus, I'm not on site or anything.

What Addison described earlier is a big part of a large swath of trades in New Zealand. 'Banter', 'shit talk' and 'keeping up with the boys' are all parts of the interactions on the shop floor, or 'on site' as Thomas describes. These responses have ties to early forms of hegemonic masculinity in New Zealand, with hegemonic masculinity being tied to 'mate ship' in New Zealand during the late 1800's and early 1900's (Pringle 2017). Reliance on 'mateship' typically occurred in strenuous physical labour, in industries like forestry and mining, where strength, physical prowess, and coping with adversity were valorised above all else. 'Mate ship' was forged not just in work, but after work as well. Of course, masculinities change and evolve over time, but Addison's journey on the shop floor, and to a certain extent Mara's too, echo elements of this type of 'mateship' when attempted to navigate 'Friday night beers' and the 'shit talk' inherent in the profession.

If we focus on gender from a Bourdieusian sense, masculinity and femininity can be considered in terms of 'capital'. Skegg (2004, 24) argues that gender can be a form of cultural

capital but only if it is symbolically legitimated. Even though femininity is symbolically ever-present in society, it is not symbolically dominant in the same way as particular versions of masculinity, it rarely operating as symbolic capital, except when femininity is used by men and when it amalgamates with other dispositions of privilege and power. At least in part, the ability for the male apprentices to incorporate experiences outside their field within their trade is because of this baseline gendered disposition. Masculine cultural capital facilitates their ability to be 'flexible,' to incorporate useful elements outside of their dominant dispositions that complement their work in a changing world. In contrast, Addison does not possess this baseline gendered disposition, so correspondingly, her journey into a trade is more reproductive when considering her agency because she does not possess the same 'base' experiences as her male counterparts, which stifles her ability to be flexible in her engagement with the shop floor.

For Addison, her initial engagement with her field was defined by extreme moments of transformative and reproductive agency. Of course, her engagement might have been different if she had decided to stay on the shop floor, but as she left and took an apprenticeship, it lead her into a very different work space within the digital print industry. As her apprenticeship moved her outside of the shop floor and the rigidly defined rules inherent to that space, these gendered dynamics were still a consistent thread throughout the interview as she talked about her apprenticeship training and her early block courses to become a graphic designer. In another example she references both the 'production environment' with its heavy machinery and masculine banter, and the more mentally focused, less 'hands on', feminized sales and design department. This uneasy tension between the two is present, beyond her experiences in working up from production into sales and design, but in the training undertaken by all apprentices in digital print production:

> A: Oh. There was one base course that we went on, so, ah, apprentices from the lower North Island all met at Print NZ's training rooms and we did a one day, no, two day course actually, two day course and we ran over the basics of print and it actually being in a classroom setting and these were, I was one of two women, the rest were all men, and it would've been a classroom of 15, 16, and I had questions thrown at me

by some of the lads, like, 'but why are you doing an apprenticeship?' Not because I'm a woman, but, you're a graphic designer. Why are you doing a print apprenticeship? Because these are guys who were running 5 colour machines, big, massive warehouse sized machines that are huge…. [Whereas] you sit behind a computer, you're not 'hands on', and I think that's really made me, probably devalue my position and place within the industry, of looking at that pipeline of, well, you need X amount of people and X amount of steps to complete one entire print job and you're part of that life cycle, just because you're not physically printing the item, doesn't mean I'm not less a part of the print industry. Um, really had to get my head around that after a while of 'let's all go around the room and tell everyone what machine you run' because uhh, I don't actually run a machine. I can, but I don't. It was, yeah, kinda made me feel rather singled out with all those lads thinking 'what the fuck are you doing?'

