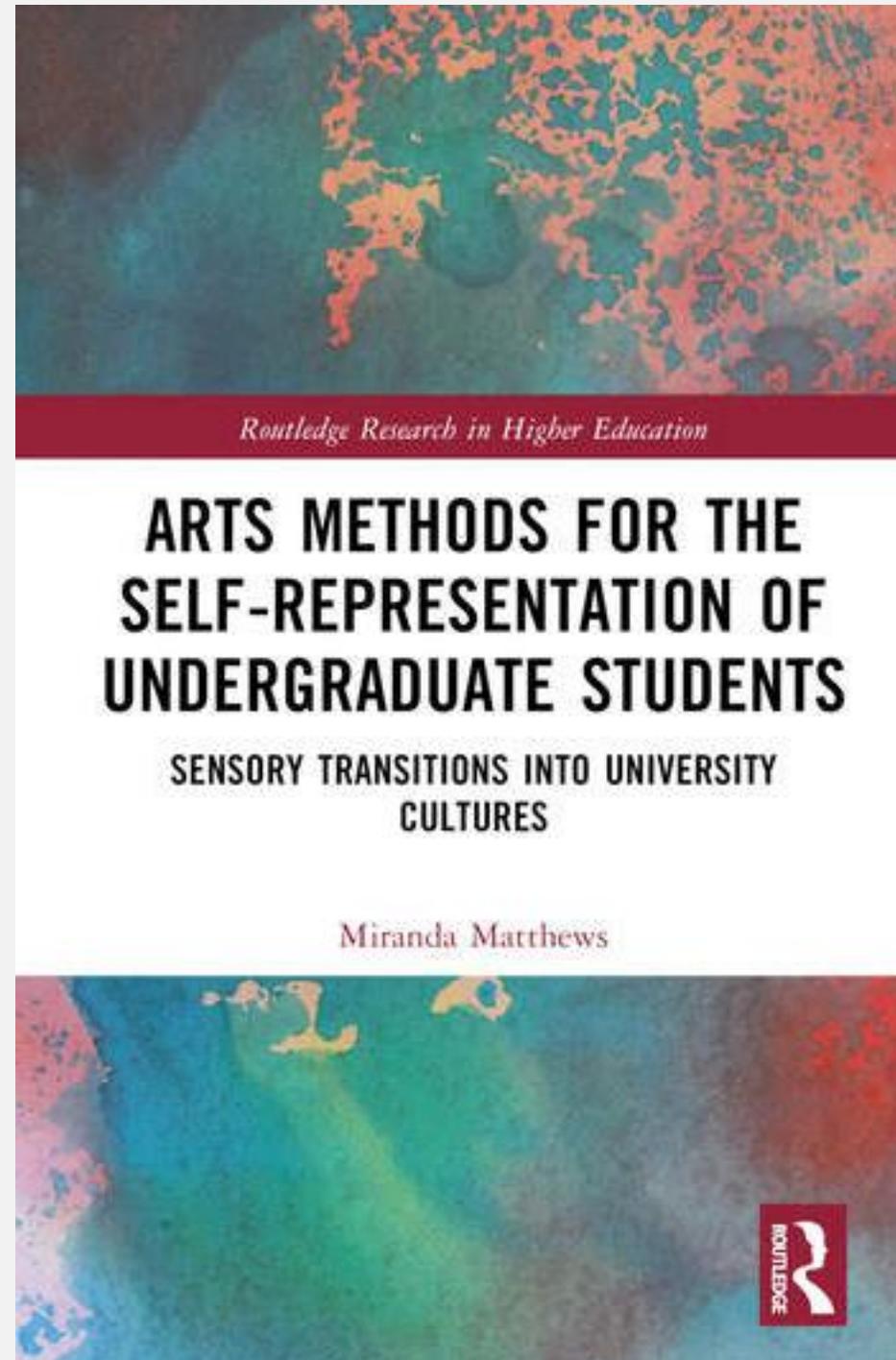# Integrating Arts Methods for Dimensionality and Vocal Presence in University Cultures

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How do arts methods integrated in HEI curricula enable a fully dimensional and vocal presence for students in underrepresented groups?

