

Time to Ponder: Transformation in First-generation Creative Industries Students.

By

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Abstract (300)

Time to Ponder: Transformation in First-generation Creative Industries Students.

By Wesley Bernard Nolan

“Transformative” is often used to describe and promote Higher Education in the UK. I investigated this promise in relation to Creative Industries education by observing it through a Transformative Learning lens (Mezirow, 1978 - 2006). A longitudinal study of the experiences of first-generation students whilst on Creative Industries degrees at Southampton Solent University between 2015 -16 is presented with follow-up interviews five years after graduation. My experiences as a first-generation student, craft professional, educator, and program leader also shape the reflexive aspects of this work.

At Southampton Solent University, students on creative industries degrees were invited to engage with PonderLogic, an online research space where I posted weekly moving image prompts. Participants were then invited to record and upload responses in their own time. Students aged between twenty and forty-four, three males and three females, contributed over 200 clips while completing their studies. They were again interviewed five years after they graduated. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006 - 2022) was adapted to code the data within the NVIVO software using Mezirow’s ten phases of perspective transformation (1978) as a triangulation base for emerging themes and an iterative framework. I sought first to critically analyse Mezirow’s transformation cycle (1978) to explore strengths, failings or potential additions. Then to identify aspects of the students’ experience that might map to the cycle and, ultimately, this journey towards experience design.

The practical, active learning environment and collaborative nature of Creative Industries programmes in Higher Education can result in perspective shifts and lead to transformative social, learning, and career gains. My research aimed to derive utility from transformative learning theory and proposes a perspective transformation benchmark approach to curriculum development. My *Frame of Reference Model (FORM)* for transformative education design and *13-step Transformation System (TS13)* are offered as next-stage contributions.

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Dedication.

For me Da, Bernard Nolan (1955-2020), whose light went out too soon yet guides me daily.

Acknowledgements.

Sir Ken Robinson, whose voice inspired my disruptive life in Creative Industries Education.

Coláiste Dhúlaigh Dublin, for those transformative chances as a student first, professional, then teacher. To Kevin White there in particular, for his faith in me, wisdom, and mentorship.

Solent University for giving me a start in UK HE and for showing me a model of how academics, technicians, and students can genuinely work together in this space. And for enabling this research through the generosity of everyone's time there.

James Fair, for the "just get it done man" chats and for normalising the alien, sometimes impenetrable world of "*doctorateness*".

My EdD Supervision Team who rallied around me when my father passed; Stephen Heppell for the inspiration and enabling my authentic voice; Mark Readman for his endless patience and academic guidance; Lys Johnson for keeping a motley crew on track; and Gelareh Roushan for guiding us across the BU finish line in the final stages. You'll never truly understand what those monthly motivational messages and meetings meant when the road darkened and the waypoint lost. Thank you.

01 Background Framing

This work deals with a very obvious truth: just as the oppressor, in order to oppress, needs a theory of oppressive action, so the oppressed, in order to become free, also need a theory of action (Freire 1970).

1.1 Why this is important: The First Personal Inhale

In July of 2023, I received news that a cousin had died. Gladstone's library rests in the sleepy village of Hawarden, Wales, cuddled by stone walls and healthy trees. I was sitting at my favourite desk in its majestic reading rooms. Having tried most desks up the tight winding stairs to the balcony, there was one that didn't get uncomfortable light during the sun's daily dander, causing you to move. Through the shock of the loss of a life I barely knew, I sat back sadly, recalling the faint, decades-old photos in my mind's eye of my cousin's face. I pondered whether the shaft of dusty light through Gladstone's windows opposite might be like the light as his brother broke through the front door. My cousin had struggled for many years after losing his father at a very young age. Having not heard from him for a few days, his brother went down and found him dead in the hallway. Shopping bags in hand.

He is one of too many young men in my hometown who have died through mental health issues, substance abuse and suicide. How different our lives are... *but why?* This research, and my life's passion, is about unpacking that *why*. I have experienced transformative education, and it saved me. My cousin and many others like him sadly have not. The costs for a week's board and all meals at Gladstone's Library would be more than their monthly welfare cheques. To me, it was free; *why?* Through continued education in creative industries, including this doctorate, my position in life has been transformed many times. It has led me to a programme leadership position at a university in Liverpool that is willing to invest in my development and cover the costs of a writing retreat to aid my doctorate completion. This is a privilege. A privilege not afforded to people like my cousin struggling on the streets of social deprivation.

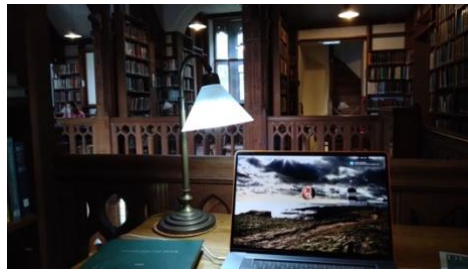


Fig 1.1 WeZ's Desk in Gladstone's

Every September, when we receive a new first-year cohort on to our Media Production course, a lost cousin or young WeZ may be in the room.

Transformation through creative industries education is authentic to me. I have lived it. The questions burning from such dynamically opposite existences as mine and my sadly deceased cousin are: *Why is it transformative for me? Is it transformative for others? And if so, in what ways could it be used to benefit?*

The term “transformative” is frequently used within academia and related marketing, and it begs the question: “How are you defining and measuring this?”

Our Vision and Values



"An inclusive civic university transforming lives and futures, by placing students at the heart of everything we do "

Mark Power -
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

Fig 1.2 1st Example of LJMU Vision & Values 2022

Fig 1.2 above and 1.3 below are just two examples from my current institute of how “Transformative” language appears in the marketing of UK Higher Education. Young people buy into this journey with considerable personal financial debt and expectations based on this “transformative” promise.

Currently, £20 billion per year is loaned to around 1.5 million higher education students in England. The value of outstanding loans at the end of March 2024 reached £236 billion. The Government forecasts the value

of outstanding loans to reach around £500 billion (2023-24 prices) by the late 2040s.

The forecast average debt among the cohort of borrowers who started their course in 2022/23 is £45,600 when they complete their course.

Forecast debt is expected to be lower for those starting in the reformed system from 2023/24 at £43,700.(Bolton 2024)

This is a staggering debt load for 1.5 million 22-year-olds to bear as they begin independent adult life. A core value of this research is that the debt needs to be worth it—it needs to be for something. Understanding this “Transformative” promise in relation to Creative Industries education is essential to identifying potential, tangible, repeatable milestones and outcomes for these students and to making good on promises like the one below (See Fig 1.2).

The image is a screenshot of a graphic titled "We are student focused" in a teal speech bubble. Below it, the text reads: "Caring for our students to give them a transformational student experience". This is followed by three lines of text: "Our every focus is on the students who come to us to learn, develop, and grow.", "Here they will discover who they are, and how they are going to change the world.", and "And we will do everything to help them do it." The entire graphic has a teal background.

We are student focused

Caring for our students to give them a transformational student experience

Our every focus is on the students who come to us to learn, develop, and grow.
Here they will discover who they are, and how they are going to change the world.
And we will do everything to help them do it.

Fig 1.3 2nd Example of LJM University Vision & Values 2022

These seeds of enquiry led me to Jack Mezirow’s (1978 - 2009) work on Transformative Learning Theory. And most pivotally, a return to his work on Perspective Transformation and phases in the ’70s, which had been partly inspired by Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) and, in its generative stages, carried the same call for reform. The initial exploration led to the development of the following research questions, aims and objectives, the evolution of which is expressed herein:

Research Questions:

RQ1: What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

RQ2: To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of Perspective Transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

RQ3: To what extent can Mezirow's Perspective Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

RQ4: What additional contributions can be determined from the data generated to advance Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978a-1994) towards practical tools and concepts for creative industries education design and delivery?

RQ5: Is it possible to gain deeper insights into transformative experiences by giving participants ownership of regular moving image contributions in an online research space, as opposed to relying solely on standard pre-arranged and structured interviews?

Research Aim:

To explore the lived experiences of first-generation creative industries students through the lens of Mezirow's perspective transformation phases (1978 – 1994) whilst critically investigating their relevance and limitations within the context of modern higher education design and delivery.

Research Objectives:

Objective 1: To capture and explore the experiences of first-generation creative industries students at Solent University using the PonderLogic, online research method.

Objective 2: To conduct arranged and structured interviews with the participants after graduation for longitudinal reflection and to compare the PonderLogic data collection method, furthering the critical analysis of the transformation phases (Mezirow 1978-1994).

Objective 3: To apply Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006 - 2020) to the samples within the NVIVO software for deeper insight and rigour.

Objective 4: To comprehensively examine the data samples further, to explore utilitarian possibilities for education design beyond Mezirow's transformation phase analysis (1978-1994).

After gaining my first UK HE lecturing position, these questions, aims, and objectives were explored with creative industries students at Southampton Solent University. This EdD in Creative and Media at Bournemouth University enabled another life transformation through education. My craft instinct from over a decade in the creative industries led me to develop a digital space I named "PonderLogic" to conduct field research. Students were asked to respond and upload weekly moving image prompts online, hoping they could capture points of perspective transformation closer to the moment rather than weeks later in a documentary-style interview. Along this journey, particularly engaging with literature and criticisms of the field, I shifted from researching and talking about *Transformative Learning* towards championing a discussion around "*Transformative Education*", "TranZed". The culmination of this work is the 13-step Transformation System (TS13) for creative industries students and the Frame of Reference Model for education design (FORM) as next stage contributions. Braun and Clarke's work on Reflexive Thematic Analysis became a trusted development companion and system to analyse the 200 PonderLogic clips, legitimise my own journey and field observations within this work and ultimately derive utility from an expansive, hard-to-pin-down concept of offering tangible transformation and potentially fulfilling the promise of higher education.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This has been a complex and multifaceted journey. The intertwining meta layers within the moving image data generated, the levels of NVivo Reflective Thematic Analysis work and interpersonal reflections have been difficult to express through words on a page. Given that the map is not *the* territory, and the thesis is not *the* work, it has been conceived and structured in a way to take the reader on my journey from inspired research apprentice to emerging Doctor of Education. To express this, the thesis has been structured as follows:

Chapter 1 expresses the background to this undertaking, why it is important, why me, why now, and shares the inspiration taken from the Learning Without Frontiers conference in 2012 that inspired this dedication to disruption and transformative education design.

Chapter 2 reviews the key players, trends and takeaways from transformative learning literature. I also make the case for my funnelling down, not just to Mezirow's transformative learning theory but, to strike out again from the beginning and the Perspective Transformation Phases identified in 1978. A table of the phases and their adjustments over time is presented. It is here the research questions, aims and objectives are defined.

Chapter 3 frames the data methodologically. The reflexive and reflective tones are expanded upon along with how an industry craft mindset permeates this work. The PonderLogic framework is expressed by showing the early, complex, pilot iteration versus my Conceptual Triangle tool. The methodological positioning is mapped and through a discussion around using moving image in research, I begin to find voice and propose Didgeography as an adaptable research method for our time.

Chapter 4 runs through data generation. I take you through setting up the online research space, finding participants, key learning points from the pilot study, labelling systems and how PonderLogic ran, ultimately generating over 200 clips. I reflect as Researcher Participant and how PonderLogic gave much more than anticipated. We then move longitudinally and share the process for the five-year-later structured interviews and my Route 66 Effect. The chapter ends

with a comparison of methods, and how the triangulation of the longitudinally generated data makes this research unique. As an attempt to express the wealth of information and depth of reflexive analysis that can be gained from just one clip, I take you on a deep dive of The 13th Clip.

Chapter 5 shares how the data was analysed, how coding was approached and why Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was adopted. The basic pilot pattern matching coding in Microsoft Word evolves to RTA within the NVivo software, and the importance of the hard-bound PonderLogic notebook I have kept throughout is expressed.

Chapter 6 is the findings in two parts. The first part is an in-depth, critical analysis of Mezirow's perspective phases (1978). Each phase is assessed individually and a final, concluding table is presented for discussion. The second part of this findings chapter expresses how the data coding and RTA stages revealed my Frame of Reference model for education design (FORM) and my 13-step Transformation System for creative students (TS13).

Chapter 7 concludes the journey and presents my original contribution to knowledge summary, limitations, next steps and recommendations. It also wraps up the meta layer of my transformation throughout all of this from Broadcast Payout to Programme Leader and Doctor of Education.

Discovering Reflexivity

There may be a parallel timeline where I never leave Wexford town, and *my* brother kicks a front door in one confusingly misty July afternoon as my late cousin's brother had to do. This mindset informs my choices as a Programme Leader, Lecturer and Researcher. Sir Ken Robinson's work on creativity within education (2006-2022) inspired me further onto this pathway. In his game-changing Ted talk in 2006 and subsequent book *The Element* (2009), he acknowledges education as being intensely personal to people. In terms of how we experience it and the lasting wounds or inspirations we carry from it. Despite that, I struggle with discomfort in response to labelling this work as purely *autoethnographic*. The temptation and tendency for others to dress my work with this qualitative jacket is regular. Keles, for example, describes "a good autoethnography as the work of a scholar who aims for the witty hand of an artist and the sharp/critical mind of a social scientist" (2022). As a creative industry professional and craftsperson, I borrow from many areas to problem-solve and invent *on the day*. Every problem along a journey deserves an open mode for solving. A closed mode might dismiss tools and options, stunting progress from stage to stage and how it is presented or mapped.

"A map is not the territory it represents, but if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness," wrote the godfather of general semantics, Alfred Korzybski, first in 1958 (Korzybski 1994). He offered that languages, at best, must only be considered maps. A map *is not* the territory. A word is *not* the object it represents (Korzybski 1994). A thesis is not the doctoral apprenticeship it represents. As a map, this thesis barely skims the surface of the impact this research journey has already had on me and the institutes I engage with. It opened access to a career otherwise closed. To friendships, colleagues, relocations, frustrations, and growth that could never be covered here in written words. It has already influenced delivery, module design, assessment design and most recently, an entire programme design at LJMU. It is far greater than the sum of these pages. It has changed how I view myself, how I view society and how society views me. It has transformed an inspiration to teach to ambitions to disrupt, challenge and improve creative industries education through further research and outputs. This thesis map barely covers the actual territory of passion transformed into action. Korzybski

proposed E-prime as a language system without any form of the verb “to be” (1994). To say that something “*is*” locks it in a singular state, which he would argue we can never scientifically *prove* through the expression of words alone. *The map is not the territory*. To say what something *is*, I feel, also leaves it open to ridicule for how it *isn't*. I try as much as I can to incorporate E-prime thinking in the expression of my work. Aspects presented here, for example, might be recognisable to an autoethnographer, but that is at times borrowed and unintentional and never is the ambition to become an expert in autoethnography. It would, therefore, be inaccurate to say that this work *is* just autoethnography.

In fact, “I” went to great lengths not to use “I” in the opening paragraphs of this thesis's first complete 99,001-word draft, which made for awkward reading. One supervisor correctly commented, “Given how personal this intro is, it’s weird to use the third person here”. I couldn’t articulate my position about the research properly on the page, but I also knew autoethnography was too tight a fit. Braun and Clarke (2006- 2023) call for us to be passionate storytellers, not dispassionate scientists, that we might even move the reader. This and my supervisor Stephen Heppell’s encouragement gave me a voice. Their award-winning work on Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) has grown alongside my own and became the key to unlocking the potential in the data generated and to my own researcher identity. RTA has enabled the expressive tone that you are now enjoying and a far more personal opening than I would have initially dared. I find a kinship in the ethos of RTA. From early on, I believed all research carries a natural bias. There is a reason I might spend a lifetime working in creative industries education and another in cancer research or sports technologies. We should research because it matters to us and not be afraid to acknowledge ourselves within the work. Particularly when it comes to education. We should care. I am an eternal student. I have been a pupil, tutor, lecturer, programme leader, and now a researcher in creative industries education. To box this away as separate and pretend it does not have value would have been a barrier to insight and progress. In their 2022 book, Braun and Clarke share a definition of reflexivity by US social work scholar Roni Berger (cited by, Braun and Clarke 2022 Berger 2015):

It means turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation. As such, the idea of reflexivity challenges the view of knowledge production as independent of the researcher producing it and of knowledge as objective. (2015,p. 220)

I struggled with this early in the work, as although I believed it already, it did not feel *allowed*. With my background and coming from industry, the section of society I was now meeting and the language they used in the doctorate world were alien to the point of exclusion. *I am part of this. It is real to me. Why can't I say that? Why is my actual life being dismissed as rhetoric?* Part of those early growing pains of academic exclusion were partial naivety on my part but real nonetheless. Voices like Berger's above encouraged me to acknowledge my position and part in generating data with my participants on the PonderLogic experience. They allowed more of "me" to enter *this* space and not keep *me* separate from creative industries. It is also why I feel much of transformative learning literature falls foul of negativity and can be lacking. Publications in the field can read as "dispassionate scientists" and less "passionate storytellers" for the most part.