What is becoming apparent here is that the rules and the understanding of what an 'apprenticeship' entails are again being challenged and contested. While Addison does mention the fact that she's the lone woman surrounded by male apprentices, the bigger issue was that she was a 'graphic designer' who did not do 'hands on work' but sat on a computer all day. This relates to the longstanding trend of the 'feminisation' of masculine labour, as jobs become increasingly digital and more knowledge based at the expense of being a 'hands on' labourer. There is also a common assumption around apprenticeships which involves a focus of manual labour and heavy machinery operation and that there are 'tiers' related to the type of capital within the industry in terms of what is considered more valuable. As Addison points out, she is still a part of the pipeline in the creation of products in the industry, even if she is not physically creating anything, but her creative 'conceptual' work is valued differently than the execution-based work that typifies the regular digital print apprentices that she worked with during her apprenticeship. However, her introduction into this space, and the negative responses of her peers, is a knee-jerk response to a field that is in the process of being contested and changed because of the technological developments in the digital print trade.

The relative instability of this field raises some interesting questions around how a field is structured and if this field is undergoing a drastic change. Krause (2017, 14) in her work on field theory, argues that a field can be structured in a multitude of ways:

> In terms of how a field is structured. There can be variation in how a field can be shaped. Some fields are shaped by consensus, others can be shaped by symbolic competition. In some fields, consensus may be the result of a very clear hierarchy; in others there may be consensus without hierarchy. In fields shaped by symbolic oppositions, the dividing line can be drawn in different ways (Krause 2017, 14).

In terms of how the field of digital print is constructed there are multiple hierarchies to consider. I would argue that the field of digital print is primarily shaped by symbolic competition between the 'shop floor' and the 'office floor' in the industry. As the apprenticeship scheme within the industry has adapted to incorporate apprentices from both sides of the spectrum, the consensus or the autonomy of the field is being questioned and, in being questioned, has led to Addison's perspective as staking her own claim as being a creative producer in a previously masculine dominated apprenticeship.

As mentioned earlier, an analysis of masculinity is still important to consider when thinking about the hierarchy within the field of digital print production. As the field changes, the barrage of comments she received about 'not really being an apprentice', because she was working on a computer, is a response to the shift in the industry and an attempt to shore up the traditional cultural arrangements that place working class, masculine work on top of the hierarchy. While the field is currently in flux and the potential to claim a new stake within the boundary of the field is a very real possibility with the onset of digital technologies, there is still a perceived hierarchy around 'real work' in relation to apprentices. How she perceives her labour and her own position as an apprentice when it is compared to the normative assumption of what an apprenticeship should entail within the field of digital print production, shows that while the boundaries are in opposition, there is still a clear hierarchy in terms of what 'typifies' an apprenticeship. The importance of developing a 'thick skin' and conforming rather than resisting male dominated work practices, cannot be understated in Addison's

journey. In a sense, it has enabled her to create a relative level of distance between this 'realised' habitus of the shop floor, and her 'idealised' habitus as a graphic designer who can incorporate both her apprenticeship and her degree outside of the rigid confines of the shop floor.

Mara also confirmed a similar divide in her training, but focused more closely on the disadvantaged position she felt she started from when she moved from those initial block courses like, Addison describes above, to the more advanced, graphic design courses she undertook later in her training:

> Mara: Yep, so, there were block course days, so some of the block course days, at the beginning of the apprenticeship, we were all in the same room, and so we had like people straight off the production floor and people out of the computer rooms all in the same room, all learning the same stuff. Yeah like, this is good background knowledge, but, yeah…The second block course was really good because that was more structure around the graphic design stuff because you had to pick electives that matched your thing. But that was a little bit hard, because by the time I actually got to that point to go to the block course I felt like I was so behind, because I had been working on, 'ok cool, like, people are only looking at print kind of stuff, not graphic design stuff, so they don't really expect a whole lot', but when I went down to Dunedin or Christchurch, I don't remember, for the other block course, I was kind of hit in the face, a bit like, okay, there are some pretty hardcore people actually doing the graphic design side of this who have a lot of support, who are putting out amazing stuff.

> Orin: Which you'd never seen up to this point?

> M: No, I'd never seen any examples of work or anything like that. Um, so that was really hard, I was quite disheartened when I came back from that [laughs] like 'okay, look at what all the support and like help that all these other people are getting. So, it was good once.... I think by that point I was kinda just like I need just to make sure I finish it.