ARTS METHODS FOR THE SELF-REPRESENTATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

SENSORY TRANSITIONS INTO UNIVERSITY CULTURES

Miranda Matthews

# Arts Methods for the Self-Representation of Undergraduate Students: Research Starting Points

The research identified how innovative arts methods assist the transitional experiences of students who may experience a culture shock when they start their programmes of study at university.

care-leavers first-generation
women
parents disabilities
wellbeing low-income
urban commuters
working-class
racialised non-binary
minoritised mature
rural

# Participants: Lecturers in the Social Sciences and Humanities

Dia at Loch
Sociology

Hugh at Loch
Sociology

Luis Enrique at Tracks
Anthropology

Shannon at Hills
Human Geography

Janet at Dales
Psychology

Fiona at Sands
Sociology

Peter at Borders
English Lit

Sally at Airways
Educational Studies

Chris at Hills
English Lit

Jordan at Airways
Educational Studies

# Participants: Arts Educators, Curators, Alumni

# Centralising the Theory of Marginalised Groups



- Kimberlé Crenshaw, was the originator of intersectionality theory in 'Mapping the Margins' (Crenshaw et al. 1995). Black feminists were challenging racism, sexism and classism, exploring the combined factors of socially constructed oppressive forces, in specific contexts (Collins and Bilge 2020).

- Relating to creative protests, 'creative social action' is an empowering form of social intervention, identified by Patricia Hill Collins (2019). Collins sees the importance of creative action in how people 'actively work at making sense of the world through critical thinking and imagination' (173).



Chapter 2 Theorising Sensory Transitions, Matthews 2023, pp.12-43.
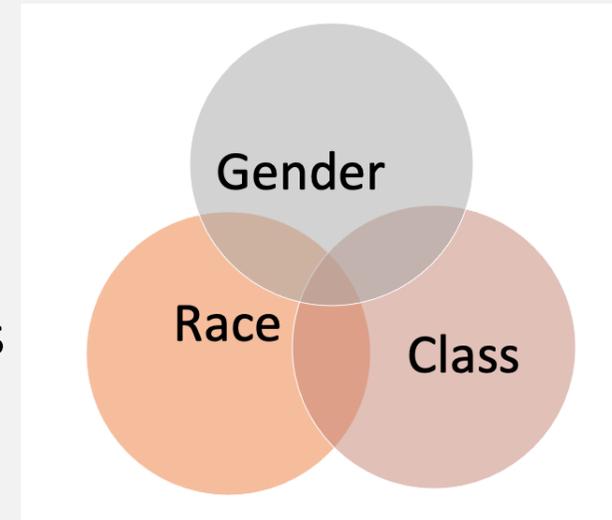
- Student self-representation is an assemblage of the many worlds they inhabit both inside and outside the university.

- Stuart Hall on 'Transition Zones' into higher education 'I came to understand that identity is not a set of fixed attributes, the unchanging essence of inner self, but a constantly shifting process of *positioning*' (2018, 16).

- There is a need for plurality and heterogeneity, decentring the Anthropocene towards 'a world of many worlds' (de la Cadena and Blaser 2018)

- Enabling 'multi-layered surrounding campus environs' (Lee and LaDousa 2015, 170), and 'multiple academic and social communities' (Tinto 2020, 17).

# Bridging Gaps with Arts Methods

I nearly always include elements where they can do personal investigation, where they have some scaffolding. I would use the word 'scaffolding' to talk about the ways in which I try and create a connection between ways they're thinking and concerned, and interested already in a topic, and how knowledge is done in that area of the discipline: there might be a gap.

(Shannon, Hills)

Chapter 3, Factors of Difference: Changing Environments, pp. 44-78, Matthews 2023.

Secular College is very wealthy and they support sport, for example with huge amounts of money. Rowing, for example, and rugby. There was never any money for art from Secular College Student Union which is a source of funds for these things. The students made an impassioned argument and they raised... in the first year it was £1,500 to buy art materials and that's gradually going up. It's nothing still compared to what the college has... but on the other hand, suddenly there's an idea that visual arts practice needs money as well. (Dan, River)

# Re-storying with Arts Methods to Enable Reflective Voice

Arts methods can help students to re-story their learning narrative towards positive responses, that celebrate all dimensionalities.