Some, particularly critics of the field, Newman for example (2010,2012), write as if they had not experienced transformative learning themselves at some stage. That they somehow arrived on earth as fully formed Professors. Reflexive positioning is another critical part of my contribution here. The perspective I have gained from being cast aside as waste by one education system to having my life completely transformed by another is a different voice in this space. Part of my doctoral training here is how to express and contextualise my first-generation voice in a way that might not be dismissed as "rhetoric" as they were during the early stages of this EdD. Since beginning this work, I have observed how creative industries education is delivered across three UK HE institutes to the management level. There are not many voices like mine in the 5th-floor boardrooms that I have experienced.

1.3 What I am bringing to the table and why:

Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs only to the people who prepare for it today (Malcolm X, 1964).

“An area of social deprivation” is *not* how life felt in Maudlintown, Wexford, on the Southeast coast of Ireland. It was a paradox. We built and raced go-carts from materials scrounged from old shopping trolleys and factory pallets. We walked the summer train tracks and swam, unwelcome, in the farmer’s Blue Ponds. Old Grey Heads corn gun was often the home time bell. The streets were filled with tens of cousins and friends. Local dogs had surnames when owners called them in at night. Front doors were left open, and summer was a riot of toddlers’ excited screams on swings and roundabouts in The Green at one end. To forgotten curfews into the long, bright teenage nights on the other. Social billionaires, by contrast to those same streets baron now and the ponds grown over, in this digital age.

“An area of learning deprivation” is precisely how life felt in the Wexford CBS (Christian Brothers School) by contrast. Born in 1978, a teenager in the nineties, I was part of the last generation to experience that licence to abuse, “Corporal Punishment”. When they were not physically beating us with fists, sticks and metal rulers, they were mentally battering us to make us feel shameful and stupid. Cigarette-drenched, middle-aged men bully children for knowing less than they do. When the “Christian” Brothers learned what area of town you were from, Maudlintown, you were segregated and ridiculed daily as a waste of time, going nowhere. Reading was used as a tool for punishment in the classroom. “Stand up, read this chapter out loud”, they’d sneer ... then have all the other boys laugh at the gaps, stutters, and throat clearings you made as the minutes sweated into what felt like numb hours. My rebellion against this was never to read. A self-harm that impacted those so-called “Christians” not one bit but lasted long into my early twenties. Writing was used as punishment by way of hundreds of handwritten lines. One sadist relished composing sentences over two or three copy lines to extend the monotony. Bullies. They enforced “respect” and authority. They never earned. The real shame in all of this is that, to this day, I get great joy from learning. They were in the business of “shut up, sit down, memorise this chapter for the test”. Asking “Why?” Or

suggesting a different way might be possible earned me more corridor time. I eventually switched off. It may have been different for students from other parts of the town, and I genuinely hope it was, but how education treats you impacts your view of self and the world, impacting your opportunity awareness. Mezirow called this “meaning perspective”. A meaning perspective refers to the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one’s past experience (Mezirow, 1978b). It takes a toll if you are constantly being told that you are a waste of space and time, that people from your area amount to nothing, and that you are going to people who have authority over you. Something in me did not give in, though. In the myth of Sisyphus, Camus created a metaphor to illuminate the capacity of all of us to become critically aware of the absurdity of living out our lives without challenging the roles we play in meeting social expectations (Mezirow 1978b). In other words, the “Christian” brothers were trying to put a boulder on me to push to the top of an unreachable hill. I threw it back and sidestepped.

Between Primary School and Secondary School, they had an entrance exam. Based on this, they would split you into class groups for your jail-like sentence for the next five to six years. Uniform assigned. Cut your hair. Speak when spoken to. Personality is peril. You were assigned to A1, A2 or A3 based on the “entrance exam” taken in a cold gymnasium one Saturday morning. A3 was the lowest and most neglected class over the five-year journey. They were unhappy in A1 when they found I, a “Maudlintowner”, had gotten in. This entrance exam was my first real memory of realising that this was all a system and that the system was broken. Critical self-examination of where I sit as a reflexive researcher today (Braun and Clarke 2022) feels like looking around the uniform rows in that frosty gymnasium during the entrance exam. I felt the shock of design. A great sadness fell over me passing the LJMU gym in May 2024 as I saw the gym had been cleared out and hundreds of desks in rows had been prepared for exams; *we’re still doing this! Really?*

The constant labelling and pressure to be the same as each other in the BCS Secondary school was in stark contrast to the Rock and Heavy Metal music I was playing in our band. It has dawned on me that the time I spent on the band did more for me getting into Coláiste Dhúlaigh by portfolio than the CBS torture

did. Those secondary schools were no place for a creative mind. One reward from a particularly nasty Christian Brother for writing poetry and lyrics during a “free class” was kneeling on two fist-sized Gideon bibles outside the principal’s office. All the students passing could see me during lunch break. I was visible from all corridors when the bell rang because of the four glass windowed walls surrounding a poorly kept garden in the centre of the school. *Why didn’t I stand up? Walk away?* Through this work, here now I am. *This* is why I am so passionate and sure that Education can transform lives when delivered well despite its failings.

The final secondary school exam in Ireland, taken around the age of 17 or 18, was called the Leaving Cert. Only a few of the parents from our area in Maudlintown back then finished school. Both my parents left school at around twelve years of age. Back then, you could do that as factory work or building sites were good jobs achieved through relatives and community, not through qualifications. To get back at the constant mental and physical abuse from the “teachers” expecting me to fail out or quit, the Leaving Cert would be finished. Boulder sidestepped. Either to prove them wrong or probably more to annoy them, but this would be it—no more School. I would work and be done with it all. It is important to bring you into my research this way so that you understand my *why*. “He who knows the “why” for his existence... will bear almost any “how” (Frankl, 1946). This quote is also attributed to Nietzsche, but I first came across it in Viktor’s book “Man’s Search for Meaning”, and I use it a lot with students. Find your “why” for being here, *and the workload will shift from bearable to valuable. This a vital mantra whilst trying to complete this doctorate work part-time around the relentlessly growing demands of Programme Leadership in modern HE.*

Nobody ever spoke to me about college or University as an option in the CBS. The family had never been, and teachers “knew” it was not on the cards for people from our area. If I overheard conversations, my reaction was: *More school? More of this? No way!* My Leaving Cert was achieved in the summer of 1996. Months were spent on trawlers at sea, and years were spent at the Celtic Linen Laundry at the entrance to the Maudlintown housing estate. It was a four-minute walk from our house to the door of that noisy laundry. Two steaming hot

years in that loop from home to factory, being elbow-deep in piles of soiled hospital and hotel linen, enough was enough. There had to be something else out there.

To this day, my Uncle Dermot is still pushing that same laundry boulder. Being a different generation, my mother's response to my wanting to leave was one of oppressed catholic guilt and shame. She saw it as a failure rather than a marker of having raised me well enough to strike out and take care of myself.

Navigating that family pressure took a lot, but I left for the city at 20, thinking I would never be accepted back. Such was the pull for change that I had to go. This space between the old life and the new grows into an essential thread of interest in this research later. Dublin was an explosion of sounds, colours, and people. Amongst the masses, you felt like nobody and somebody all at once. Through that formative, sometimes floundering, never dull initiation to city life, the first transformative stamp on my passport to *this* life happened.

My Passport Stamps to Transformation

We move through successive transformations towards analysing things from a perspective increasingly removed from one's personal or local perspective (Mezirow 1978b).

1000 Irish Pounds was the cost of a Sound Engineering course advertised in the Dublin Evening Echo. Precisely the amount my brother had gifted to me. Money from his horrific concrete pipe accident and compensation when I left Wexford a year previous. A year of bar work, live gigs, couch surfing, friendships and evictions. As wild as those Dublin days were, my brother's parting gift remained untouched until I spotted the course trawling the jobs section of the evening echo. It was a BTEC Sound Engineering Certificate every weekend. No more School, indeed. Not a uniform in sight. It was nothing like the Christian Brothers. Reflexive positioning of the transition and subsequent opportunities are essential regarding the research impact and continued contextualisation of transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1991). Reflexivity isn't all naval gazing and just thinking about yourself; it's also about the knowledge we produce from research and *how* we produce it (Lutterell, 2019; Wilkinson, 1988, quoted in Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Living through these stark contrasts in living and learning situations from Wexford to Dublin and others would later inform a key pivot during the PonderLogic experience from data gathering to data *generating* (Braun & Clarke 2022)—the question “why” on the BTEC course was welcomed. The adults spoke to us like humans, and creative people surrounded me. The posh, polished floors of the recording studios, with all of the equipment and innovative people, were a different universe from the splintered trawler deck or steaming wet tumblers of the laundry. The weekends couldn’t come quickly enough. Information was soaked in as it all had a purpose. Tutors often mentioned how different this would be from school tests, and we mostly did hands-on, practical assessments. After the year, part-time, the team on that course pointed me towards the Media and Communications course at Coláiste Dhulaigh. At the time, Coláiste Dhulaigh proudly ignored UCAS points. It was portfolio and interview-based. That summer was spent compiling poetry, developing pictures, painting and gathering band-related news clippings, art and images (See Appendix 1.1). Mezirow identified aspects of this journey in the perspective transformation of the women he studied in the ’70s: “classes designed especially for them... admission requirements simplified... class assignments recognise the overwhelming fear of failure” (Mezirow 1978b). When reading Mezirow, I could map his work to my journey at macro and micro levels, then later with my participants. This also led to important lessons in potential bias as a doctorate apprentice. I would love to have a conversation with Mezirow about all of this.

Being accepted by and during my time at Coláiste Dhúlaigh was transformative. In the second year, Frank Berry, the TV Tutor, inspired a love for cameras, editing, TV Studios and much more. Life suddenly had options. I followed visiting Producers down corridors after guest lecture sessions until one finally, through a wry, knowing grin, gave a start. That was 2002, my first paid industry work, and it began a network of opportunities and collaborations in television, film, and theatre that continues to this day. It also led to my first brush with the UK Education system and transformative passport stamp 2. Coláiste Dhúlaigh had a link with Wolverhampton, and around twenty of us moved away from Ireland for the first time to that odd Midlands town.

Contrary to our nerves, we were far more skilled than the local student cohort on arrival, but that 2004 qualification would prove invaluable when the recession hit four years later. Creative Education threw a lifeline again in 2009 after the 2008 financial crash. Mezirow might call this a disorienting dilemma (1978a). Kevin White had invited me back to teach at Coláiste Dhúlaigh; reluctant at first, this became another transformative step on this journey. In September 2008, however, my teaching hours were not renewed, and most of the production companies I was freelancing for around Dublin offering regular work went bust. By January, my savings were gone, and I was uncomfortably queuing to sign on to the Welfare in Coolock. A real sense of a creative life lost was felt, and the ghosts of the Christian Brothers were behind me with their boulder and “told you so” mocking. My Da asked on the pay phone one day why I left it so late to “sign on”.

I don't know, pride I suppose.

“You can't eat pride” he said.

I miss my Da. I know he was proud of my move to Liverpool; it was one of his last texts. I did say I loved him during our last ever phone call, so at least I do not have that regret. Is there any learning more transformative than the loss of a parent?

In the spring of 2009, I was on the dole in Dublin fair city. Embarrassed but not lost, I had an option. This is when the MA Documentary Practice at Coleraine Campus Derry was applied for and joined. Stamp three. That experience in the North of Ireland would transform my life options and change everything I thought I knew about Ireland, being Irish and who “I” was. These changes in living and social awareness form essential aspects of recognising potentially transformative influences beyond the classroom during data generation in PonderLogic. After completing the MA in 2010, the work hunt took me to Arqiva/ESPN (Disney) London through old Setanta contacts.

The hardest transformative education strand to convey here, in the written linear sense at least, is the impact of what will soon be stamp 5, this EdD Creative and Media—the fifth and final stamp. (There was a PGCTLHE at Solent during my second year of the thought phase of the EdD. Stamp four.). “Nobody leaves

transmissions” was the familiar sneer when people heard I was applying for lecturing jobs. Another boulder. Had this research and thesis been attempted from outside of higher education, still in that industry, the insights and experience needed to write, defend, and take the work forward would not be here. This EdD has enabled employment and progression across three institutes delivering Higher Creative Industries Education in England. I went from a seat in a broadcast playout facility in London to a management-level role as Programme Leader with a team of ten lecturers below me and designing a course informed by this journey. Another boulder sidestepped. Deep reflection on all of this instils a genuine understanding of Mezirow’s Transformative Learning (1991) and Perspective Transformation (1978) from the inside out. I continue to live it but must progress weary and open to lessons of bias.

The “First Generation...” tone is important.

As we move forward to new perspectives, we can never return to those in our past. Indeed, we are continually reconstructing the reality of the past by reinterpreting it from each successive vantage point as we move from one perspective to the next (Mezirow, 1978b).

This first-generation reflexive lens is the beating heart of the exploration. It forms the initial inspiration to be here, the “why”. The initial research hunch and later, you will see it change the tone from research “questions” to shared experiences during the PonderLogic study. An ongoing meta layer, of course, is that this Doctorate itself transformed my life journey from working night shifts in broadcast transmissions to an educator in UK HE. Reflexive positioning of the transition and subsequent opportunities are important to acknowledge in terms of research impact and continued contextualisation of transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1991). Looking back at my journey through the lens of Mezirow’s work, as I have asked my participants to do ultimately, has also been transformative and hunch-affirming.

1.4 From Hunch to Hypothesis: Learning Without Frontiers

Revolutions never come from the top – Sir Ken Robinson (2012).

Learning Without Frontiers.

Sports Broadcasting was never a life calling for me. Nonetheless, I spent the better part of a decade there, from Setanta Sports in Dublin to Arqiva London for Disney's sports division. ESPN broadcast playout could be often intense and only sometimes enjoyable. The Superbowl, the NBA finals, the odd punch-up when the Boston Bruins were playing Montreal Canadians in the NHL. There are worse jobs, like washing hospital sheets in a laundry, but not being a fan of sport meant the quieter night shift times were spent trawling the internet. Sir Ken Robinson's work *is a life calling for me*. Something in his message resonates deeply, and discovering an event he would appear at in London one night shift brought on a rush of excitement. Then, a flush of disappointment. The Learning Without Frontiers 2012 (LWF12) tickets cost over one thousand pounds! It was the New Year's Eve shift, and money was tight (we worked a five-on, five-off pattern, days/nights). Having no idea what a conference was, some gut instinct insisted on going. The bleary-eyed lie happened around four in the morning, and the student ticket option was clicked, emptying my bank account. It was around two hundred and sixty pounds. *Eejit! They'll probably ask for a Student ID, and you won't get in. But... you have blagged your way into gigs as big as the U2 Slane concert before with no ticket; surely you can handle this!?* It was three long weeks of begged lifts to work, borrowing cash, and rescuing stale boardroom sandwiches until January 25th and 26th came around at the Olympia. London had been home for two years, having moved over for work after completing the recession-motivated MA Documentary Practice at the University of Ulster in Portstewart, Northern Ireland.

