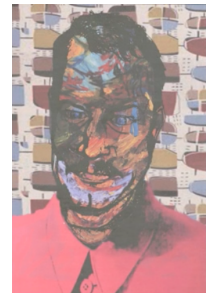
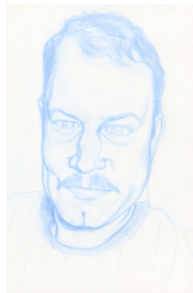


How methods developed by other subject areas might be used in fine art research

Louise Janvier



Images produced by Graphic Design students at Preston's College

The brief set was related to self-identity and the images above were exhibited at Tate Liverpool to advertise the Tate Collective in relation to the exhibition 'Glam! The Performance of Style', 2013 as part of a college inclusion programme

Graphic Design Project Overview

The 'One in Four ' Film Festival at UCLan has taken place annually for seven years and provides an opportunity for Further Education students to form a relationship with the university learning more about how it operates and the activities that it tries to promote. Students were invited to create posters to advertise films related to mental health issues and encouraged to participate in discussion to develop their knowledge and understanding of identity and mental health to explore some of the fears and phobias as portrayed in the media.

The creative industries require sensitivity with the subject matter and the application of appropriate visual material to reflect many equality and diversity issues in society is vital. Public perceptions and cultural values can be influenced by the advertising industry. The Advertising Standards Authority monitors public opinion and tries to maintain creative freedom whilst observing cultural acceptability that varies according to the placement of the material. Students would learn about specific health conditions, character portrayal and symbolic referencing within film.

Engaging Further Education students with complex questions about cultural representation via poster design helped the students to use film narrative and think about the meaning of life more holistically. Commonly held prejudices were challenged and students gained maturity as they examined the facts. Transitionally they became more caring and less dismissive of the issue of 'otherness'. Students drew on their own experiences and talked about the films they felt an affinity for or felt some common ground. The characters also were important because sadness and humour were often intricately brought together which touched them.

Students searched through film clips and discussed key aspects of films to decide on the visual content they would develop. The effects of colour, tone, line and texture within the work helped students understand how those ingredients conveyed the emotional response they wanted the viewer to feel. It was interesting in that students sometimes conveyed some of their own personality, whether humorous or melancholic. Female students tended to focus on films charged with emotional relationships or topical subjects such as anorexia. Male students were interested in the notion of warfare and the complexities of heroism, failure and expectation.

As a lecturer having worked in mental health it related to me the exposing effects of films, as sensitive conditions are usually very private with only a few individuals being privy to the situation. Personal values and the notion of 'sanity' were being questioned and with these slight shifts in perception 'art' can become most powerful. Students wanted to learn about my experiences so the group and my relationship to them grew stronger because we were together producing something for someone else and there was a satisfaction in that. It provided a vehicle for me to explore their private views and improve their acceptance of others.

I was very impressed with the attitudes of the students and that everyone accepted the challenge all were very keen to view the films although a few struggled with the content. The films drew them into the plot and choice became a factor. How do you illustrate contentious subjects and still make them manageable for the audience to view? In a sense theirs was the most difficult task because they had to freeze one moment into a single image and did not have the luxury of the director in taking the audience through the explanation. The students had to capture the essence of the film, reflect something of the

characters or environment to produce an eye catching image and strap line to attract the audience to watch the film.

Not surprisingly the students made multiple versions but seldom wanted to alter the actors into animation characters, they preferred to portray the scenes realistically, suggesting that they took the images seriously as a drama depiction. Students would review each other's work and question the content and if they were conveying the right message. The work was exhibited and for some this was daunting, that other people they did not know would be judging their understanding of the film and their personal interpretation of it. The effect was exposing for them because much of life revolves around concealing our inner world, identity and beliefs as sharing can be rewarding or reprimanding. Students were reluctant to be identified with their work and preferred anonymity.

The limitations of using projects that are emotive include the knowledge of the individual delivering the project and the student cohort in terms of their own life experiences. The film selection had been decided by the host organisation, so the difficulty of knowing the content of the films in relation to the student experiences could be conflicting. Lecturer experience and courage is required because even if the students did not object then family and friends might. The winner was always elated and when the public voted the students questioned the ability of them to judge their own creative appreciation. Competition can also be disheartening particularly for the most hard-working students who would begin to question their own ability. Some students wanted to really make the public think about the film and its meaning and held very strong views, feeling that they could change public perceptions.