Here, Mara is quite frustrated by the 'lack' of training she's received and how, while the general application of the apprenticeship did help in giving her foundational knowledge of the digital print industry, the lack of any further development in either her training or her workplace has left her at a disadvantage in more advanced training courses. Her 'do it yourself and hope it works' mentality, while useful in the lack of a proper mentor and one on one training, has still left her in a precarious position. In comparing this with Addison, the importance of the mentoring role in an apprenticeship becomes more apparent, as she had clear role models to shape her ideas around the apprenticeship and what she could expect to be after the apprenticeship:

> So, I saw two graphic designers that I had worked with for three-odd years who had completed their apprenticeship in digital print processes, which is what I've completed. They were women who were the go-to people in their studio, people that knew the most about print, the people who had the answers to anything basically, they were the know-it-all's, and they were the source of all knowledge and I found I wanted to be that person. They were my inspiration, and I approached my manager and suggested 'hey can I do this', um, and yep, they thought about it and signed me up.

The importance of this mentorship cannot be understated. As well as being one of the reasons as to why she decided to go for an apprenticeship, it gave her a model of the type of work she would end up doing, a model she could reference and shape herself around as a successful graphic designer because she was lucky enough to work on the production floor and interact with these graphic designers for three years before applying for her apprenticeship.

Mara went in a different direction, as stated previously the lack of a mentor had shifted her goals and her outlook on her journey as one of perseverance and an unwillingness to back down and be 'less than' because she once worked as the companies' receptionist:

> Mara: Um, I'm not really sure. I think once I had been doing it for a wee while I was quite happy with how I'd, you know, like 'okay, this is something I can do' and that,

you know how people always ask you about your career goals? I think in part it was a good answer. But, kind of once I said it I was like 'yeah, that's something I want to do, that's an appropriate goal, which I kinda saw as being achievable. I think part of it was that from starting as the receptionist, I kinda wanted to prove that I could do it, like, not only am I going to become a graphic designer, I'm going to become the head graphic designer for the company because then, you know, you might not see me as a receptionist [laughs].

Orin: So, you actually felt that back then? You thought that you wanted to prove that you could do this? That you weren't just going to be answering the phones?

M: Yes, exactly and prove that I've not let anything make me break and run away. Even the relationship stuff, no, I'm not some silly girl that's just going to run away from a job, just because it is inconvenient, I'm my own person and I can be here, and I have achieved my goal of being the head office graphic designer, so you should respect me. Yeah, still a little bit hard.

Mara, in the absence of a mentor or a model to develop the right 'type' of habitus, she adopts a narrative of perseverance. She is expected to struggle but, in that struggle, defines herself as strong and as having a point to prove to her company. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Mara's actions were agentic and transformative because of the extreme disconnection she encountered in first entering the apprenticeship. She had to 'figure things out herself' and define her space and protocol within her field. However, that level of 'freedom' has also lead to one of the more difficult transitions out of the ten apprentices interviewed in this research, which has been compounded by the relative instability of the field itself as it undergoes a fundamental shift in its processes and transitions from physical production to more digital and web production. The reason for this agency is not just because of their lack of skills or experiences associated with this field of the trades, and more specifically digital print production, the relative instability of the field is partly the reason why they are able to show so much agency.

In previous chapters, we have discussed reproductive and transformative agency in the decisions made in finding a trade, but what is occurring here is slightly different. It is different in that there are not those same experiences to draw from, like those apprentices from the third and fourth chapters. Addison and Mara's journey has been defined by struggle and in the absence of experiences or social connections that would allow for a seamless transition into a trade, they have defined their journey through adversity and struggle as these apprentices must reflexively adapt with each step of their journey into work. I have argued that in some respects its reproductive in falling back on a specific type of experience to reproduce the correct field conditions, because the apprentices are grounded in multiple fields. Because of this, rather than drastically changing themselves to fit a field, they are reproducing cultural capital depending on the position and time that they find themselves in their respective field, being both reproductive and transformative in their agency in relation to their interactions within their fields.