An Example in Practice:

'People find it hard to defamiliarise from their own lives. So if you just ask a question you will get like an instant response' (Fiona, Sands).

Fiona uses arts methods such as collage to re-story experiences and enable discussion of the 'gaps' that emerge in the collage, towards ownership of nuanced self-representation.
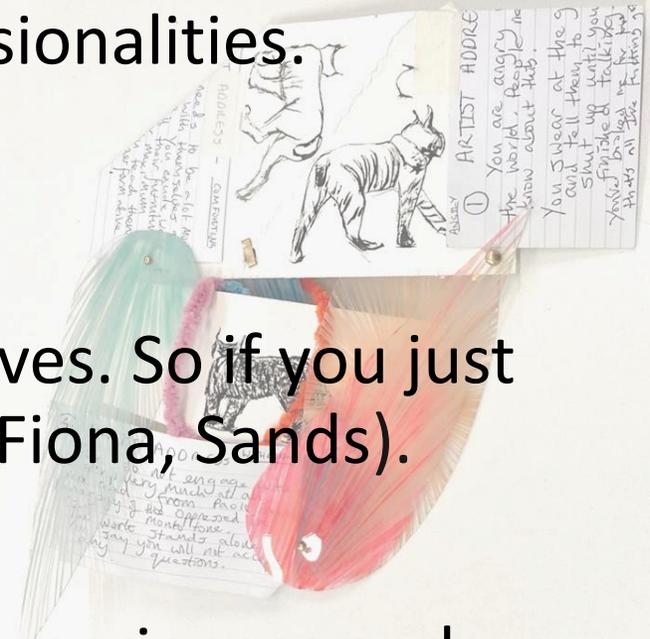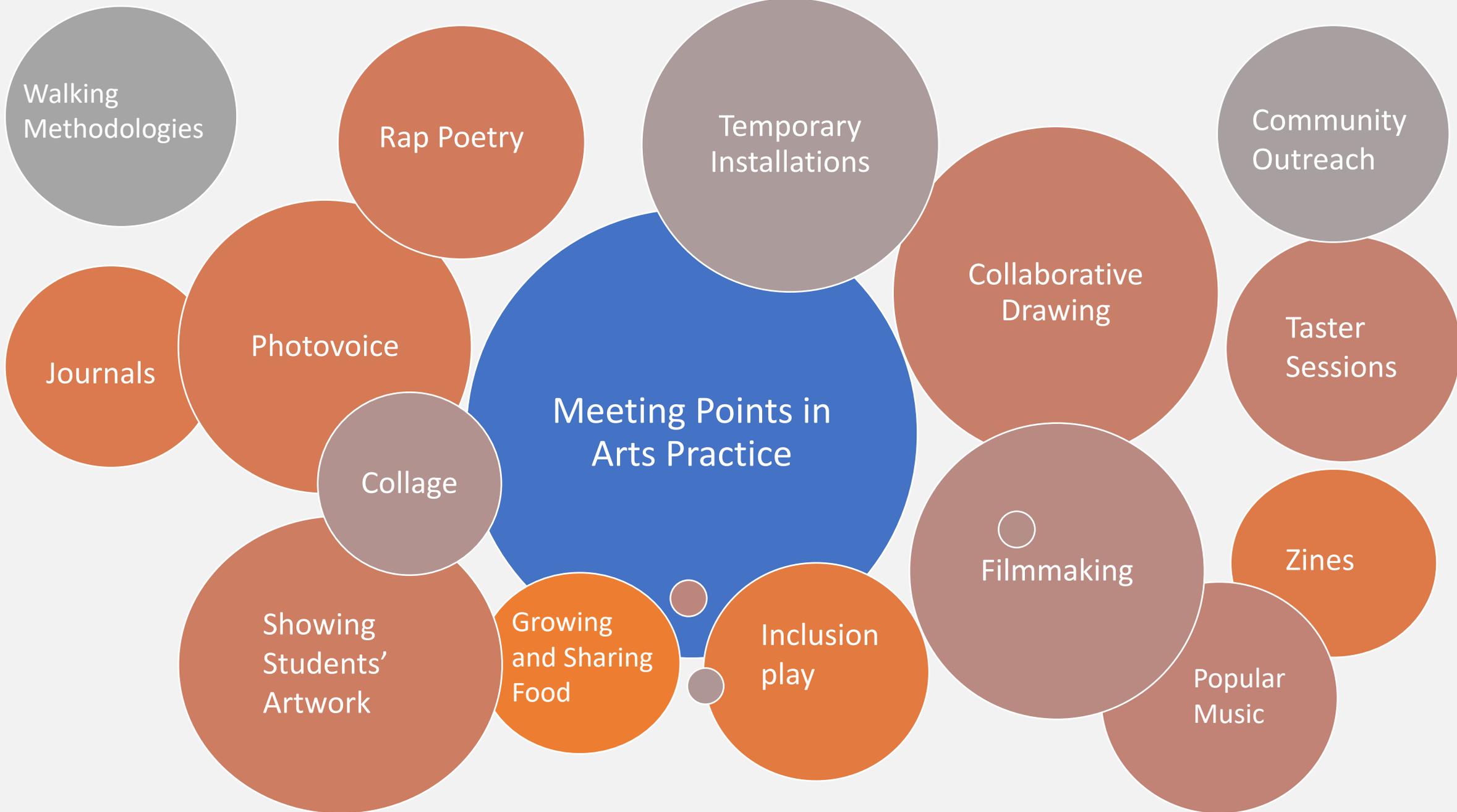