Impact on Student Perception of 'Self'

Students in fact tend to shut themselves away and generally they are quite shy and afraid of confronting the world with their creative skills. They are unsure of themselves and their identity, they often do not know where they want to go in life or how to apply their talents. The effect of this lack of direction can result in them going down the wrong career path as the creative industries contain a multiplicity of avenues that can be a heaven or a hell. It is therefore important to investigate factors influencing Further Education students beginning to research creative careers in order to make more informed decisions and whether any additional career guidance had an impact on their higher education course and career choices. The brief made them ask the question: Who am I?

‘People are capable of making their own decisions, and need to if they are to be confident in their capacity to change personal and social situations.’ Mc Niff & Whitehead (2004: 141) Presentations and discussions to raise awareness as to the multitude of creative courses available to them are paramount as the digital programmes increase in complexity and specialisation. The student knowledge of degree course content and its appropriateness to specific career options is vital. The Careers Advisory Service presentations help to clarify the employment opportunities especially for those who have no family or friends working in the specific industry. Design Festivals and Higher Education Fairs must be made available to the students and institutions must analyse the most effective strategies for creative subject areas.

Students in Further Education are at a critical turning point because their career decision-making will affect them for the rest of their life. A sense of direction helps improve self-concept and ambition that are required as students embark on independent study skills. ‘It

is prudent at the outset of a career to learn about and practice all the disciplines that strike your interest and fancy as well as those that are growth areas for employment.’ Heller, S. & Fernandes, T. (2002: 26)

Many student’s experience difficulties in decision making for their chosen degree and career choices, often delaying their options because of lack of research and limited knowledge of the many opportunities which exist in creative industries. ‘It is understandable that people are intimidated by the unknown that we wish others to make choices and create our identities for us.’ Mc Niff & Whitehead (2004:141)

The skills acquired in arts degree courses are very specifically directed towards particular occupations, especially in relation to the software programmes taught. It can therefore be difficult to change creative direction following a degree. Further Education learners seem unaware of this and of their post-graduate opportunities thereafter.

‘A lack of experience or lack of specialist skills were the main reasons for recruitment difficulties noted by employers (42% and 35% respectively)’ Creative & Cultural Skills AACSB LMI report 2010 NGRF – LMI Future Trends – Sectors – Creative and Cultural

The Digital Dilemma

Acquiring new creative digital skills is time consuming and employers do not wish to employ those without the ability to create work quickly and efficiently to industry standards. Graduates generally do not have the luxury to change direction or have the time to learn particular industry skills retrospectively in order to gain employment. It is vital that Higher Education responds to the specific digital needs of the employer so that the student and society benefits from this investment of time and knowledge. The vast array of

software skills required by commercial industry is overwhelming both for the student and the educational institution as it tries to keep pace with student expectation and the advances in technology.

The emerging 'smart technologies and cities' have been analysed by the NLA, London's Centre for the Built Environment publishing an Insight Study with exhibition 'Smarter London – how digital technologies are shaping the city.' It included ideas and projects to show how smart technologies are transforming the way professionals work' such as Building Information Modelling & Augmented Reality' NLA Insight Study (2014: 3, 82)

The emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics STEM centres are important, but then so is art & design. 'As a minimum, we need to insert the arts into STEM (= STEAM) if we are to ensure that our school curricula are best matched for the realisation of the multifaceted potential of all our children and young people.' The arts and humanities and the 'English Baccalaureate': STEAM not STEM. Research in Secondary Teacher Education, Prof Graham F. Welsh Institute of Education University of London Vol. 1. No. 2. October 2011 pp. 29-31

A group of 16 to 24 year olds enquiring about entering the film, television and games industry revealed that 'just 9% believe they received excellent careers advice' and a quarter of the group felt that 'contact with people already working in their chosen industry was their most useful source of advice.' 'Poor careers advice is failing the creative industries: the insider story.' Anne Morrison, BAFTA trustees, 27th Dec 2012 Guardian Careers

Students are not informed, probably because it is not part of the course curriculum, but also it may be destructive and compound the problem, if individuals felt that their chances of success were slim. Incredibly ‘678, 480 people currently work in the creative and cultural industries as their main job.’ ‘A further 151, 000 people will be needed in the sector by 2017(Source: Skills Needs Assessment 2007 and Gap Analysis and Market Testing 2007, NGRF – LMI Future Trends)