For the apprentices in this chapter, their experiences in their trade are even more complicated, not only in that they have chosen a trajectory at odds with their success in academia, but because they have not had a set of experiences to default to when shifting into a trade. This lack of capital, both cultural and social has led to the most challenging transition of any of the apprentices, to the point where they are demonstrating extreme forms of transformation, in that they are having to forcibly pull themselves into a different trajectory than their habitus would point them, but at the same time, extremely reproductive in that they have to develop a 'thick skin' that ultimately accepts and reproduces the gendered nature of the printing industry around them because the transformation is only felt from a personal perspective. Moments of transformative agency in one set of fields, can set up reproductive agency in another set. So, when you actively transform one field, you might inadvertently end up reproducing the structure of another field. In the context of Addison and Mara, they have successfully transformed themselves to fit their field, undergoing a transformation of an inner or 'personal' field, while leaving some core structures of power of the 'outer' or 'public' field intact. This is a new concept that I am attempting to add to field theory, to highlight the importance of personally transformative agency. In introducing fields that are either 'personal' and 'public' I am trying to demonstrate that fields are multiple,

overlapping and co-dependent. In acknowledging a type of 'personal' field, we are acknowledging the importance of personal narratives of transformation. Addison and Mara both personally transform, reflexively changing their own habitus and their own 'inner field', while legitimating the existing power structure of the 'public' field that encompasses the print industry in which their 'inner' or 'personal' field overlaps.

# Chapter Six: Conclusion

Up to this point I have described the journeys of a wide variety of apprentices as they make their transition from school to work. I framed these journeys using Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' and assessed the ways in which apprentices become like a 'fish in water' in their chosen field. From chapter three, a baseline was established in what could be considered a 'traditional' transition into a trade. These apprentices had an ideal habitus for the trades, coupled with the right social capital, which enabled a successful transition into their apprenticeship and were able to handle any potential precariousness that might occur during that apprenticeship. While this was framed as a choice by these apprentices, this choice is inherently structurally reproductive in that they had eliminated any other potential opportunities for their transition into work that would have put them on a pathway out of the working class. As they reached that structural turning point, leaving school for work, they effectively had only one choice, as school was one of the first things to be disengaged as it did not fit their trades-based habitus. However, this journey was not mechanical and thoughtless, but was tempered with moments of reflexive thought as they incorporated their high school experience into their work to various degrees, when during school they had no 'time' for it. Of course, it does not change the outcome or the reproductive nature of this transition, but what it does begin to show is the potential complexity of agency as these apprentices show that they are reflexively engaged with those class conditions and build connections between fields that were initially disparate in nature.

The following chapters attempted to complicate this ordered transition of a trades-based habitus and stabilised fields, by introducing apprentices who had a similar 'hands on' childhood as the apprentices of the third chapter, but without those social connections to place them into a trade. To complicate this picture further, they were also apprentices who, prior to entering a trade, had a significant amount of cultural capital in the field of secondary and tertiary education, having achieved university entrance and gone on to university before entering a trade. For these apprentices, they had to conform to the dominant discourse around education even as it was, as Craig put it, 'shoved down our throats', and with any other pathway being suffocated out of the equation. It highlighted that in the field of education, vocationally minded students are effectively left to fend for themselves, leaning

heavily on those social connections to find their way into a trade. As such, the apprentices in this section were relatively lucky to find an apprenticeship, taking a chance at something 'practical' and having it pay off for them in the long run. These apprentices made a personally transformative decision to choose an apprenticeship over university, pushing against the dominant discourse of tertiary education as the 'approved' pathway for academically successful students.