My mohawk hairstyle, shorts, and tattoos stood out against the aftershave suits in the queue, who were poignantly getting free iPads on entry while the student ticket got you nothing. Thankfully, they didn't ask for a student ID. Still, the knitting needle of a woman holding a clipboard insisted "Student" was Printed large on my name badge, peering down through disapproving spectacles. *You will be labelled as a lesser*. This was familiar territory, having always been seen

as “disruptive”, but how that term was used throughout this conference was not familiar at all.

Being Disruptive

“Disruptive” was coming up time and time again during LWF12. Mainly by the organiser, Graham Brown-Martin. Asking “why?” or if a thing could be done differently in the Christian Brothers Schools was disruptive and earned countless hours in the corridor. “Disruptive” was on every school report as proof of how useless you were. But now, at LWF12, disruption and disruptors were almost being called to rally. It was surreal to have a buried label used to beat you down mentally and physically, gain new context and re-emerge as a point of almost pride. *Hang on, isn't disruption a bad thing?* It was rousing.

Talking to me?

It is hard to convey the wealth of inspiration and innovation I experienced at LWF12 from previously unknown names. Over the two days, we heard from people like Michael Brooks (Brooks 2012) about the anarchy of science. On how *disruptive* the innovative mavericks of science had once been, experimenting on themselves and breaking the rules. A cry to get us disruptive, creative types to sit beside the safe image of the modern scientist. Stephen Heppell (Heppell 2012) talked about child-led learning. *This guy is doing things his way here AND lives on a boat! Close to my sea soul. I should look up Bournemouth University.* Jaron Lanier (Lanier 2012) gave a fantastic talk on learning by play and experience but opened with a song on a baffling ancient Chinese instrument he proposed was one of the earliest examples of computing—a ten-thousand-year-old instrument in the form of a sequence of pipes that are either active or not. Ray Kurzweil (Kurzweil 2012) spoke of the impending singularity where we will merge with our technology and exponential learning. Noam Chomsky (Chomsky 2012) was a familiar name that spoke on the purpose of education amongst all this new technology.

A standout moment worth sharing was from the man with the best job title on the planet: the president of Lego, Jacob Kragh. During his talk, he asked us to reach under our seats for the same six-piece bag of Legos and encouraged us

to make a duck. After much shuffling and nose breathing, we were invited, giggling, to lift and display our examples (Kragh 2012). It was a great equaliser.

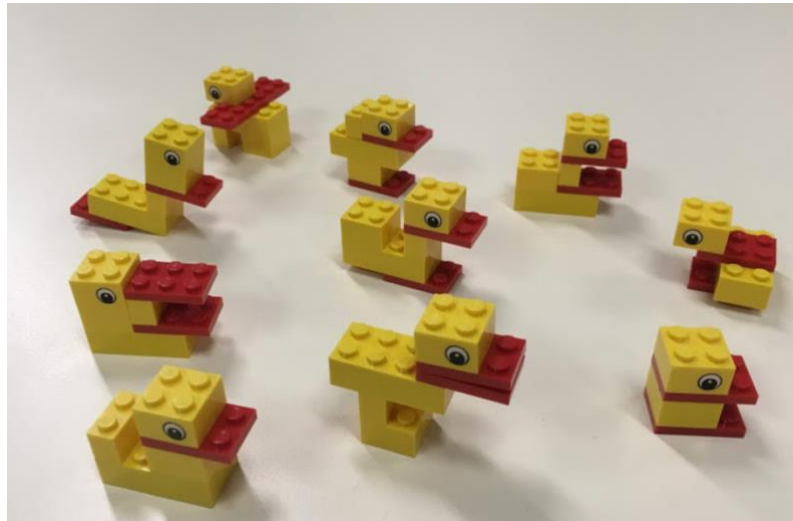


Fig 1.4 Lego Duck Examples

“You all come up with the right answer. You’ve all built a Duck, but you’ve done it your way, expressing how you are unique and an individual” (Kragh 2012). The feelings of encouragement and inclusion starkly contrasted the chalk dust ridicule of the Christian Brothers’ “teaching” style. It all disappeared into playful achievement: suits, mohawk, male, female, thirty or seventy. This was a powerful message expressed unforgettably. Everyone was included. Everyone could try. Everyone was “right”. This is how teaching should be. *Was he talking to me?*

There were too many others to name here, but finally, the Festival Headliner, in my eyes at least having spent my food money on the ticket, Sir Ken Robinson, closed. He summarised both the conference and the challenges of leading a learning revolution. Sir Ken urged us to recognise that the revolution we were discussing, as well as being urgent, was in process. And that it won't come from the top. “Revolutions never come from the top. They always come from the bottom. They come from grassroots movements of people doing what they think is right in their current situation” (Robinson 2012). *He was talking to me.*

The most unexpected and lasting catalyst that led me to change my life direction and to this doctorate research journey was from Astronomer Royal, Martin Rees. At 70, the more he spoke about the cosmos, the younger he

became on that stage. Running a computer simulation of two galaxies colliding, he informed us that “of course”, the Andromeda galaxy will hit us in about 4 billion years. “So be warned,” he quipped to much laughter. What he said next, got inside and cranked the cogs of change. He had been talking about the job of education being to help young people see themselves as part of a long heritage and stewards for an “immense future”. He then shared a personal perspective that strikes him every time he visits a cathedral. The builders lived within 100 miles at a time when even the most educated knew nothing beyond Europe. They thought the world was 2000 years old and might not last another thousand.

“But despite these constricted horizons in both time and space, despite the deprivation and harshness of their lives, despite their primitive technology and limited resources, they built these cathedrals though they knew they would not live to see them finished. Their legacy still elevates our spirits nearly a millennium later. What a contrast that is to so much of our discourse today”. (Rees 2012)

This humbled and stirred me. For days afterwards, I travelled the tubes of London in silence instead of with my usual headphones on. Blank spaces were stared into, pondering all the information instead of trawling the internet back on broadcast night shifts. The lightbulb moments, the talks, and the people I met between talks all swirled around me, staring at the little Lego duck I now carried everywhere. My main existential frown was caused by Martin Rees’ words and resounding question: what is my part of the Cathedral?

My corner of the Cathedral?

“Unlike our forebears we know a great deal about our world and the worlds beyond. We know that we are stewards of our pale blue dot in this cosmos. A planet with a future measured in billions of years – but all too often, the focus is short-term and parochial. We downplay what’s happening even now in impoverished, far-off countries. We give too little thought to leaving a fair inheritance to our grandchildren and widening these *perspectives* is surely the prime educational goal” (Rees, 2012).

He was talking to me.

I have always had a deep-rooted personal urge to do *something*. So, *what corner of the Cathedral could I at least start for others to finish?* Something was stewing from all of this, but what? *Make a documentary? What are the core things driving me here? What can I do from a transmission suite in London?* Coláiste Dhúlaigh transformed my life, twice. *How?* First, by giving me a chance as a student. *School hated me*. Doing more school was never on the cards, but the part-time sound engineering course encouraged me towards Coláiste Dhúlaigh. Their recruitment focus on creative portfolios and interviews over UCAS points was game-changing. The second time they transformed my life was inviting and encouraging me to teach there. *School hated me, so surely I can't go behind the desk? The lads in Maudlintown would kill me, too!* "Turncoat"! Teaching at Coláiste Dhúlaigh was fulfilling in ways previously alien to me. It changed my life. It was transformative. Media Education changed my life many times. *Maybe in some small way, I could help to change the lives of at least a few others. Open that door?* The misguided "Mickey Mouse Degree" insults around our subject area and industry are infuriating. *Maybe a life spent championing this above the negativity and creating a safe space for the disruptive to learn is the way?* That was it. Thunderstruck.

Media Education is my corner of the Cathedral. This was a profound personal paradigm pledge. The sense of direction and passion ignited cannot be understated. Everything digested from those two most transformative days at LWF12 was for something. Something would come of this. I had purpose and ambition. I had a why. It would mean change, though. I was leaving places and people... again. Mezirow describes this as integral to transformation. Structural reorganisation in the way a person looks at himself and his relationships (Mezirow 1978b). It would mean a pay cut. I was starting from scratch and seeing myself as a lecturer. *Could I even teach in the UK as an Irishman?* A doctorate was required; at the time, I had no idea what that was. *It's like an MA but a bit longer, maybe?* Nope.

1.5 WTF? (What's the framework?)

These are Mezirow's phases of perspective transformation. My reflexive position in this work began with lightly testing the phases against my own experiences to gain a better understating.

Mezirow's Transformation Cycle 1978:

- 1) a disorienting dilemma;
- 2) self-examination.
- 3) a critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and a sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations;
- 4) relating one's discontent to a current public issue;
- 5) exploring options for new ways of living;
- 6) building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
- 7) planning a course of action and acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
- 8) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
- 9) provisional efforts to try new roles and
- 10) a reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective (Mezirow 1978a).

More nightshift internet trawling led to a hop, skip, and jump to a part-time doctorate at Bournemouth University. *The place that Stephen Heppell guy lives on a boat mentioned at LWF12!* There was a nagging from day one to have a "conceptual framework". Others on the programme nodded at the first annual residential, so they must have understood something that seemed invisible to me. The first two years of the EdD programme at BU were a taught phase, with regular 5000-word assignments culminating in a 10,000-word transfer paper and viva. During the first year of the taught phase, I worked as a Senior Transmission controller in Broadcast Payout for Arqiva/ESPN London (see Fig 1.2). Amidst the blur of live sports commercial breaks, a familiar frown would rise:

Why can't you grasp "conceptual framework"?

Then:

3...2...1 back to you...

roll bumper... studio in ten, nine....

Next break in fifteen and twenty seconds... *Studio in ten, nine...*

Conceptual FRAMEWORK, FRAME? Hmm, why can't I see it?



Fig 1.5 Arqiva/ESPN Playout Suite

Soho to Solent: A Disorienting Dilemma (Mezirow 1978a)?

The hypothesis seeds were:

Why was media education transformative for me?

Is it transformative for others?

How can any of this be turned into an “original contribution to knowledge”?

Initially, the idea of an “original contribution to knowledge” was intimidating, akin to Einstein’s work. Transitioning from industry to academia for an EdD posed a steep learning curve with unfamiliar systems and language. Early feedback during the taught phase, dismissing my journey as rhetoric (see Appendix 1.2), revived past academic insecurities instilled by the Christian Brothers. While the moderator may have aimed to promote critical thinking, the feedback appeared harsh and lacked actionable guidance for someone from a working-class and practical Creative Industry background. For instance, the comment on “rhetorical bellicosity” needing to “cool off” failed to provide clarity and exacerbated existing insecurities, hindering progress. I would later learn to cherish these moments of alienation, as I now know growth and identity progression lie on the other side.

The mid-night shifts would be spent trawling jobs.ac.uk for opportunities, and in the morning, the local library in Ealing would become the after-work study space. The experience of coming from the high energy of a night shift broadcasting live sport to a quiet library reading and writing titles like “Theories of Learning” and “Knowledge and Methodology” was relatable to Phases one and two of perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978a). Phase 01: a disorienting dilemma, and phase 02: self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame. *I don’t speak the same language as these people. Maybe I don’t belong here.* The UK HE system requires you to have a doctorate to teach at university, so the doctorate was something that *had* to be done. However, the language and tone of academic articles and essay submissions made you doubt your abilities. It was also hard to see how *this* would help you teach and train teenagers in the production craft for their careers. Completing those essays outside of academia was a struggle. It led to many hours staring at the blue glow of the broadcast multi-bay screens, wondering if this was the right path. *Maybe I don’t belong in that world?* Phase 03: a critical assessment of assumptions (Mezirow 1978a).

One nightshift, Southampton Solent University broke the cycle of “must have PhD” disappointment by being willing to accept an early career researcher. Being on the EdD Creative and Media at Bournemouth University for one year opened the first gate to university lecturing in the UK. Phase 05 & 06 (Mezirow 1978a): Exploration of options for new roles and relationships and planning a course of action. Creative Media education once more enabled a new, transformative life direction. Passport stamp 5 was active. Solent was *the* first job interview that felt sincerely vital. The chance of a new beginning. It was exhilarating. The walk from Southampton train station towards the University for the interview was a natural high. It was one of the happiest moments of my life. *How am I here doing this!?* The job was not guaranteed, but there was a validation of sorts in getting the invite against the backdrop of negativity back in the broadcast playout suite. The buzz of walking through an alien town for an opportunity only education would afford someone with my upbringing was transformative. You see yourself differently. The “you can’t” narrative of the world around you dials from “I can” to “I am” inside of you.

There was a short presentation of my research ideas, followed by an interview, and they got me. The Dean commented that students seeing someone from the same background doing well might inspire them. I hope Mark Udall and Polly Hickling know how grateful I am for the chance they gave me. This research would not exist without their belief in me, and I would not be in my current position. The neigh sayer, boulder bearers, became silent, working out my notice as the London life of one-hour commutes on either side of twelve-hour night shifts was left behind for a five-minute day walk through the park in Southampton. Evenings, weekends and Christmases were mine again. I was a day walker. This was a complete transformation of circumstances made possible by education. I was acutely aware that this was a meta-layer of evidence supporting my hypothesis. However, the “rhetoric” ghost made me weary, and I still needed to figure it out. It was keeping me out. Reflexive thematic analysis freed me from what some might call “imposter syndrome”, but it did take until this final write-up year to shake it thoroughly. With my first lecturing job at Solent, the foundations had been laid, and now the scaffolds were beginning to form around my corner of the cathedral.

Meta-layers: Loops of inside-out perspective

With the first UK lecturing job secured, instead of researching from outside academia, the perspective transformed into being embedded within the system with the students and educators. It was possible to observe student’s journey on their programmes first-hand. A blatant and welcome change was that the alien academic language was now being heard daily, and at coffee breaks, people not only knew what a doctorate was but either had one or were attempting to complete one. Phase 04: the recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change (Mezirow 1978a). I began feeling like the subjective, situated, aware and questioning researcher that Braun and Clarke would consider *the reflexive researcher* (2022). I must express, however, an in-between regarding subjectivity. Coming from industry, you do not feel entirely like an academic, and the longer you stay in academia, the less you think you can say you are from industry. You are caught between two narratives. “Those who can’t teach” and the tensions between craft professionals with “real” experience and academics who have never been in production. Being inside the system also

showed just how different a doctorate truly is. Unlike the BA hons and MA passport stamps, this doctorate began another new life path as an academic researcher, not just a lecturer. Phase 07: Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans (Mezirow 1994). A doctorate was a journey to becoming an expert in a chosen field. This was the catalyst for focusing the hypothesis.

What will be worth talking, writing, and presenting about for the rest of your life?

WeZ's Pilot Study Conceptual Framework Triangle

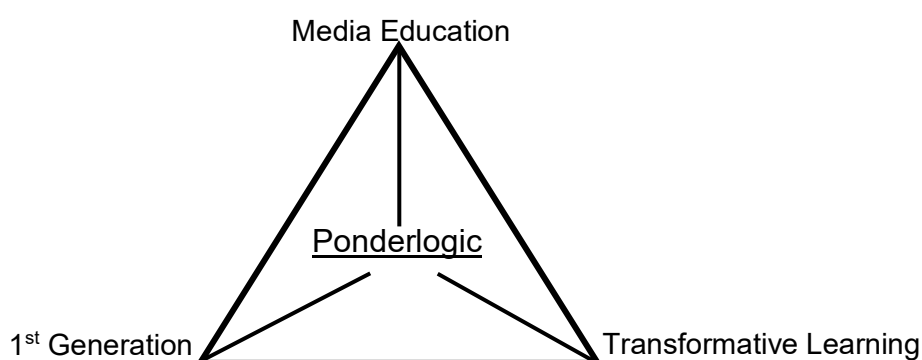


Fig 1.6 WeZ's Pilot Study Conceptual Framework Triangle.