‘The UK creative and cultural industry contributes nearly £25 billion Gross Value Added to the UK economy each year.’ Surely it is worthwhile society is more aware of the massive contribution that creative individuals make as their status is diminished due to the undervaluing of their specific digital skills that are in fact a precious resource and due to the anonymous maker go unnoticed by the general public (Source: Sector Skills Agreement for the Creative and Cultural Industries 2010 and Creative and Cultural Industry Impact and Footprint 2008/09 NGRF – LMI Future Trends – Sectors – Creative and Cultural)

In the Creative Industries Council’s strategy report outlining a vision of industry and government working together to develop the UK’s creative industries to their full potential to 2020 it raises ‘the sector generated £71.4 billion gross value added (GVA) in 2012’ (2014:3) Creative Industries Council

The benefits from enabling students to realise the opportunities for their skills is highly important and reassuring compared with the past experience of arts students. Nelson and Quick (2003) listed **six** benefits of diversity including improved ‘creativity’, ‘innovation’, ‘problem solving’, ‘marketing’, ‘organisational flexibility’ and ‘attracting and retaining the best human talent’. Challenges with diversity included ‘lack of cohesion’,

‘communication’, ‘conflicts’, ‘decision making’ and ‘resistance to change’. If these issues are not addressed then inequality remains. Baruch (2004: 267)

Government Employability Interventions

In March 2006 the white paper on further education, ‘Raising skills, improving life chances,’ was published. Employers would be involved in adult ‘train to gain’ programmes to meet the economy’s demands and develop specialist diplomas for 14-19 year olds. It also announced that all lecturers undertake 30 hours of professional development per year by 2010.

In December 2006 the ‘Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills’ offered recommendations to transfer ‘responsibility for qualifications to sector skills councils and creating a single information, advice and guidance service for young people and adults’ with a ‘train to gain’ scheme and student accounts. The effect of this would distance the lecturer from the involvement in the student/career relationship. (UCU – University and College Union – Key developments and documents)

John Denham MP, Department of Innovation and Skills (DIUS) commented in his H.E. speech at the Wellcome Collection Conference Centre in February 2008, there were ‘worries about the lack of careers advice for students’ and following Leitch’s recommendations have ‘set a target of 40% of the workforce having higher level skills’. The Central Office of Information (COI) produced a report for DIUS in October 2008 suggesting ‘improved relationships between F.E. Colleges (FECs) and HEIs could be facilitated by Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs).’ Bridging the gap between the institutions seems to be a logical solution.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Learning Skills Council (LSC) and the Sector Skills Development Agency aim to improve the vocational qualifications. The National Skills Alliance, DCSF and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform also assist with advice on skills and productivity. There are nine regional skills partnerships the LSC, Jobcentre Plus and the Small Business Service help with skills, employment and business.

The Macro Government policy has introduced a range of career enhancing strategies. The organisations that aim to reduce inequality include ‘Connexions’ and ‘Kudos’, offering careers guidance for young learners. ‘Adult Directions online’, information, advice and guidance (IAG) is part of NIACE’s (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) commitment to supporting employers overcoming skills shortages, adult learners and addressing barriers. NIACE worked on European, UK and Ireland guidance policy, also developing and embedding information, advice and guidance in learning provision for adults.

The ‘Creative Access’ organisation founded in 2012 aimed ‘to provide opportunities for paid internships in the creative industries for young people of graduate (or of equivalent standard) from under-represented black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME).’ Hancock, M (2014) GOV UK

The Rt. Hon Matthew Hancock MP, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills announced on 14th July 2014 ‘a further 4 million of funding to match industry investment, in a major boost to the creative industries.’ Hancock, M (2014) GOV UK

Careers Advice

Controversy relating to the ability of educational institutions to produce a skilled workforce has endured. Most colleges ensure that second year students have a group discussion with a Careers Advisor, with the opportunity of individual guidance. In practice few students make appointments at the Further Education stage, as they feel they are not ready and try to postpone their decision-making. Consequently Careers Advisors tend to become more involved in Higher Education when the student is in the final stages of their degree. It is vital that students begin to develop their self-concept as soon as possible and direct their creative interests and skills within their portfolios, for the specific degree courses they apply for.

Higher Education also has to provide 'career learning opportunities for young people', advocated by DfES Department for Education and Skills (2003) 'Careers Education and Guidance in England: A National framework 11-19.'