By 'personally transformative', I mean that they themselves were affected by this decision, rather than actively shaping and contesting the field. While they chose a different pathway, their actions were still grounded in a habitus heavily influenced by these 'hands on' after school activities. Rather than drastically changing to fit their supposedly new field, the value of the cultural capital they possessed shifted, their home and outside of school experiences became the more valuable capital that eased their transition at the expense of their school based cultural capital that helped them prior to their trade. Of course, it is not to say that these are not interconnected, but their cultural capital and its value effectively shifts depending on the individual's position in space and time. If we look back at Sam's journey, it was his experiences outside of school, in his physical part time job in landscaping, his constant 'tinkering in the garage', that was described as crucial for his successful transition into a trade. But at the same time, he succeeded academically in his school and went on to university because of a lack of other, trades-based opportunities that were offered to him. Sam, like the rest of the apprentices in the third chapter, is essentially grounded in both fields. By 'grounded' I mean they have a habitus that 'fits' in either field, and as such, have capital in either field that they can draw on depending on their circumstances in whatever field they find themselves. So, on one side, these apprentices each make a 'choice' that is transformative to enter an apprenticeship at the expense of the dominant discourse that is dictated to them because of the academic cultural capital they possess. But at the same time, they are reproductive in their destination as they are reproducing a set of cultural capital that while not as useful in their school environment, has been perfect for their transition into their respective trades. The value of capital for these apprentices essentially ascends and descends depending on their position, the more dominant habitus/capital taking charge, while the less important habitus/capital takes a secondary role. I would argue that this produces a type of

adaptivity for each of these apprentices which is grounded in reproductivity as they flow between either field comfortably.

This 'grounded' nature was not the same for the final group of apprentices. The two female apprentices whose stories are detailed in this chapter were the only apprentices who lacked both the social and cultural resources of the other apprentices in this study. This lack of a trades-orientated habitus led to the most difficult transition from school to work. Of all the apprentices in this study, they were the only two who described their transition as a struggle as they came to grips with navigating an originally male dominated industry. In their training, rather than embracing the habitus of the field, their approach was different in that they had to 'develop a thick skin' to try and weather the field and their apprenticeship before they transitioned from the 'shop floor' into the sales/design wings of the digital print industry. As mentioned throughout the thesis, masculinity plays a huge part in the construction of the field of apprenticeships and the trades that I have discussed in this thesis. As I reflect on the research process, I was too pre-occupied on a class-based analysis of Bourdieu, rather than considering the intersections that has with gender and ethnicity. Future research needs to address this in more detail, providing a more concrete explanation of the gendered power dynamics within the apprenticeship industry. There needs to be a renewed focus on accurately describing how masculinity and femininity is constructed within a trades-based environment, as well as establishing if those brief mentions within my own research around 'banter' and 'shit talk', which I've tied to early representations of Pakeha masculinity, are a consistent thread throughout the trade's industry and form part of the 'hegemonic' form of masculinity within this field.

To complicate matters, the apprentices mentioned above also had to contend with a field in the middle of a major transition, as it tried to incorporate digital technology to its more traditional background. Because of the dysfunction of the field, it led to the most transformative journey of any of the apprentices, as there was nothing to 'ground' themselves in their interpretation of the field. Unlike the third and fourth chapter whose respondents had experiences to draw from in their day to day lives, Addison and Mara had no idea what to expect and had to actively contest and construct a space for themselves in their field. In this disconnection between their habitus and the field of digital print, they were simultaneously the most reproductive and transformative in their agency. As structurally, they had to

reproduce some aspects of the 'public' field, mostly in relation to gendered capital within of the print industry, to take advantage of the changing nature of the field and achieve their own personal transformation.

So overall, and this applies to all the apprentices in this study, there are varying levels of difference in reproduction and transformation throughout their journeys, and their ability to be agentic can fall somewhere between these two opposites. One of the traps within the debate around structure and agency is that we fall into using the binary, either describing something as 'transformative' or 'reproductive' without acknowledging the nuance and complexity within agency and how for individuals this can change depending on their position and time within the field (See Hays 1994 for a good snapshot of this debate). Rather than a binary, it is better to approach agency as if it was a continuum with reproduction and transformation at either pole, with individuals falling somewhere in between, some more reproductive or more transformative than others, but none ever just 'reproductive' or 'transformative'. The first group of apprentices were primarily reproductive, in that they 'choose' to reproduce their class conditions, even if they are aware of it. The second group of apprentices are transformative in that they 'chose' a deviant trajectory based on the current discourses in education that privilege tertiary education over all other educational pathways after high school. But, this transformation is coupled with reproduction, as instead of reflexively managing and changing their behaviour or habitus to fit the field, they just incorporate experiences outside of their school habitus that are suited to their apprenticeship.