A second-year tutor, Frank Berry, at Coláiste Dhúlaigh, once revealed that “three is a sequence”; once you see this as a content creator, it is everywhere. Story structure, sequences, the number of characters walking into a bar, and even catholic religious iconography all rely on it, and it stuck. *What are my three research things, then?* Being quite visual, it helps me to scribble. Seeing a thing embeds it. It makes it tangible. Drawing a conceptual framework triangle and placing the three key motivators for the research on each corner reveals the thesis where the lines intersect. Media Education, Transformative Learning and First-Generation Students were topics worth pledging. This conceptual pledge was the first positioning of myself as a researcher with a goal and focus. Phase 10 is building competence and self-confidence in new roles (Mezirow 1991). The conceptual pledge aligns with career aspirations, research demands, and personal passion. It is when you arrive at and accept: *Ok, this is what I am comfortable being associated with for the rest of my life. I will be known for_____*. For the effort required and lifelong connection to your work, you had better care about it. Phase 10/11 (1987a/1991): A reintegration into one's own

life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. This phase fits this moment in terms of finally feeling a clear research purpose and forward drive. It helped to narrow focus and speak more directly to areas of importance.

Above, I attached Mezirow's perspective transformation phases to my move from Industry into academia. From Soho to Solent. It was a very light touch, a trial run in the style of the studies Taylor (1998, 2007) flagged as lacking depth of analysis and having merely mapped the stages as accepted. I have not been critical in any way yet. Without depth, it was easy to map Mezirow's phases against some key life moments of mine, but they may not hold up to deeper analysis later. The key learning here is that simply attaching the phases and arguing that they "fit" reveals little. The phases themselves would require scrutiny and deep unpacking of how they can be interpreted before further use and in terms of rigour. This was a surreal but essential step up in my researcher mindset. *Who was I to evaluate the work of someone as established as Mezirow?* But it was my job now if I was going to pull a seat up to this table and demonstrate progress in my doctorate training.

1.6 Notes on the Pilot Study & Transfer Viva

The pilot process and transfer stages were affirming regarding method proofing, direction, and the contraction of research themes. It was also an important first step towards feeling accepted and owning an identity as an early career researcher.

Where “PonderLogic” came from.

Your Method Hunch is an instinctual leaning towards processes born of professional experience and craft skills. The gut urge to use “video” would not go away. This quickly became problematic as supervisors said I would be working in the emerging fields of “practice-based” and “practice-led” research. If I were planning a straightforward, interview-focused documentary, this may have been true, but that was not the case. Having edited and shot factual interviews as a freelancer in Dublin, and transmitted thousands of hours of factual content in broadcast playout over the years, the limitations of the documentary style interview did not feel suitable for this. This method would typically lead to specifically organised times and dates. A visually exciting corner of the location would be chosen, and a crew of around four people would arrive at the interview.

Lights, microphones, cameras, recording equipment, and people all plugged into the smell of coffee and the pressure of the clock. Conversations might last twenty minutes to half an hour. It may or may not go well. It is quite a skill to interview and put a person at ease amongst all that paraphernalia. Some would be shy. Some too bold or fake even. We would leave, then arrange it again in two weeks to a month. Crang and Cook (2007) would call this a method of “serial interviews”. This is not what I felt the research required. *What about the moments between all the arranged exchanges? What about spontaneous insight? That might be where the transformative learning nuggets could be mined.* Taylor (2000) also highlighted how most studies are carried out in retrospect, that a means to investigating changes as they occur would add fresh insights to the current overreliance on interviews.

Most students in 2015 had access to mobile phones, laptops and tablets with cameras and microphones. What if they could be persuaded to capture and share moments of interest close to their occurrence, as little or as often as they

liked? This was the method hunch that led to PonderLogic. I won a small grant of £6000 at Southampton Solent University, which was not enough to build and run a bespoke platform, but I did get some physical technology to assist the project. The subtle craft of polite Negotiation (beg, borrow, steal) learned on low to no-budget productions won 100GB of space and 100 user accounts from James Cross of Mediacore. This transformative win enabled this digital ethnographic research to be trialled as conceived.

Pondering the Logic and Personal Process Policing

I felt YouTube or Vimeo would not suffice, and at first, ruling those platforms out was not even an ethical data decision. “Doctorateness” at that time was adding layers of importance and paranoia to process choices that would hinder at times in terms of allowing tools from my creative life “outside” of this new doctorate world “inside”. “No” was often the internalised response to *Can I do, or use, this or that method or tool?* The lack of doctorate research experience led to a level of personal process policing that would hold things up and stifle creativity at times. It happened so often it warrants lifting out and acknowledging as a *thing*: Personal Process Policing (PPP). PPP is an early-stage internal mental barrier to bringing otherwise valuable craft skills and tools to the research table, caused by a naive exaggeration of what “Doctorateness” *is*. We overthink and stress “doctorateness” in the beginning. Socially available platforms were internally deemed off-limits. *Something far more serious would only be allowed in this secret doctoral society*. The participant’s content would need a safe space to be uploaded for the study. Ideally, it would have a clean, secure interface and, even better, if it had a mobile app that they could respond with anytime, anywhere. The method hunch was to ask research questions on the platform that participants could respond to in their own time. Then, after reviewing the participant responses, new research prompts could be uploaded, and it would run again weekly. Another hope was that participants would upload unprompted when they thought something was worthwhile to share. I wanted it to be a space for students to feel part of, want to engage with and not see as a dry research survey. The choice not to use available platforms like YouTube or Vimeo turned out to be a popular one when I later asked the participants directly about it.

Ponderlogic would not have happened without the kindness of James Cross at Mediacore (See Appendix 1.3). The Mediacore platform was being sold to institutes as a plugin to their VLE. Their USP was how it handled large video content and other media (see Fig 1.7), but I saw its potential as a stand-alone platform for this research.

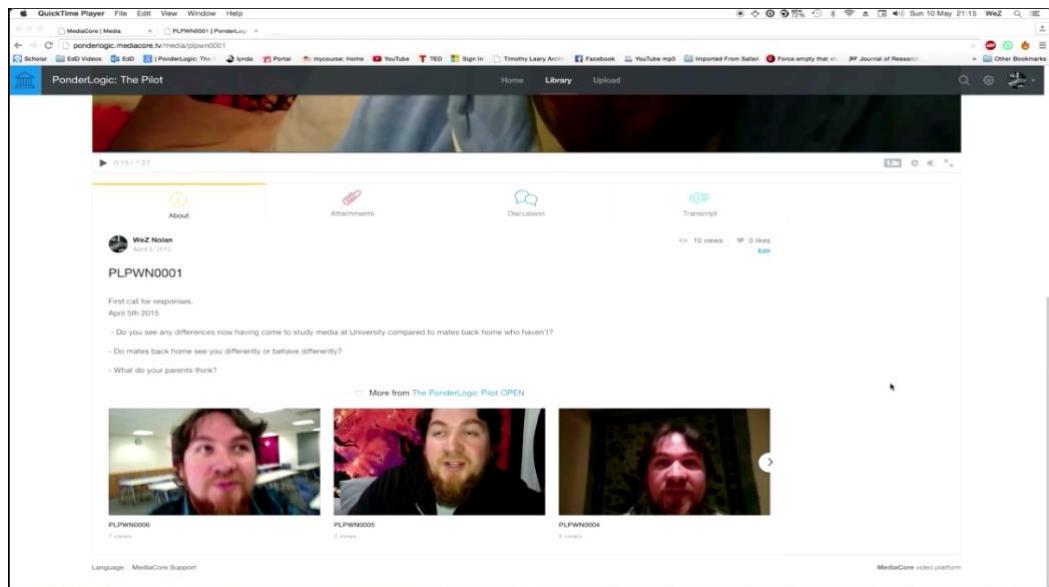


Fig 1.7 Mediacore Screenshot

Mediacore were targeting the education market and did not usually deal with individuals. After a few email exchanges (see Appendix 1.3), James gifted 100 user accounts and 100GB of space for the Pilot for free. He continued this generosity into the full study. Craft had come into play again during the e-conversations with James as the negotiation skills acquired on low to no-budget productions instilled a sense of polite hustle. Reflecting on those emails, the research passion and buzz jump off the page (see Appendix 1.3). Creating a website, or the time to fund and build such a thing, at that time, seemed impossible (PPP?). On the EdD, we dealt with very short windows. The pilot and transfer wrapped up the two years' worth of essays, and the full doctorate study was to launch directly after the Viva if successful. To have the support and Mediacore tool readily available, "off the shelf", was incredibly enabling and humbling. The pilot study helped to test the platform and the research method. It also helped narrow the theoretical and literature focus down to perspective transformation (1978a). The Transformation cycle gave an anchor for data coding and a refined launch pad for exploration.

1.7 Futurecomfy: The correct terminology.

One of the most surprising and bizarre bits of mental gymnastics related to this research space is how long we can ponder labels. Some of the more surprising hours were spent on once simple terms like “video” and “media”. Some didn’t feel right when tried on, such as “practice”, “practice-led” or “practice-based”. These simple terms opened doors to areas of expertise and hours in a direction that did not make sense to me, particularly concerning PonderLogic. It was something else. Other labels made sense to narrow down and set an achievable exploration. From the broad scope of Transformative Learning (Mezirow 1991) down to Perspective Transformation (Mezirow 1978a, 1991, 1994).

Trimming Transformative Learning to Perspective Transformation.

“Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow 1991, Cranton 2000, Illeris 2014) was often met with negativity during residencies and in some academic papers being described even as “Arcane” (Newman, 2012, 2014). The Newman papers would prove invaluable to me at the transfer stage. Reading Newman’s arguments *against* transformative learning felt wrong. This was new. At that time, academic papers were usually challenging to get through and made you feel like you knew even less than when you started. The Newman papers were the first time a sense of *them* being wrong or not quite getting it was felt. Mezirow’s observations in the late seventies were based on his wife’s engagement with adult education. The subsequent study was of women’s re-entry programs in community colleges across the US (Mezirow 1978a). The Newman papers (2012, 2014) appeared to be written by an outsider who did not quite get transformative learning. This led to the realisation that Mezirow was also an outside researcher looking in. It seems obvious now to state, but at the time, this was an important revelation and became an exciting motivator. No matter how many books a person could read about a particular country, for example, they couldn’t *know it* the same way someone born there would. Taking a step back, Newman (2012, 2014) suddenly seemed to be sceptical and saw it all as intangible because he did not acknowledge having lived through a transformation himself. When engaging with the criticisms around transformative Learning, this defence would rise in me: *If you had experienced transformative, life-altering education yourself, you would not have written*

that... This was also the beginning of my separation between Transformative *Learning* and Transformative *Education*. Learning can be anywhere, at any time, and involve any significant life event. Education tends to have a fixed duration and location with intent and design.

Ponderlogic, then, is observed from the position of having experienced transformative education first-hand. I am *from* there. That requires self-awareness of potential complications and biases that were not fully understood until the data analysis stages. Still, this is a strength of this thesis position. “Transformative learning” as a “framework” is too large and intangible to “test” in any real empirical sense given the breadth of Ontological and Epistemological rabbit holes attached to pondering all adults learning anywhere. This is further unpacked in the literature review. Going back to Mezirow’s Perspective Transformation (1978b), during the pilot study, it was successful in being a way into the data—an anchor for coding.

Transformative Learning as a blanket term remains problematic as it can be applied with creativity and conviction to any significant life event. Even accidental or unplanned (Brookfield 2000). The term “Transformative” is often used as a marketing tool for educational experiences without any definition or expression of how it could be measured. Brookfield cites this as a critical reason for not using the concept as a point for exploration (2000). The Ponderlogic pilot study showed the phases of perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978b) as a more tangible lens through which to explore educational experiences. It also demonstrated that even though there are “only” ten/eleven phases, the depth of experience analysis they invited was ample on even a tiny sample. After leaving the pilot study and transfer, the focus was trimmed down from the broader umbrella of the transformative learning framework (Mezirow 2006) back to perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978a). Regarding Creative Industries, HE, the transformation cycle gave clear stages for measuring, coding, and discussing participant experiences. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006-2022) offered process stages and rigour.

WeZ's Full Study Conceptual Framework Triangle

Heading into the full study, the new Conceptual Triangle looked like this (see Fig 1.8) with “Creative Industries” replacing “media” and “perspective transformation” replacing “transformative learning”. Perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978a) was a narrowing of focus from the broader Transformative Learning discussion. I will take a minute to touch on some of the other semantic shifts in the work here as I feel they express an important milestone in becoming a researcher. I would never previously have spent so much time and effort contemplating the meaning of words and phrases to the point of invention. Had I still been in broadcast playout skirting the world of academia, the depth of thought and perspective triggered from being within it as a lecturer would not have occurred. Mezirow speaks to this when he observed that moving to a new perspective and sustaining the actions which it requires is dependent upon an association with others who share the new perspective (1978b).

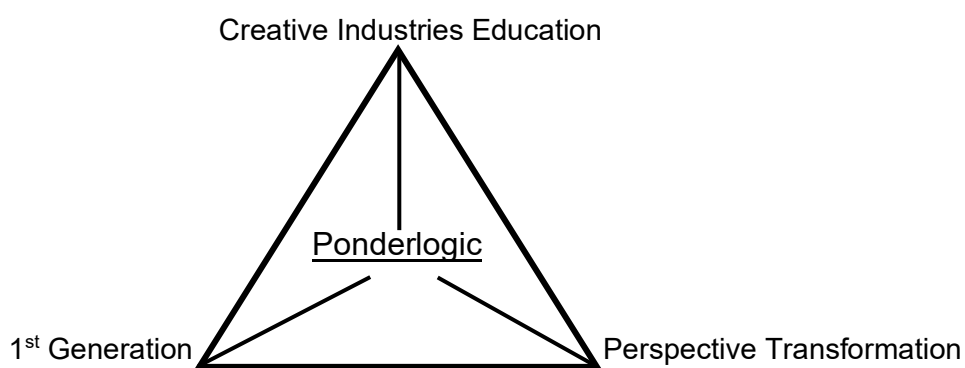


Fig 1.8 WeZ's Full Study Conceptual Framework Triangle.

Dropping “Media” for “Creative Industries”

An unexpected paradigm adjustment came in discussing and writing the research over the years. “Media” began to feel quaint or inadequate as a descriptor. An internal needle would scratch whenever the word was written or discussed, but “Creative Industries” played smoothly. Media now feels like the older factory systems related to Film, TV, Radio, etc., what we now call “legacy media”. Creative industries feel more encompassing of all the possible outlets and emerging areas such as Extended Realities (AR, VR, MR), virtual production and AI. I feel that the pace of digital production technologies and audience options fixes the term “media” to analogue technologies and physical production materials. The exponential growth of Digital in terms of cost vs

computing power per dollar (Kurzweil 2006) means that there is regular innovation in the area, and “Creative Industries” as a label can move with the tide.

Dropping “Video” for “Moving Image”

The internal needle bumps each time it hits the word “video” as well. Video, in my experience, is an analogue physical tape format. We trained in analogue video suites in Coláiste Dhúlaigh. This was destructive editing. Physical tapes were first “blanked” and you had to destroy the edit back to the shot you wanted to change and rebuild. Discipline. Mechanical. Smells and touches. At ESPN, we would ingest the classic events from tape for those channels, and as we left in 2013, it was sad to see the £50K+ Digibeta Decks and tapes all in the skip. The end of an era. The term “Video” carries particular nuances. “Digital Video” seems too paradoxical. “Moving Image” works. It is also platform agnostic, so whether it is film stock, TV, tablet, or phone or projected onto a city wall, it is the illusion of single images flashed sequentially, eating the illusion of movement in our brains. “Moving Image” should work for some time before the subsequent paradigm adjustment. It is ~~Futureproof~~ Futurecomfy.