Students must learn about 'self-development, career exploration and career management', particularly at this turning point in their lives. 'Career-learning theory' is thought to be 'inductive' rather than 'deductive', looking at specifics and forming a general opinion Piaget and Inhelder (1969) To achieve this, research involved 'feeling and thinking.' Ellis (1973) 'Links between feeling and career occur subliminally' and may have been influenced through discussion. Hood (1995) Cited in Watts, Law, Killen, Kidd, Hawthorn (2002: 61, 62, 63)

Many students do not discuss career options with their family, so may rely on the institutions for guidance. The concentration purely on creative coursework limits the time

students discuss their own identity and specific career opportunities. Career guidance is one of the most important functions in Further Education.

Law and Watts (1987) identified the four interconnected career and educational guidance learning aims of schools and colleges as: ‘Self awareness, opportunity awareness, decision learning and transition learning’ Super (1957; 1981) suggested that self-concept was translated into occupation via ‘identification’ with an adult, ‘experience’ with an activity and ‘awareness’ of one’s skill. Research has shown that ‘more able youngsters with high self-esteem’ strive to superimpose ‘ideal self-concepts and occupations than between actual self-concepts and occupations.’ The aspirant student could be more open to suggestion than the less able student with lower self-esteem. Cited in Kidd (1996:15, 21)

The Rt. Hon Matthew Hancock MP, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills states in part of ‘Improving the quality of further education and skills training’ and ‘Further education and skills’ press release 14th July 2014 states that ‘More than 1000 creative industries employers will work with at least 250 schools and further education colleges.’

Hancock, M (2014) GOV UK

Incorporating company projects into the curriculum, organising work experience, arranging speakers is a fantastic improvement, but the workload of those working within private industry and educational institutions require additional time to orchestrate this huge task.

The ‘Creative Skillset’ organisation ‘empowers the creative industries to develop skills and talent.’ Stating ‘as the industry skills body for the creative industries, we work across

film, television, radio, animation, visual effects, games, fashion, textiles, advertising, marketing communications and publishing.’ Hancock, M (2014) GOV UK

Discussions aimed at stimulating either focused or general careers and qualitative information. Morgan, D. L. cited by Denscombe (2007: 179) comments: ‘Focus group members share their experiences and thoughts, while also comparing their own contributions to what others have said. This process of sharing and comparing is especially useful for hearing and understanding a range of responses on a research topic. The best focus groups thus not only provide data on *what* the participants think but also *why* they hold those views.’

Self-reflecting in writing ‘enables an on-going self-dialogue with some of the otherwise quiet or silent voices within.’ Rowan cited in Bolton (2005: 179) The basic premise being that ‘enquiry and discovery were an alternative mode of learning’ and ‘what starts off with an aspiration, a rather general idea, needs to be translated into a set of practices’, if they were found to be beneficial. Pring (2004: 131)

Socio-economic circumstances play an underlying part in outcomes that would vary depending on the participant. Student fees remain an influencing factor, but ‘on average graduates earn over 30% more than non-graduates after ten years’, they ‘earn up to £400,000 more over a lifetime’ and are ‘50% less likely to be unemployed’. Nevertheless ‘15% or one in seven students drop out of university each year,’ but as there are ‘over 50,000 courses and 280 institutions’, no wonder students are confused, ‘every year, tens of thousands drop out because they made the wrong choices.’ Rich (2004: 3, 9, 107) The fees and loans have now reduced additional earnings to ‘£168k’ for men and ‘£252k’ for

women over a lifetime compared with those of a similar background without a degree qualification. Walker, I. (2013)

The Value of Group Discussion

Qualitative information within unstructured discussions, observations, open-ended questionnaires and presentations offers a naturalistic microcosm. Questionnaires enable lecturers to compare the written private views expressed accurately and individually, they form a less intrusive and anonymous method of inquiry, which can also be expressed statistically.

Students must believe they have a positive creative future, thereby improving their self-concept. ‘Good relations’ lead to ‘feelings of trust and confidence’ key to successful research. Hitchcock, Hughes (1989) cited in Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2006:66)

Recording and observing are difficult to do in unison, as self-concept is developed from assessment and the students perceive this experience as a type of formative assessment. In the construction of identity through assessment, Reay and Williams ‘asserted that many students construct their identity through assessment and that as a result, it reveals something about themselves as individuals.’ Cited in Reece and Walker (2003: 366)

‘Accepting the responsibility for one’s own life and choices however can be very hard for some. John O’ Donohue (2000:145) speaks of the prisons we choose to live in, and those prisons include the way we think and ‘the cage of frightened identity’.’ Mc Niff & Whitehead (2004:141)