Addison and Mara, as described above, are a little more complex as their complete disconnection with the field means they must reflexively manage their transition more closely to fit in their respective field. If we take transformation into account and how 'change' is measured, you can see transformation in various degrees, ranging from an individual transforming themselves to fit within a field and transformation where the actions from an individual can change the boundaries of the field and this is fundamentally different from the other type of transformation as seen in the second group of apprentices. To be a little more precise, transformation can occur, from an individual perspective, when pursuing a trajectory that deviates from the norm. An 'inner' field, or an individual's internal dialogue and their reflexive interactions with the field around them, shapes and is shaped by the multitude of

'outer' fields that interact and overlap with this more personal field, leading to a personally transformative change in habitus.  The 'act' of choosing outside of the dominant discourse, in this case outside of tertiary education and pursuing a trade, is a personally transformative decision, even if their actions are not drastically changing the power structure or cultural conditions of the field they are entering.

While Addison and Mara 'chose' an apprenticeship outside of the dominant discourse around education, they also experienced a disconnection between their habitus and the field of their trade because of a persistent gender hierarchy, which added another layer of complication. But, this disconnection can lead to an even deeper level of transformation within the individual. The two digital print apprentices that I interviewed in this study were aware of their own disconnection with their habitus and the field around them. As such, they were deeply reflexive about what is causing that disconnection and therefore consciously changed to better fit their apprenticeship. But again, this agency still only resides in the 'inner' field of the self.

To have agency that is transformative from a field-wide perspective, their needs to be a level of instability, enough so that the 'interrupters' who enter from a deviant trajectory, have enough space in which to actively contest the boundaries of the field. Of course, the degree to which an individual can impact a field, especially an apprentice, is difficult to measure. Apprentices are on the bottom rung in terms of influence, so considering them as stakeholders in the boundaries of the field, it is incredibly difficult to leverage that personal transformation into a field wide transformation that affects more than themselves. If we look back at Addison's journey and the importance she places on developing a 'thick skin' to be successful, she did so to manage the indignities of the old boy's culture of the print production industry. So, while she has made some transformative decisions from a personal or an inner perspective, it is coupled with accepting the reproduction within another part of the field.  It is thus incredibly difficult it seems to impact the field, it is also hard to measure that in relation to what is most important when measuring change. That is the temporal nature of fields. For those apprentices who have had to make the most of their agency in navigating a field, there is the potential for more field wide transformative change as they progress into positions of power in their respective trades over time, but that is not something I can assess with the limited temporal scope of this study.

This transformative change, or more accurately, the potential for change is not without its risks. The more unsettled a field becomes, the more possibilities there are for potential change, but that does not necessarily equal an easy change or transition. The apprenticeship schemes that were the most diversified in that they had multiple pathways into their profession were representative of this idea, simultaneously promoting opportunity and difficulty in the transition into this field. For the apprentices from engineering and digital print production, their pathways were alternatives to more conventional, tertiary based education schemes. Instead of getting a degree, their alternative pathways have provided a successful pathway into adulthood. However, even as these pathways were successful, and hint at a field with boundaries that are suddenly more porous, there are still issues around education before entering a job in the field and the long-term value of a degree versus an apprenticeship. You can see this in looking back at Craig's journey, as he talked about his time at school and academic success, he also mentioned a 'cap' in terms of what he can achieve and the knowledge he can attain on the job with his engineering firm and how he would like to go back to university:

> If I came to study at this point in my life, it would be to knuckle down and study, and so I'd really have to chuck all my eggs in that basket and I think at this stage I'm just not prepared to do it. It's too hard and it would almost be a step backwards, because if I jumped into tertiary study now, I turn 25 this year, minimum 3 and a half to four years study by that time I'm 28/29, then you get into, I'd probably do post-grad I guess? If I got that far I'd want to be that next level, so I'd do that and that's another couple of years and then you get into a grad job hopefully, but there is no guarantee of getting a job at the other end, so if I jumped into tertiary education now, I end up being 30, unemployed, with a lot of debt. Cool. I don't see an attraction there. If I could do it extramurally I'd sign up tomorrow.