Futurecomfy: To express concepts and terminology in a manner that hugs future developments.

This is an example of where a creative mind like mine goes once it starts to play in an area such as terminology fully! The term “Futureproofing” comes up a lot when describing my intent when dropping “video” and “media” from my vocabulary. But again, this causes an internal flinch. “Waterproofing” keeps water out. The thing being protected will stay the same despite the rain. Bullet-proofing keeps bullets out. The thing being attacked will remain the same despite the onslaught. “Futureproofing” then keeps the future out? The thing remains the same despite the change around it? The term seems to suggest the opposite of how people use it, so I invented “Futurecomfy”. Let’s hug the future!

Branding: Ponderlogic

“PonderLogic” was a long pondered title. It needed to be shorthand for discussion and to flag the project intention. It needed to be snappier than “WeZ’s research project” or some long thesis title that would not easily roll off the student’s tongue. This was a space and time to reflect and ponder what we were doing. Monty Python’s John Cleese once gave a speech on creativity in management (Cleese 1991b). He has since expanded the ideas to an Audible audiobook (Cleese 2022). In it, he describes the need for creatives to create a space and time to *ponder* problems in the open mode (Cleese 1991). The closed mode enables people to apply themselves to tasks with vigour and concentration; the open mode is more relaxed and conducive to creative thinking. “Pondering” had been knocking on the window, and the Cleese clip let it in. The student participants were asked to ponder their experiences without the ceremony of a production crew or fixed dates, times, and arranged places as it would be treated in the documentary interview method. “Pondering” should form part of the title. Something would need to come out of the project. *We would need to be pondering something “exploratory”? “Doctoratey”? ... logically? Logic! PonderLogic!* Participants would not ask how the “research” was going. Instead, they would ask how PonderLogic was going.

The intention, with support, would be to turn PonderLogic into a brand of research tools and student-facing outputs if successful. The daydream for potential at inception was for people anywhere to use the research tool to connect globally and share experiences. This might lead to digestible, direct discussions on how to get the most out of creative industries courses from the people doing them. And in a language they understand from peers. Potentially transformative experiences could be shared through podcasts, websites, pocketbooks and apps. Ambitious and in need of reigning in at this naïve ECR beginning, but as we will explore in the method section, running PonderLogic produced much more than expected.

Dropping “Practice” for “Craft”

Personal process policing was initially suppressing the urge to create a documentary. It felt like that was a familiar craft, and this doctorate was supposed to be something different. More rigorous. During the taught phase of

the EdD, when introducing my craft experience within the research, the terms “practice-based” and “practice-led” were introduced. At Bournemouth, in particular, the term “practice” came up a lot, and they seemed to be using it to describe what we do in industry. It bothered me. *I am not “practising” anything. Relationships ended, Christmases, births, deaths, and funerals were missed for this career. A hometown left. Family and friends are estranged to hone this professional craft.* Calling it just “practice” felt dismissive of all of that. To this day, I wouldn’t say that I like the term. *Maybe the academics I encountered as a student teaching from the books, who never set foot in the industry, are just “practising”?* The tension between Industry Craftspeople and Academic “Practitioners” is worth exploring in another thesis or paper.

Something striking was when presenting the PonderLogic Pilot at the University of East Anglia’s symposium on the Audio-visual essay. Speakers had created lengthy presentations on “methods” we, as professional editors, employ so routinely that they are inconsequential to us. As professional craftspeople, we are very poor at recording our techniques and thought processes. By comparison, the skilled or academic researcher seeks to add to our shared store of knowledge (Candy 2006). The merging of both worlds might lead to more in this area as, by comparison, there is a wealth of untapped craft knowledge that will benefit those in training.

Next came the first encounter with what I describe as “philosophical overload” when exploring the thinking around practice-based vs practice-led research. A quick example from back then is conveyed here in Candy’s expression of the terms. “If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-*based*. If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-*led*” (Candy 2006). Problem. PonderLogic is both. It has operational significance (led) and relies on moving image production (based). The same contradictions would arise time and again (Dallow 2003; Mäkelä 2005b, 2005a; Haseman 2006; Haseman and Maffe 2009). The ‘practice’ in ‘practice-led research’ is primary – it is not an optional extra states Haseman (2006), which complements Candy’s (2011) assertion that a complete understanding of the significance of the research can only be obtained with direct reference to the artefacts in whatever form they take.

Mäkelä suggests that an artefact can embody a greater range of roles: as an object made by an artist-researcher during the research process and that it can also be seen as a method of collecting and preserving information and understanding (2005). What was absent in all this were writers coming from production industries into academic research. Mäkelä (2011) outlines a shift in the field of art toward creators challenging themselves to explore their practices within academia, which I would encourage in terms of stopping the personal process policing. I now feel that we shouldn't be afraid to use the tools of our craft trade to solve problems within research. To not be deterred by overcomplicated language to the point of academic weasel wording and obsession with labelling. Dallow (2003), discussing "art practice," writes that "the 'emergent' qualities of this process are bound up with the specificities of the art form adopted, as well as the final mode of presentation, exhibition, or performance, which includes how it will be seen, heard or otherwise experienced or consumed, and perhaps by whom, where, under what conditions, and for how long". Meandering descriptions like this were leading to theoretical burnout.

Hockey (2003), in an extensive study of fifty practice-based research students from 1995-97, covered the "whole spectrum of art and design disciplines", including painting, ceramics, installation, photography, printmaking, sculpture, glass making and design. Although I can relate to the valuable insights offered by this extensive research, "process of struggle", "synthesis", and "creative identity" (Hockey 2003), I am relating to it out of a need to. The study had no moving image participants, so I am making pieces fit. Candy (2006, 2012) writes that the terms are used interchangeably. Farber and Mäkelä (2010) suggest that the researcher's artistic practice becomes involved in tackling a research problem, and therefore, this trend can be termed academically attuned practice-led research (2010). This is closer to what I do, but "academically attuned practice-led research" is still far too convoluted. I felt that this was all unnecessarily complicated and a barrier to progress. Instead of continuing to force all these bits to fit, I have chosen to step aside and operate under my terminology: "Craft-enhanced research". It fits.

1.8 Craft-enhanced Research

I kept a PonderLogic notebook from the pilot study onwards to capture ideas, insights, and irritations. On page 10, there is a big red “do not define” line under “Craft-enhanced Research” (see Appendix 1.4). My apprehension was around defining what is intended to be a licence to get creative with your research. With a too rigid definition, we might restrict innovation, invention, and investigation possibilities. By saying what something *is*, you give others the licence to say what *is not*, and we are back to square one. The research should come first. We should use whatever craft tools best express the research story we are building when they are needed. You may have found your rhythm in your craft. Your element (Robinson 2009). Your flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Being new to this academic research space, we can feel like we must move to the rhythms set by others. This can be confusing as it feels contradictory in an endeavour with a goal for *new* knowledge. We should feel free to beg, borrow, and steal as we would in our crafts. Find or bring *your* rhythm here.

Craft-enhanced Research is an open-mode approach to applying industry craft skills, mindsets, processes, and tools within academic research. It calls to stop Personal Process Policing (PPP) and to express and test before closing a method hunch down, inviting craft knowledge to permeate research spaces.

Personal Process Policing (PPP) is an internal mental barrier to bringing craft skills and tools to the research table, caused by an over-assumption of what “Doctorateness” is or might allow.

These ideas may die within this thesis, but the fact that I am sharing these terminology proposals with you speaks volumes about how far I have come from being an alien outsider to attempting to contribute.

02 Theory Framing & Literature

“Learning traditionally has been understood mainly as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, today the concept covers a much larger field that includes emotional, social and societal dimensions” (Illeris, 2009).

2.1 A Transformative Review

Marshall and Green noted that in just one year, enough information is generated to fill the Library of Congress five times over (2010). They refer to this as “information overload”. Their response to the literature review pressures felt to cover *everything* in such times is simply that “*you can’t*”. Engaging with Transformative Learning literature through the lenses of this work, I felt there to be a “Philosophical Overload”. Those lenses are as a first-generation student with lived experience of transformative education, a Programme Leader seeking key milestones, an educator hoping for practical insights, and an early career researcher developing academic vocabulary.

Laying the groundwork: Pathways to Mezirow

Malcolm Knowles (1980), introduced the concept of andragogy and lay the groundwork for understanding how adult learners may differ from children in terms of motivation, self-direction, and experience-based learning. Knowles emphasis on learner autonomy and problem-centred learning environments provided the initial foundation for the discussion of adult education that Mezirow took forward. In a sense, Mezirow began the funnelling for us by pulling together his contemporaries, but *a theory for all learners everywhere* got messy as we will discuss shortly. Experiential learning theories championed by Kolb (1984) for example, asks us to deepen our understanding of how adults make meaning through cycles of experience, reflection, and adaptation. Mezirow was a part of this wave of new voiced on education and morphed the wave into what would become *his* transformative learning theory. These frameworks remain highly influential in professional education and lifelong learning initiatives and help to explain the dynamic and iterative nature of adult cognition and meaning-making. Lev Vygotsky (1978), contributed a sociocultural dimension suggesting that learning was situated, dialogical, and mediated by language and cultural

tools, a position later echoed by Jerome Bruner (1990) and the meaning perspectives within Mezirow's work.

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) feels like the headliner of the time, to me at least, and challenged the "banking model" of education, promoting instead a dialogic, problem-posing model aimed at raising critical consciousness. Freire's ideas weave a strong foundation to Mezirow almost as a provocation. Particularly in the notion that education is never neutral and that learners must question underlying power structures, which in some ways gets lost as Mezirow's work progresses. A response to the pull of being more widely accepted perhaps and less rebellious. Some thirty five years later Stephen Brookfield (Brookfield 2000) still argues for the necessity of critical reflection in the teaching and learning process. Something now taken for granted within the UK Higher Education system as learning outcomes for undergraduates echoed within the QAA guidelines. While Brookfield shares with Mezirow a commitment to critical reflection, he places more emphasis on the political and ideological dimensions of learning while Mezirow focuses more precisely on the structure of meaning perspectives and how they change. Jürgen Habermas (1984) provided a vital philosophical bridge between critical pedagogy and transformative learning. His theory of communicative action, with its emphasis on rational discourse, validity claims, and emancipatory knowledge, profoundly influenced Mezirow's conception of ideal discourse conditions. The raw materials from Freire, Habermas and Vygotsky provided the intellectual mesh upon which Mezirow could pour his theory for others to cure and finish.

Within this broader field, my gut instinct to work with Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1978, 1991, 2000) as the central analytical framework for this study would not let up. His emphasis on perspective transformation, a fundamental shift in a person's frame of reference, begged exploration. Do we change our perspectives internally or is new opportunity, gained through education, perceived externally actually as that change? And how can this be explored with, or relate to those who may already see themselves as creative, engaging with creative education? The decision to funnel toward Mezirow is not based on a narrow preference but rather on the potential his theory offers to gain insights on questions like these. Back to the individual as the key to

unlocking the whole and my hunch to return to Mezirow's earlier writings. To begin again, and test his thoughts anew in twenty-first century delivery.

Philosophical Overload.

I describe Philosophical Overload as the drifting sense of exploring an area of educational research beyond that which can be practically implemented. Over the decades Mezirow's journey has been impressive in terms of the challenge he set himself to understand adult learning broadly. In his figuring out over time, he offers Four ways to learn: By refining or elaborating meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes and transforming meaning perspectives (Mezirow 1994). He later offers Domains of Learning: Instrumental, Interpretive and Critical (Mezirow 1991, 1994, 2006). The more literature was engaged, the further distance from the more concrete and valuable aspects of the transformation cycle and grounding was felt. There was also an echoing sense of repetition, as Newman (2012) expressed. My research here is a "back to the beginning" approach to branch out away from the ever-growing philosophical limbs towards practical implementation. Mezirow's instigating paper (1978a) will be discussed and referred to as the trunk to test other branches against. To test the frame's strength, we should examine the foundations first. As my Da would say, "If the foundations are bad, there's no point even looking at the rest of the house". This review is a return to Mezirow's initial study in the '70s to critically assess the foundations before testing them in the field with participants. The pitfalls of mapping Mezirow's phases, without critical depth, to my journey and the data in the pilot study also inform this direction. For a broader review of the evolution of Mezirow's complete theory, I recommend Andrew Kitchenham's paper (2008).

2.2 It's all about Perspective

Mezirow cites Freire's work in the '70s as being a key influence. In Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he likens education to a banking system (1970). Coming out of his major study, Mezirow declares that an unexplored educational goal of enormous significance is to identify and facilitate the transformation of the meaning perspectives of learners (1978b). This goes far beyond simply depositing information (Freire, 1970), and that call to break from tradition quickly pushed Mezirow's work into the spotlight. Jack Mezirow

was inspired by his wife Edee's engagement with adult education in 1970s America and the "consciousness-raising" efforts of the women's movements. As a result of these efforts, the number of women attending college doubled between 1970 and 1975 (Mezirow, 1978a). This hunch led him to the research project with the Centre for Adult Education at Columbia University. At the time of the initial study, he was a professor of adult and continuing education. He held bachelor's and master's degrees in Social Sciences from the University of Minnesota and a Doctorate in adult education (EdD) from the University of California, Los Angeles.

He identified a scarcity of information related to re-entry programmes for women in the United States in 1975 as the knowledge gap and cites "the large numbers of two-year colleges, the high proportion of working-class students they served, their community service orientation, their diversity and their relatively high proportion of adult students" as further reason for focusing on those institutes (1978a). They reviewed twelve programmes representing urban, rural, suburban, working-class, middle- and upper-middle-class, and ethnic minority students. Over a dozen field investigators conducted interviews and telephone surveys of twenty-four additional programmes. They also had mail responses from 864 colleges, of which 314 were sponsored re-entry programmes. Amongst the theoretical influences informing the work, he also acknowledges Kuhn's "paradigms" (1962), which would lead to Mezirow's "Frame of Reference" contribution and Freire's "conscientization" (1972) as being critical. Freire's work highlighted the lack of "critical consciousness" in the styles of education where knowledge was unidirectional or "deposited" to selected students unquestioningly (1970). He argued that this was insufficient if individuals were to take ownership in life and society. What Mezirow and his team present (1978a) has an air of championing how different and "frequently innovative" the re-entry programmes were by comparison. They encompassed the type of involved reflection and critical engagement Freire was beginning to make the case for (1970).

Frames of reference

Transformative Learning theory explicitly relates to adult education. At the theory's core is the belief that, as adults, we already carry feelings, ideas,

concepts, assumptions, or conditioned responses and that these “frames of reference” define our world (Mezirow, 1997). Where we grew up, our schooling, parents, social circles and so on inform our meaning perspectives developed in later life (Taylor, 2000).

“Meaning perspectives are the psychological structures within which we locate and define ourselves and our relationships. By recognising the social, economic, political, psychological and religious assumptions that shape these structures -presumptions inherited but rarely examined critically- we can reconstruct our personal frame of reference, our self-concept, goals, and criteria for evaluating change. (Mezirow 1978a)”.

“Meaning perspectives” and “frame of reference” appear interchangeably throughout his writing. Mezirow believed a “uniquely adult need exists for the reconstruction of meaning perspectives” (Mezirow 1978a).

Introducing Mezirow’s Transformation Cycle

The “major theoretical finding” from that initial study was Perspective Transformation and the associated phases identified (Mezirow, 1978a). This “transformative cycle” would inform later definitions of Transformative Learning (Mezirow 1987b, 1991, 2006).

1. a disorienting dilemma;
2. self-examination.
3. a critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and a sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations;
4. relating one's discontent to a current public issue;
5. exploring options for new ways of living;
6. building competence and self-confidence in new roles;
7. planning a course of action and acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
8. acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
9. provisional efforts to try new roles and
10. a reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective (Mezirow 1978a).