Chapter 3, Factors of Difference: Changing Environments, pp. 44-78, Matthews 2023.
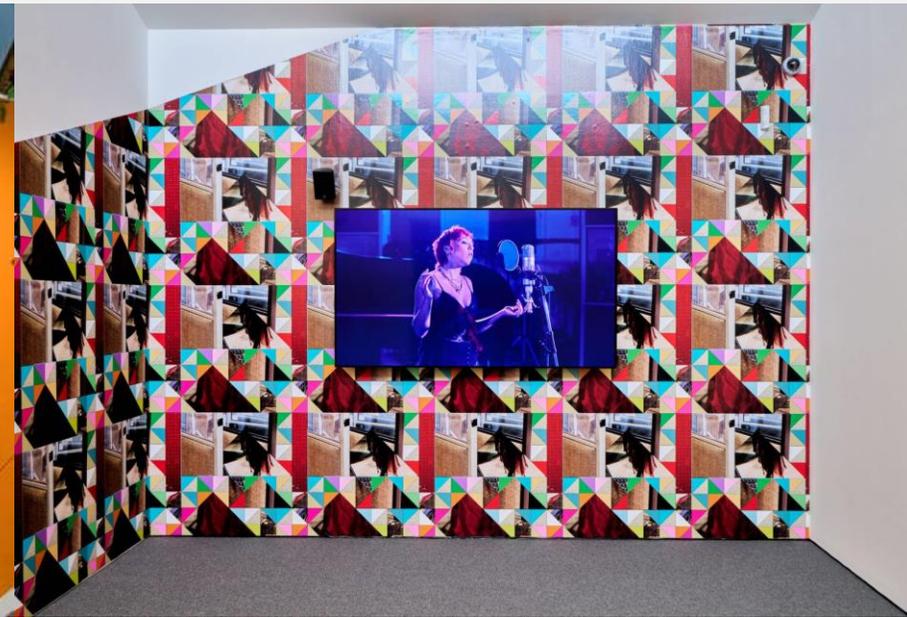
# Opening Narratives – Creative voices for 'homing', self-representation and belonging



Martin Parr, Photographing the Great British Seaside, 2018

Michael McMillan, The Front Room 2021

Sonia Boyce, Feeling Her Way, 2023

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- https://elephant.art/the-great-british-seaside/