There is a lot of tension in Craig's response to education here. From a practical perspective, there are too many structural barriers to move from engineering, back into university. But, while it is practically impossible, there is a definite desire to continually improve and get to that next 'level' in his personal development. Of course, this is not to say that apprenticeships do not offer opportunities, as Craig is about to complete a level 6 qualification with his

engineering firm, but what is interesting is where this level of learning is compared against tertiary education. Anything Craig can achieve essentially stops before a bachelor's degree, as for someone training in an apprenticeship, qualifications can be achieved from between level four to level six, while a university qualification ranges from seven to ten (CAREERSNZ 2018). Of course, these numbers are largely arbitrary, and we are talking about very different systems of assessment and education, but even if the numbers are arbitrary, there is a very real structural disadvantage when it comes to achieving through an apprenticeship in terms of its relative value compared with tertiary education in New Zealand.

For Mara, this lack of a degree, and the perceived value of her education, is sometimes seen to her as a disadvantage and a sign of her 'lesser standing' within the field:

> Whether it's how I view it or whether it's how it's viewed, I still kind of feel like the apprenticeship wasn't as prestigious as a university degree. But yeah, I still did three years of work and worked harder than most of my friends that went off to uni. Yeah, so, I mean, I would love to go back and get a bachelor's degree in design. I think that would be awesome and I think that would help me a lot with feeling like I'm not faking it, like I'm allowed to be here, and I've earned it.

From Mara perspective she has worked just as hard, if not harder, than her friends at university, but feels like her education is not at the same level as a university degree. Just to clarify, the intent here is not to attack university and the education it provides, but to point at the lack of perceived parity between the two training pathways. From a policy perspective, this is something that needs to be addressed, as training schemes are diversified, and an attempt is made to bring a more 'hands on approach' to job training, to create more successful workers who can pair practical with abstract knowledge. Businesses need to be cognizant of the 'aura' that is held by a university qualification and how it impacts workers within fields that have diverse training streams. If an apprenticeship has a qualification range from levels 4-6, and a university degree has a qualification range from 7-9, while the numbers might be argued as arbitrary, the 'perception' on this type of education as being somewhat under-valued, or a barrier towards future achievement has a very real effect. If that is the case, the disparity between the two in terms of the 'value' the education provides, needs to be addressed.

Of course, this has already been done to a certain extent by New Zealand businesses. In an open letter to the New Zealand public, NZTALENT, a consortium of businesses based in New Zealand, are starting to acknowledge the precarity of tertiary education and the potential for individuals from a diverse set of training pathways:

> As businesses, we acknowledge that the skills we are looking for in prospective employees can now be developed through a range of pathways. While traditional tertiary education has its place, it is one of many pathways to employment. Internships, apprenticeships, new micro-credentials, on the job training, online courses and badging are all effective ways to learn. For many, the time and cost of gaining a tertiary qualification without certainty of employment means we all need to think outside the box to connect people to jobs and opportunities (NZTALENT 2018)'

This is an important first step and may potentially shape the public perception around alternative forms of education. But, more can be done in either providing parity in terms of qualifications between tertiary degrees and apprenticeships or offering the ability to upskill through tertiary education. As a field becomes more permeable and less autonomous in certain aspects, it is important to consider what elements impact the autonomy of the field. Yes, dysfunction can be positive in providing moments of agency that drastically changes the boundaries of a field, but at the same time it adds a level of risk that must be addressed because hybridity of a field may not change the overall relations of power and while new spaces may open up, so if the tertiary sector is still considered in a position of power relative to vocational education, those from that tertiary educational background still benefit over their vocationally educated counterparts in a diversified field. While people from different pathways are theoretically able to compete for jobs that have previously privileged tertiary based educations, it does not mean that the power of the degree has been mitigated. Nor does it affect the businesses who, while signalling that they will 'acknowledge' job

applicants from alternative pathways, do not guarantee that those individuals without a tertiary education will get hired. The applicants themselves are the ones who must bear the brunt of the risk, as there are no guarantees that even in an open job market, they are going to be able to acquire a job over a similarly experienced but tertiary educated individual. Nor

does it guarantee the same level of career advancement that has plagued some of the apprentices in this study who have come to a job from an unconventional background.