Problematic Social Frames

The social context of the times permeates the findings and tone of the report. In the first iteration of the transformation cycle, “a critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and a sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations” is given centre stage (Mezirow 1978a). Outside of the direct quotes, Mezirow himself left an interesting tell of the times, particularly in the last line here as he expresses:

“... to negotiate the process of perspective transformation can be painful and treacherous. A woman's very sense of identity and integrity has traditionally been invested into conventional wife and mother roles, and her most rewarding successes achieved in fulfilling their demands.

Many women in re-entry programmes find that they can't stand the heat and go back to the kitchen.” (Mezirow 1978a).

This isn't easy to unpack sensitively writing as a working-class Irish male in 2024. Mezirow and his Team were researching at a revolutionary point in American social history. The original research frame of reference is of a specific movement in a particular context.

“The re-entry programs perform a distinctive function a catalytic support systems fostering an altered perspective. By encouraging a critical appraisal of the culturally determined sex stereotypes that women have internalized and defended, they open up to new vistas for self-realization” (Mezirow 1978a).

The gender focus of the study is not the issue being flagged here. Still, the precise nature of the reasons for engaging with the programmes is essential, given their foundational nature and impact on everything else in the framework. Education was seen as some of the first steps towards the ongoing struggle for genuine equality of opportunity and an incentive to enable women outside the 2.5 children, picket-fenced American family tropes of those times. Perspective Transformation and Transformative Learning theory grew out of this by encompassing all adults without an equivalent male or mixed study by Mezirow to triangulate. The data relates to the re-education of *women* during a specifically hostile era undergoing social change. The impact of these

conditions would later be described as “disorienting dilemmas” within the work (1987a) and play a pivotal, instigating role in transformation. The “sex-role” tone of the transformative cycle progressively drops over time, but it is important to hold on to that origin if we are to test the theory sincerely in modern settings. Given the exponential advancements in technology, education, and societal shifts since then, does a transformative framework with such explicit heritage hold value today? Again, not just from the gender struggle triggers but from such blatantly expressed “disorienting dilemmas” within the initial research. To what degree would this phase of the transformative cycle map be relevant to the experience of current UK undergraduates? This would need validation exploration.

Disorienting Dilemmas

In terms of experiencing a Transformation, Mezirow claims that “Whether or not a woman comes into the programme in response to a disorienting dilemma makes a crucial difference.” (Mezirow 1978a). He identifies two distinguishable types of disorienting dilemmas. The internal type is subjective experiences such as feelings that being a housewife denies access to other experiences, that life is not fulfilling or a sense of deprivation. The external type includes divorce, job loss, moving to a new city, or the loss of a husband (Mezirow 1978a).

However, there is a distinct lack of the student voice of having experienced perspective transformation within the report. We never get a sense of what the women experienced from the source. Most direct quotes come instead to highlight these external dilemmas. For example:

“I was planning my life around soap operas... the only topic I had to discuss with my husband was what I saw on afternoon TV.”

“I told my husband during the summer I've had it - I can't stand this nothingness - I feel like I'm vegetating. How much can I wash and iron and clean the house and all of that nonsense?”

(Mezirow 1978a).

Because the “disorienting dilemma” phase became part of the canon, given these precise parameters for it at genesis, it needs testing in modern settings where seventeen-year-old students commonly choose undergraduate pathways under less existential crises. There may well be an element of “dilemma” attached to deciding to attend HE in the first place, but is there a sense of “disorienting dilemma” whilst also on the programmes that we need to consider? There are more options now than when the transformative cycle was conceived. Whilst programme leading at Bournemouth University, around 45-50% of our 360 students in the BA Hons Media Production were female. We have a similar split at LJMU. Of course, gender inequalities are far from fully resolved in creative industries and academia, but the trends in this new generation are encouraging. The original parameters are so specific that if loyal to their true spirit, they might be challenging to apply to less radical modern pathways to adult education in support of perspective transformation.

“A woman becomes a transformative learner when she realises how the culture and her own attitudes have conspired to define and delimit her self-conception, her lifestyle, and her options in terms of a set of prescribed, stereotypic roles.” (Mezirow 1978a).

This definition of a transformative learner is eventually given is broader and more imaginatively applied in a modern context at first. However, remembering the importance placed on sex roles and the impact of the initial reason for attending the programmes, the latter requires exploration in relation to the later adoption of the transformation cycle. The concept would also require exploration *within* Creative Industries HE and the quite negative tone of having a disorienting dilemma as a primary reason for engaging in a transformative educational experience.

Perspective Developments

Although Mezirow does outline some of the attributes associated with the phases within the report (1978a), we never get a sense of the day-to-day classroom experiences from the student standpoint. Broad strokes such as “Subject matter, both traditional and first generation, are all taught from the woman’s perspective” (Mezirow 1978a) are expressed but with no supporting quotes from the research participants. This may be due to the scope of the

research, but it would be interesting to know if certain subject areas were more conducive to the transformation cycle than others. He would revisit and adapt the phases of the cycle over time in response to specific criticisms and in light of new influential works such as the writing and practice of psychiatrist Roger Gould (1978), philosophers Jurgen Habermas (1981), Harvey Siegal (1988) and Herbert Fingerette (Mezirow, 2006).

2.3 Mezirow's Phases of Perspective Transformation over Time Table

Purple = **Dropped in next version**

Green = **Added since previous version**

	1978a	1991	1994
01	A Disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma
02	Self-examination	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support.
03	A critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions.	A critical assessment of assumptions.
04	Relating one's discontent to a current to a current public issue.	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change.	Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change.
05	Exploring options for new ways of living.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions.
06	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles.	Planning a course of action.	Planning a course of action.
07	Planning a course of action and	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans.	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
08	acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans.	Provisional trying of new roles.	Provisionally trying out new roles.
09			Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.
10 (09)	Provisional efforts to try new roles.	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles.	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
11 (10)	A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by ones new perspective.	A reintegration into one's own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Table 1 Mezirow's Phases of Perspective Transformation over Time.

2.4 A review of Mezirow's Perspective Phases over time.

Over the years, Mezirow tweaked the phases of the transformation cycle. The following phases remained unchanged but, in some iterations, moved position:

01) A Disorienting Dilemma. 08/10) Provisional trying of new roles. 06/10)

Building of competence and self-competence in new roles. 10/11) A

reintegration into one's own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

06 "Self Confidence"

The use of "self-confidence" within the transformative cycle is most surprising.

"Building confidence" is given an entire section in the initial report across seven pages (Mezirow 1978a) and covers a broad development spectrum.

"Before a woman can take the first steps towards change, she must possess the self-confidence to try new roles. For many, building self-confidence is a critical initial goal." (Mezirow 1978a).

He goes on to flag this area as a major focus of programme directors and teaching staff, so narrowing down the phrasing to just "new roles" and then expanding out to "new roles and relationships" (1994) still seems quite restrictive. In the context of Creative Industries education, students encounter software and hardware, for example, an area we would like them to develop "confidence" in. Some of these craft skills would fall under roles, but a lot might be missed with just a focus on roles and relationships. Engaging with society to tell factual stories would be another example of an area for development. Not all students have specific roles in mind in the early stages of their creative industries degrees, so craft confidence and etiquette are taught in broader strokes first. This would need to be acknowledged if the cycle is to be practically helpful.

02 Turning to Religion for support

Phase two seems more useful in practical terms at conception. Simply put, "self-examination" (1978a) is open to interpretation by both the student and the teacher. The addition of "with feelings of guilt or shame" (1991) starts to become exclusive. Feelings like this are often put on the person and not

necessarily felt by them even though they express it or nod in agreement due to societal or religious pressures. The “Christian” Brothers were masters of this oppressive tool. External judgment is not the same as feeling it from within. Of course, given the diversity of students, both and more may be possible, but this is why narrowing down to such terms is problematic. Adding “sometimes turning to religion for support” (1994) seems exclusive. Jack Mezirow died in 2014 at the grand age of 91. My father passed at 65, so imagining 26 more years with him is fulfilling, and he did become more spiritual near the end. When he added the religious tone to phase two, Jack was 71. This may have resulted from his personal journey at the time, as “turning to religion” did not appear in the initial research (Mezirow 1978a). “Religious assumptions” are mentioned in terms of shaping frames of reference that these new programmes challenged, but they were not expressed as a necessary stage.

In his 1994 paper, where the religious tone of phase two first appears, Mezirow does not delve into why. However, if we go back to his 1991 book, he briefly mentions a study by Joyce Morgan (1987) that confirms his original ten phases. Joyce studied thirty displaced homemakers who had become separated, divorced, or had suffered the death of a spouse and were involved in a college programme specially designed for them. These circumstances are similar to those of Mezirow’s study a decade previously. Morgan reported that this group of women often turned to religion for solace. This may be why Mezirow included the religious tone in the second phase, a nod of appreciation to Morgan’s work, but it seems quite restrictive. It also begs the question: if people turned to things like yoga, exercise, meditation or even substance abuse over time in other research, would that make the phase as well? When expressing Morgan’s (1987) findings, Mezirow states, “However, they ultimately came to rely on themselves as well”. (Mezirow 1991). The word “sometimes” in the addition of “sometimes turning to religion for support” to phase 02 might be an attempt to allow for openness, but in terms of the Creative Industries classroom in 2024, this seems, again, exclusive rather than inclusive to any individual students rite of passage. Specificity is the issue. Morgan’s study was about a specific group of women going through common life crises. That they might turn to religion would be particular to that sample. If I may be flippant, including “sometimes turning to religion” within the transformation cycle is a bit “so what”. Humans

turn to coping mechanisms in times of need. Embedding just one of these coping mechanisms within the framework leaves it deservedly wide open to some of the criticisms it faces.

Within the same paper (1994), Mezirow states

“Critical reflection and discourse are processes of adult learning emphasised by those cultures experienced in rapid social change in which old traditional authority structures have been weakened, and in which individuals must be prepared to make many diverse decisions on their own”. (Mezirow, 1994).

Acknowledging the weakening of traditional authority structures, of which religion is arguably one, to include it in the transformation cycle in the same publication seems counterintuitive. Realising that these authorities are less impactful than they once were is a reason to simplify the phase back to what was first presented in 1978. Phase 02: Self-examination (Mezirow 1978a). If needed, this would allow individual student interpretation of their critical outcomes and coping mechanisms. It also allows for moments of self-examination that are not so extreme as to require something like religion to cope with the new insights. There may also be everyday realisations that lead to growth that are quite pleasant to experience.

New 09: Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.

In 1994, phase ten became eleven. The transformation cycle grew to incorporate “Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships” (Mezirow 1994). In the 1994 paper, there is no reasoning for adding the new phase, number nine, “Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.” (Mezirow, 1994). For clues to the inclusion, we must go back to Mezirow’s 1992 impassioned three-page submission to Adult Education Quarterly’s summer edition. Here, he sets out to clarify his position and takes issue with Phyllis Cunningham’s contribution to the spring edition of the same year (Cunningham, 1992). He claims Cunningham makes several “erroneous inferences to which she takes exception” and “seriously misrepresents” his meaning when reviewing his 1991 book.

The nugget we are looking for is in the rebuttal to Cunningham's third criticism (1992).

Cunningham erroneously suggests that I have failed to acknowledge that these meaning structures are produced by economic and cultural power relationships. However, this rather self-evident point is explicitly made on pages 131-138, where I discuss hegemonic ideology, false consciousness, and "implicit ideologies, language games, cultural codes; social norms, roles and practises" Which constitute sociolinguistic premise distortions". (Mezirow, 1992).

Mezirow then states that power relationships "obviously shape" epistemic and psychological factors that are culturally assimilated. However, the relationship between these factors and economic and cultural power relationships are seldom direct or easy to establish. "Nor is establishing this relationship always a necessary precondition for either critical reflection or an effective educational intervention" (Mezirow 1992). It is an enjoyable exchange and a rare bit of drama and "goss" in a normally dry landscape. This is one of the few times Mezirow flags something as not being a necessary precondition. The disorientating dilemma, for example, is stressed as "crucial (Mezirow 1978a). Here, he closes the door on relationships. Something about Cunningham's criticisms prompted further reflection from Mezirow. If establishing these relationships is not a "precondition" in 1992, why include a phase just two years later with a focus directly on "renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships" (Mezirow 1994)? This is the second time a new phase has been added in response to a single piece of work, raising questions about the value of inclusion. Is it too obvious a point to warrant inclusion in the transformative cycle? Because of your educational programme, there will be new relationships, and your journey may impact old ones.

In her essay, Cunningham states the engine that pulls the current train of adult education is still "human capital formation" or "learn to earn" (1992). She also doubts that "any members of the commission [of Professors of Adult Education], in practice, view personal transformation, much less social transformation, as a goal for adult education." (Cunningham, 1992). As Creative Industry educators within the UK, we consider all these factors in our delivery. There is an

emphasis on “transformation” in the marketing language of our institutes. There is a clear focus on Creative Industries employability upon graduation. There is also a growing focus on social impact and outreach through programme initiatives. As a subject, we do some of this naturally. When we ask students to explore society through non-fiction content, for example, the nature of creative industries, education might still be conducive to perspective transformation and have something to offer the broader theory of transformative learning in adult education.

2.5 Perspective Shaming: getting personal now.

“Transformative learning is defined as the process by which we transform *problematic frames of reference* (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow 2006).

I felt frustrated and found it challenging to unpack when engaging with Mezirow’s definitions of Transformative Learning over the years (1991, 2006). There is a problematic tone expressing the conceptual framework of Transformative Learning. Having lived a transformative educational experience, the phrase “*problematic frames of reference*” (Mezirow, 2006) within the definition triggers acceptance resistance. Problematic by who’s definition? Being told that you are useless and going nowhere by the Christian Brothers daily is very different to feeling that way and carrying it as a self-belief, for example. There was no avenue for me to transform *their* sets of assumptions and expectations about me. To make *them* “more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow 2006). It was a closed, one-way system. Sit down. Shut up. “Read the chapter... if ye can read up that end of the town at all, Nolan!?” [laughter from the room]. They were very much depositing information (Freire, 1970) and poorly. When they heard your home was “Maudlintown”, they piled assumptions upon you—Sisyphus’ boulder. From day one, they “knew” you would leave school by fourteen; they separated you from other students and put less effort into you. Maybe some of

the women in Mezirow's study felt they were capable and always had been but were never given a chance.

The transformation cycle (See Table 1) does not acknowledge that society, institutes, family, industry, and so on may have shared a collectively negative and *problematic* frame of reference towards women. The research was presented with an awareness of the women's movement of the times as an instigating factor for the re-entry programmes, but Mezirow (1978a) never unpacks that how these women were viewed culturally may be what was wrong. They were only encouraged and allowed to express intelligence and talent through the re-entry programmes. The women may have felt capable all along, and because they were now "educated", society saw them differently. This feels like Perspective Shaming to me. Mezirow was writing as a professor within the institution of adult education. From this position, we can assume educators to be the "we" when he writes " , Transformative learning is defined as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference...". As students, then, they are going to do something to us. They are going to "transform" our "*problematic frames of reference* (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make [us] more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow 2006). There is something wrong with us, and they will fix it. For me, *Perspective Shaming* presumes that a student's frame of reference is flawed whilst overlooking cultural and societal cultivation of, and view towards, that individual's position.

To be clear, Mezirow does acknowledge this aspect within his reporting, but that angle is never fully unpacked, nor does it make the identified phases:

"A woman becomes a transformative learner when she realises how *the culture* and her own attitudes have conspired to define and delimit her self-conception, her lifestyle, and her options in terms of a set of prescribed, stereotypic roles... Bringing these unexamined *cultural assumptions and attitudes* into critical consciousness makes a woman aware that she is trapped in her own history and this insight precipitates a concerted effort to extricate herself." (Mezirow, 1978a).