Family background ‘will influence the future career choices of children.’ Stewart, Baring (1996) Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) identified the ‘values, norms and beliefs’ of individuals which are affected by ‘individual personality (and demography) and by culture and environment’ to explain the ‘why’ of career choices. ‘Attitudes towards different career patterns can be affected by the general culture of their society, the media to which they are exposed, the education system they experienced, and of course, the career advice and direction provided by the organisation for which they work.’ Students may also therefore be impressionable and open to suggestion, so careful monitoring is required. Baruch (2004: 23)

Individuals may feel that their characteristics could dictate their occupations and in fact ‘Holland’s Personality-Job Fit Theory’ including ‘Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (RIASEC)’ would confirm this career choice theory, which whilst it has ‘good face validity’ has not further investigated the ‘career satisfaction.’ Baruch (2004: 45)

The form of delivery affects how students relate to creative career information including persuasive speakers and certainly the costs incurred when students embark on a H.E. course. A deep-seated fear of debt seems to make some not even entertain the prospect of university, however many creative companies cannot employ them without the necessary skill set qualification. It is therefore misleading to students to think that they can circumvent the debt and short circuit the process by applying direct. Apprenticeship can be a wonderful way into a career but many are short and limit the student’s employment mobility. Students are now caught up with a baffling array of options and the effect could reduce social mobility limiting achievement.

The Employer Ownership Pilots are a £340 million competitive bidding fund that invited employers over two rounds to tell government how they would better use public investment, alongside their own to invest in the skills and workforce.’ Hancock, M (2014) GOV UK

Sparking debate about career paths helps to formulate and inform students to clarify the skills set required. Sharing placement experiences and respecting alternative viewpoints are the most beneficial aspects to the discussions and learning more about self-discovery.

Guidelines for lecturer involvement including a checklist of strategies that have been researched as being the most effective methods of engaging students to form an integrated package, documenting the career continuum for each student.

Career Outcomes

Adam Smith’s (1776) stated that individuals encouraged to pursue their own interests are led by an ‘invisible hand’ to promote an end which is no part of their intention – the public interest – and to do so more effectually than when they intend to promote it.’ Watts, Law, Killeen, Kidd, Hawthorn (1996:382)

The overwhelming factor regarding student advice seems to be ‘clearly define your goals before choosing a graduate program’, then ‘make sure the curriculum is flexible and matches your needs, and check all available options.’ Heller (2001: 23)

It is important to realise that the discussions hold ‘indexical’ meaning that was less explicit within the ‘social context’ by the group, rather than a wholly ‘reflexive’ analysis of the events. Strike (1990) identified two principles in the ‘ethics of educational

evaluation' which were in operation that of 'benefit maximisation' and 'equal respect'. 'Social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity.' Research must be conducted as an 'open-ended' analysis rather than having a 'research agenda' or 'evaluation of *given* initiatives.' Cohen, Manion, Morrison (2006: 25, 68, 56, 38)

'The Greenhaus et al. model of career development 'focuses on the individual as the one who needs to make a decision, a need that leads to a career search and into a process of setting career goals, developing strategies and tactics to fulfil them.' Baruch (2004: 70)

This is a laudable approach but in reality 'there are, of course, people who are not able to make choices for reasons of pathology or coercion, and it is then the responsibility of those in positions of influence to support them and fight to arrange circumstances such that their voices are heard.' Mc Niff & Whitehead (2003:142)

Whilst lecturers should not use briefs as a replacement for the careers service, it would seem remiss of them not to share their knowledge and position in order to best enhance the life chances of their students. The poster outcomes included in the portfolios for interview and this gave the student the opportunity to speak about equality and diversity in society and in the creative communities. The students had experienced a group exhibition so could include it in their UCAS statement. The posters have been used to advertise the events online and at other conferences. The experience they gained gave them the confidence to tackle any subject matter and also they used their work to gain freelance opportunities. The students understood working to the deadline and satisfying the client and audience whom they did not know.

The project allowed everyone to be open about others and accept that it is ok to not feel 'normal' all of the time, but that they would know some of the signs and symptoms to take action if needed. One student decided to train in mental health nursing and use her creative skills in occupational therapy. A couple students became very interested in health and fitness and they visited the gym to alleviate the sedentary working life of many digital professionals. One of those students became a fitness instructor with the aim of using his graphic design skills to open his own gym. A few other students went into caring professions, volunteering community support groups or ex offender work. The vast majority pursued many spheres of design, but the project seemed to be a turning point for those looking inwardly and see that they could use their creativity to influence society.

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