Bringing this back to Bourdieu, one of the goals of this thesis was to introduce a more transformative view of agency within Bourdieu based studies, and to focus more on field theory and how it creates various forms of agency depending on its level of autonomy and permeability at any point in time. One of the biggest criticisms of Bourdieu is that he merely mystifies the process of reproduction. Habitus is nothing but a 'fancy wrapping' on a deterministic outlook on agency that is unable to anticipate change (Yang 2014) and this is how his theories have been used in social research, especially in relation to vocational studies. But by that same token, there are moments within Bourdieu's own work that suggest, at the very least, the potential of change:

> [Fields are] 'a site of twofold uncertainty: *a parte objecti,* on the side of the world, whose meaning, because it remains open, like the future on which it depends, lends itself to several interpretations and a *parte subjecti,* on the side of agents, whose sense of the game can express itself or be expressed in various ways or recognise itself in various expressions (Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations 2000).'

You could find many similar quotes throughout Bourdieu's work as he tries to wrestle with all the complexities of structure and agency, but this statement acknowledges the 'uncertainty' and the multitude of interpretations of the world on the side of the agents. I like this interpretation for two reasons. As I argued earlier, we need to incorporate an understanding of a field from a conscious, introspective position of an individual actor and how they interpret the field. Their inner dialogue that manifests itself as an inner field that interlocks with larger external fields which changes and is changed by them, which in turn, can be recognised reflexively and can lead to personally transformative decision making that not necessarily translates to change in an external field, but change that effects that inner field.

Second, this quote is not just important in relation to how social actors make 'sense of the game' in their field and the field of power, but how we as social scientists interpret and use Bourdieu in our own research. I would argue that Bourdieu actively encourages a rather loose, experimental, and gung-ho approach to social theory:

*'I blame most of my readers for having considered as theoretical treatises, meant solely to be read or commented upon, works that, like gymnastics handbooks, were intended for exercise, or even better, for putting into practice … one cannot grasp the most profound logic of the social world unless one becomes immersed in the specificity of an empirical reality. (Bourdieu 1993, 271; as quoted by Reay 2004, 439)*

Bourdieu's work is meant to be used, It Is meant to be immersed in the empirical, in the stories of real people. As well as that, Bourdieu sees his concepts as being continuously reworked and like Reay (2004) argues, using Bourdieu as a 'method' as well as theory, helps smooth some of the sharp edges of his theory of practice and can potentially lead to theoretical innovations that can offer different ways to 'work with Bourdieu.'

This approach is what has informed this thesis at every step. The goal of this thesis was to value the personal, reflexive interpretations of each the apprentices I have interviewed. In doing so, I have added much needed empirical data that challenges the preconceived notions of school to work transitions as something more than 'maccas or uni'. This research shows an incredibly complex and nuanced field, filled with individuals who engage with their field in a variety of ways outside of this 'common sense' assumptions around school to work transitions in New Zealand. From a more theoretical perspective, this approach questions the position of agency within Bourdieu's own work and addresses the need to conceive of agency as something that can be *more* than either reproductive or transformative, but simultaneously both. In trying to conceive of an idea of agency that is this flexible, it has lead me to engage with Bourdieu from a unique perspective, leading to my own theoretical conception of an 'inner' field that overlaps and interacts with a wider structural field. Which I hope has the potential to be used in wider research, adding another level of depth and complexity in the use of field theory, not just in vocational based studies, but in all Bourdieu based studies.

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