The definition of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2006) grows out of the transformation cycle, so the cultural aspect seems too important to leave out. It leaves a society-sized hole in the *expression* of the framework. The groundwork is solid, but most will only engage with the perspective transformation phases and transformative learning definition without diving deep into that groundwork. Therefore, it is a significant omission that would be better recognised on the surface as a flag for self-care. This is an inside-out perspective. There's nothing wrong with us. We just weren't given a chance before.

The Christian Brothers branded us with a problematic frame of reference when they learned what part of the town we hailed from. This would shift responsibility away from them and onto us. They were operating in a closed mode. The "stereotypic roles" (Mezirow 1978a) set by the "Christian" Brothers were for us to work on the building sites or more *likely* to join the dole queue. In an open mode, they may have seen an individual and, in turn, individual potential, no matter where you were from. On top of being from *that* part of town, the school system was geared towards STEM subjects and was not equipped in the delivery or attitude to develop creative minds. They were in the business of training meat and bone photocopy machines to spit out specific answers from specific chapters when tested on specific subjects at specific times. The Junior Certificate is at 16, and the Leaving Certificate is at 18. When, by chance or fate, Coláiste Dhúlaigh happened, I felt like the same person internally with the same core frames of reference. My background and identity did not change, but here was an environment that encouraged creativity and championed questions with a focus on bringing out creative potential. These educators were open. The experience felt more like perspective plugins or new gears to shift in and out of rather than an all-out transformation or leaving behind of a previous self. Take phase 11, for example:

"A reintegration into one's own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective." (Mezirow 1994).

Holding those first qualifications from Coláiste Dhúlaigh and successive BA top-ups at Wolverhampton meant new options opened. Society saw us differently because we had institutional approval now. The "new perspective" felt like societies towards us. New avenues of exploration were opened with these new

passports. The transformation cycle (See Table 1) is written in a tone that focuses on the individual and does not acknowledge society's perspective/attitude change towards you once "qualified". The argument here is not to *prove* societal perspective shifts towards the individual, which presents an enormous task and one-way ticket to philosophical overload, but to acknowledge it at the borders of the theory.

Perhaps the fix is to drop the word "problematic" from the definition (Mezirow, 2006) as a trigger for perspective shaming. To open the language and acknowledge the institute's or society's framing of the individual changing once "qualified". The "disorienting dilemma" and "problematic framework" are negative expressions of the foundations and catalyst for transformation. Deeply rooted, this tone permeates the original ten phases and the importance given to a disorienting dilemma as *the* prerequisite for change. There may be other, more positive paths to recognise. The learner who may have felt comfortable at their core but was never afforded a route until education initiatives were offered. The "emancipated learner" (Mezirow, 1978a) is a nod to this individual but little more.

The emancipated learner?

Mezirow differentiates between different types of learners on the programmes (1978a). He categorises them as Conventional Learners and Transformation Threshold Learners.

Conventional learners may complete the re-entry programme with enhanced self-confidence, acquire new skills, have new vistas opened, gain insights, and modify or change attitudes. Although these are significant achievements, Mezirow states that they are not perspective transformations (Mezirow 1978a). This seems contradictory initially, given that phase seven of the transformation cycle is the "acquisition of skills" (See Table 1). Zooming out, however, "critical assessment of assumptions" and "self-examination" may be missing in the conventional learner and cited as essential to Perspective Transformation (Mezirow 1978a, 1991, 2006).

Transformation Threshold Learners participate in the re-entry programmes because of a disorienting dilemma. He goes on to further subdivide learners into:

Housewife learners: had little or no work experience or recent education.

Self-awareness learners: had psychotherapy or consciences-raising groups.

Work-wise learners: had a career and were there to find better.

Study-wise learners: had some college or adult education experience already.

Emancipated learners: *had never fully accepted the inferior roles traditionally assigned to women.*

For the emancipated learner to earn a place on this list, they must have come from only one of the two identified types of disorienting dilemmas: the external event or internal subjective experience (Mezirow 1978a). The emancipated learner will not, by definition, be from the internal subjective type described as having “the conviction that being only a housewife forecloses access to other rewarding experiences” (Mezirow 1978a). This leaves the emancipated learner to come from the second dilemma type, encompassing the death of a husband, divorce, loss of a job or moving to a city. He does not spend long on the emancipated learner, just three sentences. This section of the paper becomes confusing as he first identifies threshold learners as separate from conventional learners, then in the writing, it appears to subdivide these learners further. However, in some definitions, he flags them as having attributes not conducive to transformation. For example, when he claims that emancipated learners “are likely to be interested in finding a specific career direction rather than engaging in more self-examination” Mezirow (1978a). Critical self-examination is presented as the key to perspective transformation, so without further discussion, we never learn if the emancipated learners experience transformation. Feeling “alienated” as a creative in a STEM system is a trait expressed in common with that of the emancipated learner not accepting “roles traditionally assigned” (Mezirow 1978a) and may hold value when testing the transformation cycle within Creative Industries HE. There was a point on the Coláiste Dhúlaigh course where the penny dropped so that you could earn a living as a creative. This was a perspective shift regarding real opportunity, but ultimately, being creative was something felt all along. No longer feeling alienated within a STEM system, my creative core was given room and direction

to grow. There is something within “the Emancipated Learner” in adult education that chimes with this and warrants further exploration.

The Adult?

One final point to note before moving out to a broader discussion. The original study (Mezirow, 1978a) would have been even more insightful if it had included the age of the participants. On page two, he states that the number of women aged 25 to 34 attending college rose by more than 100 per cent from 1970 to 1975 (Mezirow 1978a); the source of this information is not offered. The age of the actual research participants is never expressed. We know the scope is outside the 25 to 34 bracket as one lady named Roberta is reported as thirty-eight on page sixteen, but that is the only direct mention of a participant's age. We are left to infer from this that Mezirow sees adult education as all-encompassing. Given the detail of subcategories given to other areas, that he does not spend time differentiating between the learning habits or needs of an eighteen-year-old compared to a thirty-eight-year-old is telling. Or maybe he decided to leave that door closed to avoid philosophical overload. I suppose it would prevent the expression of a general theory for all adult education if you started to break down the needs of different age groups. For one, it would complicate this simple declaration, “The uniquely adult need for the reconstruction of meaning perspectives” (Mezirow 1978a). You might end up with multiple versions. But maybe that is what is needed. Age boundaries and maturity levels may be more relevant to transformative learning in a modern context.

2.6 Key Players, Trends and Takeaways.

Discourse Duality.

There is duality in the discourse around Transformative Learning theory. One critic highlights the misuse of the word transformative in professional conversations at conferences, research seminars, graduate education and staff meetings as the reason he refrains from using the concept as a central analysis point (Brookfield 2000). Cranton, on the other hand, describes transformative learning theory, at its core, as “elegantly simple” (2002). Through an event as ordinary as an unexpected question or as traumatic as losing a job, we become aware of holding limiting or distorted views. And by critically examining these views and consequently changing the way we see things, we transform some part of how we make meaning of the world (Cranton 2002). Cranton’s description here, although positive, is a mirror of Mezirow’s descriptions twenty-four years previous (Mezirow 1978a). This expression similarity may have led to some criticisms and frustrations, such as the “literature has grown repetitive and the theory too generalised” (Newman 2012) .

A similar example is Brookfield's assertion that having a more informed, nuanced, sophisticated, or profound understanding of something (such as an idea, an assumption, or an educational practice) is not equivalent to transformative learning (2000). The 1978 paper is important in highlighting this repeated point again, as Mezirow pointed out when he categorised the “conventional Learner” as just acquiring skills and confidence separate from the *transformation threshold learner*. The transformative components that are missing are the critical and self-reflection components (1987a).

Critics also question Mezirow’s methods for extrapolating the experiences of particular women within a specific context to all adults in any context (Clark and Wilson 1991). There appears to be a paradox, however, within Clark and Wilson’s paper when, in the concluding stages, they present Hawkesworth’s definition of “rationality as a human practice” as being more accurate than Mezirow’s ideal set of conditions when they offer “... Knowledge then, is rooted in the practical judgments of a community of fallible inquirers who struggle to resolve theory-dependent problems under specific historical conditions. (Hawkesworth 1989 cited by Clark and Wilson 1991). A major drawback is that

this defines exactly what Mezirow and his team did in the initial 70's study (1978a). Research seems at least to be the practice of looking at things that already exist in the world through a curious lens and then reporting any insights for peers to take or leave. The initiatives Mezirow first investigated were already happening. Encouraged by a gap in research being carried out by Helen Astin (1976), they identified a "dearth" of information regarding re-entry programmes (Mezirow 1978a). He and his team began the exploration based on this hunch. They did not design, set up, or run those programmes. Papers like Clark and Wilson's (1991) are an excellent example of the dead ends met if you seek practical inspiration to take back to your students. There is nothing for the classroom in a tangible sense other than a personal smirk of appreciation for early career research progress, having read and understood the thing.

The Newman Papers

Many writers have challenged Transformative Learning theory over the decades, but Newman's contributions in 2010 and 2014 stand out for several reasons. One of which was pivotal to my research. Newman (2010) highlights common flaws in explaining transformative learning and offers bold new oppositions in that first article. A colleague at Bournemouth University, who was also in the taught phase of the EdD and considering Transformative Learning as a framework to peruse, was wavering due to some criticisms and negativity. When we found the Newman papers, which were the nail in the coffin for him, he was out. It had the opposite effect on me. The more Newman opposed, the more my conviction grew. Here are just a few moments:

"Could it be that they [the women in Mezirow's 1970's study] were not subjects, but objects being swept along by the flow of social history, as we all are, much of the time changed by accident and not by design?"
(Newman 2010)

My immediate response here with PonderLogic is yes, but if we can identify the milestones that contributed to those changes, could we then enable change for others through design based on the findings?

“Claims can be met by counterclaims”.... “We cannot assume that people have undergone radical change because they say they have undergone radical change”... “Stories can provide a window of insight, but they contain invention as well as record... stories prove nothing. This leads me to wonder whether transformative learning only exists in the realm of theory”. (Newman, 2010)

This is where my heels began to dig in. Most people of my generation in my home estate of Maudlintown did not finish school. This is true of all generations above me there, my parents included. If I were to sit with and share my “story” with Newman, there are tangible things that take it beyond just a “story”. The fact that I am here responding to him in this thesis is one of them. How did a “Maudlintowner going nowhere” (CBS circa 1986-1996) from an area of social deprivation on the coast of Ireland end up analysing UK Creative Industries HE in a doctorate thesis? Education did this. Then, there are the careers, experiences, and travels I have experienced as an industry professional, educator, and programme leader. There is a considerable salary difference between my Uncle still washing sheets in that laundry and my grade 09 management position at LJMU. Education completely changed my life—many times. And there are things outside of theory to prove it. I can’t fully express them in theoretical terms yet, but maybe that would be the wrong route anyway. Perhaps a more practical route with offerings for daily practice could be figured out. Newman (2014) also questioned the “arcane examples” used to evidence transformative learning. “Academic adult educators educating adult educators about adult education” (Newman 2014). This line must have been digested as the catalyst to compound my position and goal of clear expression and outputs. I also did now feel like just another adult educator.

Through the storm of criticisms and philosophical overload experienced engaging with Transformative Learning theory something kept my grip on the mast. Then lightning struck. Everything I read about transformative learning was from “academic adult educators educating adult educators about adult education” (Newman 2014). Nobody was writing from the perspective of having experienced it themselves. In all of his work, Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1991, 2006) writes from a position of care, understanding and appreciation for perspective

transformation but never expresses having experienced it personally. Has Cranton (2006) experienced an internal change of making meaning in the world? If so, how? And can we take anything from that to enable others? Brookfield (2000) never expresses feeling personal tectonic shifts himself. If Simpson (2010) experienced metamorphosis personally it is never expressed. Looking at the works presented through this lens was profound. Particularly when reading the criticisms of Newman and Taylor, I would often leave their papers thinking: *they wouldn't have written that if they had experienced it themselves.*

While Taylor regularly flags the lack of empirical evidence (1998, 2000, 2007) Cranton called for a widening definition of “empirical” to include observation and experience (2000). I read that to include the voice of someone who has physically and practically lived perspective transformation. These are all “outsider in” perspectives, and they have discourse value, but some “insider out” perspectives would be refreshing at the table.

The lasting motivator, inspired by Newman is whether transformative learning theory can “be applied in educational practice, or is it a construct we can only use to explain certain educational phenomena *after the event?*” (2014). Creative Industries Education has changed my life. Neman has a suspicion that transformative *learning* does not exist... or has little or no basis in everyday practice (2010). I have a suspicion that transformation *education* does exist, and my hunch is that creative industries education provides a rich ground for testing Mezirow’s transformative cycle (1978a) and potentially deriving utility.

Transformative Trends and Themes

If you’ll forgive a list blurt momentarily, it is important to highlight a key trend in Transformative Learning (TL) research. The majority of studies in this area, particularly pre-2000, are qualitative. They primarily employed techniques like retrospective interviews and field observations. At the turn of the century, Newman (2007) noted the emergence of video and photography tools as an area for potential:

Mezirow (1978a):	Women returning to adult education
Schlesinger (1983):	Jewish women returning to the workforce
Morgan (1987):	Displaced homemakers
(this study led to the inclusion of “religion” in phase 02 (see Table 1))	
Lyth (1988):	Nurses returning to school
Coffman (1989):	Master of Divinity programme
Dewane (1994):	Self-help groups
Taylor (1994):	Intercultural competency in a second culture.
Saavedra (1995):	Teacher transformation in study groups
Courtenay et al. (1998):	HIV-positive adults make meaning in their lives
Mcdonald et al. (1999):	Ethical Vegans
Bennett (2003):	Grants for personal and community change
Kovan and Dirkx (2003):	TL in lives of environmental activists
Gravett (2004):	TL in teacher development
Sands and Tennant (2010):	TL in the context of suicide bereavement
James et al. (2013):	Creating a Disorientating Dilemma for a Health Care Student Using Video Feedback.
Keen and Woods (2015) :	TL in a prison classroom

Above is just a snapshot of the growing body of work around transformative learning theory but there is a noticeable trend, particularly in early studies. This trend may be a direct result of the importance given to a disorienting dilemma as the first phase of transformation (Mezirow 1987a). The researchers have focused on groups where the dilemma is quite present as a motivating factor to engage with. There is an often imposed, or existential event, as cause to step outside of the norm for these groups. In relation to creative industries education, there may well be a section of students that fit the original portrayal of a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow 1978a) entry point, but if not, does that result in a less transformative experience or one void of perspective shift altogether? At least in Mezirow’s terms? And if so, do we need new descriptors? Do we need to revisit the original cycle phases in modern context or take a different direction altogether?

That dilemma again...

The question revolves around the condition of a disorienting dilemma as a trigger *before* engaging with a programme, or could it be while on a programme? A study published in 2013 focused on creating a disorientating dilemma for a healthcare student using video feedback (James et al. 2013) to describe “a single moment in time that was attributed to the change of habitual behaviour”. They call it a moment of profound realisation and that the overall experience was transformational for the student participant and their career. They used speech analysis software and played back videos to the students during supervision to ascertain moments of transformation. They do not express why they used the ten-phase cycle (Mezirow 1991) and not the 11-phase cycle from 1994 (See Table 1). It would be interesting to know if this was intentional or oversight. The key thing of note here is the emerging themes of the role of supervision in transformation, also raised by Taylor (1998,2007) and King (1997) when highlighting the importance of class discussions, critical thinking skills activities and the teacher's contributions as a facilitator. This study (James et al. 2013) also takes a very different take on the disorienting dilemma as part of the student experience and not before it. More specifically, it is “a moment of illumination that changed her trajectory from failing her clinical placement to passing it” (James et al. 2013). This began to emerge in the pilot, requiring further testing in the main study.

Digital Developments

Regarding technological developments, it is worth nodding to a 2021 qualitative proposal (Wiley et al. 2021). In the methodology offered, they operationalise Transformative Learning theory by connecting the self-(re) constructive dimensions of transformative learning theory as identified by Hogan (2016) with the seventeen scales of the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI; Shealy, 2016). It is a passionate paper and an interesting branch of the theory, but I felt a quantitative underload instead of a philosophical overload here. One of my lenses is for utility to ring back to the classroom, and again, this experiment offered little beyond an interesting read. As a Programme Leader, perhaps there is an underlying defence against putting a numerical value on something like an individual's transformation. It might be used against us on

another metric table of how “transformative” an institute is. Another marketing badge to tout in addition to the controversial National Students Survey (NSS).

Reflection is a widely agreed upon essential aspect of perspective transformation, and a 2021 study attempts to quantify the process (Savicki and Price 2021). Their study applied a 2007 software version of Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) to forms of reflective writing such as journals, reflective essays, and blog posts from 98 study-abroad students. They argue that the software's benefits are that it is quick to train and costs less time and money than purely qualitative methods (Savicki and Price 2021). They state that, yes, LIWC gives quantitative results but that it measures qualitatively generated materials by learners in their own words. These are exciting developments, and the imagination, in times of big data, cannot help but ponder a time when artificial intelligence might scan millions of sources and generate academic papers instantly. The question is whether numbers can express such a profound experience as personal transformation (Mezirow 1978a. Taylor 1997, Cranton 2000). Is it the gaps between the words on the page, the body language, eye movements, or the sentences in an interview where the human observer recognises the moment of “deep realisation” (James et al. 2013)? The societal and technological advances since Mezirow’s first 1970s study have grown exponentially (Kurzweil 2006), and research methods are beginning to reflect these changes. They may offer fresh evidence and expressions alongside more traditional methods, but data sets alone may only add another layer of intangibility to the meandering branches.

Transformative Learning Research Relative to Creative Industries HE

At the time of writing (summer 2024), no published works have tested the perspective transformation cycle directly to Creative Industries Higher Education delivery in the UK. A 2008 study looked at critical media literacy in relation to transformative learning (Tisdell 2008). Building on Tisdell’s previous work, the study focused more on adults in education and analysing media texts. The focus was on having them analyse content like movies and TV shows to determine if it would make them see other content they had regularly engaged with differently. Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political motivation of producers often came up. Tisdell (2008) does not focus on Mezirow’s theories

in depth and certainly does not test the transformation cycle critically as a goal within the study. Other studies use technology to explore perspective transformation (Stansberry and Kymes 2007; Wang and Cranton 2013; V.Rasiah 2014). In their research, Stansberry and Kymes had students create electronic portfolios (2007). Again, within this study, they are not critical in any way of the transformation cycle and stray very far from the original meanings. For example, as evidence of a disorienting dilemma, they present:

Creating an electronic portfolio based on teaching with technology is a disorienting dilemma for most student... Students described themselves as “inept”, “confused” and “out of [their] comfort zone” (p482).

On those grounds, almost everything a creative industries student does in terms of learning production craft, software and hardware skills might be deemed a disorienting dilemma. That is before we consider the parallel learning curves involved with university level scholarship. Indeed the theory will fall apart if we apply Stransberry and Kymes (2007) reasoning to every learning curve? This takes us full circle back to Newman (2010) when he argues that he doesn't have to go to transformative learning theory to identify, recognise or understand just “good learning”. He argues that of all the examples presented and reviewed are simply examples of good education. The weakness with his position, and I find it almost endearing or at least admirable, is that the position presumes that all educators, in all locations deliver “good learning”. But that is precisely the point of all of this. Not all education, not all learning is *good*. Take the Christian Brothers, for example, with their hourly bullying through physical and mental corporal punishment. If their education goals were instead guided by perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978a, 1978b), or even a flawed interpretation of transformative learning, instead of the cane and humiliation, how different would our experiences be? Wouldn't that be worth pursuing? This is an extreme illustration, of course, but an early response in kind to Newman, who proposed dropping “transformative” altogether (2010).

My Favourite Paper.

Before exploring the key takeaways from the field and setting out the research inspiration, let us end here positively. That positive is the hitherto unfathomable occurrence of my having a favourite academic paper! In 1978, Mezirow published a separate paper called “Perspective Transformation” (1978b). It is around 4000 words in length, has five references and is challenging in its simplicity. I use this paper to ground off whenever things get lost in philosophical overload. It is one of the few papers that gets carried around in print, and it is dog-eared, tea-stained and scribbled on (See Appendix 2.1). It is a tone goal for eventually publishing papers myself. In it Mezirow posits a theory of adult learning based on meaning perspectives. “Personal paradigms” for understanding ourselves and our relationships (Mezirow 1978b). “Meaning perspectives are more than just ways of seeing; they are proposals to experience one’s life which involve a decision to take action” (Mezirow 1978b). The sentiment of this paper is a key driver for this research. In fact, many of the criticisms Mezirow’s later works received for lacking are covered in this paper. For example, Mezirow’s claims about ignoring relationships (Cunningham 1992) are given centre stage when he suggests that “a crucial dimension of adult development involves a structural reorganisation on how a person looks at themselves and their relationships (Mezirow 1978b). He states that the transformation of meaning perspectives can only happen through taking on the perspectives of others with more critical awareness. Another example of how much he fits into this short paper is the role of support, which is emerging as an area for development in recent studies. Even this was present when he expressed that:

“With a new meaning perspective, people will still require educational assistance in acquiring the skills and knowledge they come to see as relevant. Self-confidence needed for perspective transformation is often gained through an increased sense of competency and through a supportive social climate in which provisional tries are encouraged with minimal risk”. (Mezirow 1978b)

This championing of self-confidence in the early stages feels essential and a keystone that potentially should never have been dropped (see Table 1). The use of the Greek myth of Sisyphus [sic] within the paper, who was doomed to push a boulder uphill only to have it tumble again, is an excellent metaphor for personal development and the role that perspectives play in our lives. It makes the work accessible. It builds a concept in the non-academic brain before hitting us with *theology*. The challenge is to turn the inspiration into action within creative industries education. Even though Taylor flags the lack of this twice (1998, 2007), Mezirow highlighted it in this first publication on perspective transformation: “An unexplored educational goal of enormous significance is to identify, and facilitate the transformation of, the meaning perspectives of learners” (Mezirow 1978b). This tone gets lost in his later explorations into a universal theory for adult learning. By bringing it back to this perspective transformation, we might identify benchmarks to share, adapt and integrate into creative industries training.

2.7 Takeaways from this “theory in progress” (Mezirow 1991).

Mezirow’s transformative learning framework seems quite simple at first. The “transformation” he refers to is of making new meaning perspectives. Perspective Transformation.

The Transformation Cycle

Taylor’s paper in 1998 was the first real critique of the field in which he reviewed the empirical studies of the 17 years previous. Within those studies, he highlights that most failed to critique Mezirow’s theory, leading to a redundancy in depth. In 2007, Taylor again, reviewing 1999-2005, flags the same lack of critique in accepting the transformation cycle. If we are going to understand transformative learning in relation to creative industries education, we need to critically examine the transformation cycle against students’ experiences on those programmes. This felt like a fresh narrowing of intent and tangible. In the opening chapter of their 2000 collaboration, Mezirow reports that the perspective transformation phases had been *broadly* confirmed in other studies (Dewane 1993, Egan 1985, Hunter 1980, Lytle 1989, Morgan 1987, Williams 1985), but in the closing chapter of the same book Taylor (2000) claims that few studies provide actual data confirming each phase. These assertions motivated

my research hunch further to go back to these roots and explore creative industries education through the framework of the perspective transformation cycle.

Strong Words

When criticising “Transformative Learning, ” commentators likely focus on the wrong aspect. Newman writes that we should not be surprised at the corruption of the word “transformative” because it was an inappropriate label in the first place and proposes that we strike the phrase “transformative learning” from the educational lexicon altogether (2010). I can sympathise that he may have been experiencing philosophical overload when he went that far. I believe that he and others (Boorman 2000, Taylor 2000) miss the target slightly. The phrase contributing to discussion burnout may not be “transformative” but “learning”. Learning happens in everyday life, everywhere, and to everybody.

Transformative *Learning* could mean anything from gaining a driving licence to surviving cancer, to a great holiday, a first kiss, the death of a loved one, a psychedelic experience, marriage, divorce, births, news of terminal illness, ad infinitum... The ability to hypothesise, ponder and debate such concepts intellectually separates us from our fellow creatures. The problem, however, with deep, meandering philosophical debate is that it sometimes remains just that. A workout for the mind. A gymnasium of *Aha... and I Haven't a clue...* moments.

“Transformative *Education*” might be a more focused discussion. Education tends to have fixed timescales, objectives, outcomes, aims and structures. Tangible targets that we can look at from a design point of view. Mezirow’s inaugural study (1978a) might have been more helpful if they had also expressed the practices within the re-entry programmes and shared some of the “innovations” often teased at in broad strokes. The road out of the study Mezirow took (1978a) in the direction of an all-encompassing adult education theory has led to the theoretical cul-de-sacs and roundabouts for those following his map. In the twenty-first century, it might be more productive to strike out from the base he set (1978a) but to take the left-hand path towards educational practices and design. Illeris (2014) passes Keegan’s (2000) challenge forward to us in restating his question, “What form transforms?” and

claims that it has never been answered clearly and satisfactorily. This challenge embodies the spirit of my research. If we are to deliver with integrity as educators in a climate where transformative learning experiences are more commonly marketed, we need authentic feedback for designing and providing guidance to foster transformative community collaboration.

2.8 So... What's missing then?

Critical Analysis of the Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978-1994)

My position now, having been through the process of mapping the changes Mezirow made to the phases of perspective transformation over time (1978 – 1994), coupled with criticisms of studies (Taylor 1898, 2007) that trust and use the phases uncritically, calls loudly for a deep dive into each phase to ascertain their meaning and value concerning creative industries education. This is a crucial additional layer to my work. Before fully engaging with the literature, I must admit that my pilot was one of those studies that trusted and used Mezirow's phases uncritically.

Testing the Transformation Cycle in Creative Industries Education.

As creatives, we can look at the body of interdisciplinary studies and borrow back to our corner. Teacher education (Saavedra 1995), terminal illness (Courtenay et al. 1998), nursing (Lyth 1988), suicide bereavement (Sands and Tennant 2010), women in crisis (Schlesinger 1983; Morgan 1987), and prisoners (Keen and Woods 2015) (Keen & woods, 2015)... can all offer valuable insights. Still, we need context in relation to creative industries higher education within the UK. Does transformation only happen in these heavy situations? Are these situations chosen because of unquestioning adherence to phase 01, the Disorienting Dilemma (Mezirow, 1978a), as the transformation catalyst? In other studies, the dynamics of group learning (Scribner and Donaldson, 2001). Real-world experiences (MacLeod et al., 2003). Critical reflection (Whalley, 1995, 2021). The use of technologies (Stansberry and Kymes 2007). Study abroad schemes (Savicki and Price 2021). The nature of content production training means that we cover aspects of all of these studies combined and more in creative industries HE. There is something intrinsic for the transformation cycle (Mezirow 1978a) to be tested against and either be "proven", left behind or updated. Would Mezirow's ten phases (1978a – 1994) apply to twenty-first-century Creative Industries students?

Bringing it back to the Classroom

“Does the *practice* ever match up to the *rhetoric*?” (Newman 2012).

Mezirow was a trained sociologist interested in investigating people’s broader epistemological cogs. I am a creative industries professional and educator interested in enhancing the student journey on the ground. Now. Illeris (2014), in direct opposition to Newman, offers that a *broader*, more up-to-date definition of transformative learning theory is needed. Newman’s (2012, 2014) frustrations were that it is far too generalised, and I now agree. We need to bring it back to the sentiment of that original study sample (Mezirow 1978a). The re-entry programmes were one response to the women’s movement of the seventies. That education might be the bridge between an old life and a new one. Education as a passport. Discussing Transformative *Learning* is open to considering all of life’s probabilities. If instead, we talk about Transformative Creative Industries *Education*, we might be able to start something in our corner of the cathedral for others to take up later. As twenty-first-century custodians, we need some practical tools and clear conceptual guidance to interpret back into our curriculum design and delivery. Keegan (2009) asks, “What form transforms?”. One of my research ambitions is to answer that.

The voice of lived experience as empirical evidence.

If the key contributors to the field of Transformative Learning theory have themselves experienced perspective transformation or life-changing transformative education, then they have not written about this in any depth.

The reflexive voice of lived experience and the insight that might come with this is missing from the key literature (Mezirow 1991, 2000, 2006; Cranton 1994, 2003, 2012; Illeris 2007; 2014; Keegan 2000). This reflexive tone is a potential empirical widening (Cranton 2006), filling a gap and further contribution my work might contribute to this field. Perspective Transformation may not always need to have negative origins, as expressed in the instigating disorienting dilemma (Mezirow 1978a). There may be positive seeds and inspirations for transformative journeys deserving of perspective recognition.

These post-literature musings, coupled with the craft instinct for method design, have informed the research questions for this thesis.

2.9 Questions, Aims, & Objectives coming out of the literature:

RQ1: What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

RQ2: To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

RQ3: To what extent can Mezirow's Perspective Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

RQ4: What additional contributions can be determined from the data generated to advance Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978a-1994) towards practical tools and concepts for creative industries education design and delivery?

RQ5: Is it possible to gain deeper insights into transformative experiences by giving participants ownership of regular moving image contributions in an online research space, as opposed to relying solely on standard pre-arranged and structured interviews?

Research Aim:

To explore the lived experiences of first-generation creative industries students through the lens of Mezirow's perspective transformation phases (1978 – 1994) whilst critically investigating their relevance and limitations within the context of modern higher education design and delivery.

Research Objectives:

Objective 1: To capture and explore the experiences of first-generation creative industries students at Solent University using the PonderLogic, online research method.

Objective 2: To conduct arranged and structured interviews with the participants after graduation for longitudinal reflection and to compare the PonderLogic data collection method, furthering the critical analysis of the transformation phases (Mezirow 1978-1994).

Objective 3: To apply Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006 - 2020) to the samples within the NVIVO software for deeper insight and rigour.

Objective 4: To comprehensively examine the data samples further, to explore utilitarian possibilities for education design beyond Mezirow's transformation phase analysis (1978-1994).

03 Data Framing: Methodology, Method & Data

“All generalizations are dangerous – even this one!”

– Alexandre Dumas

In his article, Keles (2022) draws on a “large range of paradigms” and describes and treats method and methodology as different colours on a palette to mix and mesh to produce other colours. I relate very strongly to this. My initial reluctance to bring my craft skills into my research was due to personal process policing and, without it being expressed in layman’s terms, an overextension of what “doctorateness” *is*. “An original contribution to knowledge” initially felt like a gargantuan task, and little clarity was offered on what it meant. I now recognise it as a partial statement. “An original contribution to *a conversation around knowledge in your chosen field*” is the complete statement that I wish I had been told in the early days. Braun and Clarke’s Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2006 -2023) grew alongside my research and mindset. Their acknowledgement that research is not all about the “gap” or “original idea” (2023) and more about building on the work of others was refreshing and honest. They expressed that you are entering a conversation or debate, and it should feel collaborative, not exclusive. I would describe my current thinking around method as “Pick n’Mix-ology”. Different tools, philosophies and paradigms might advance what the work needs at various stages. Staying rigid on one methodological lane and one colour might hinder and dull the insight palette.

Being critical is championed within doctorateness, so we should feel welcome to be critical of the whole. Some processes are expressed openly here to demonstrate reflexively some internal hurdles overcome along this apprenticeship. For example, there was a real pressure felt in the early stages to have “a method”, “a methodology”, and “a” question. *One? Really? But there is so much swirling around!* One of the characteristics of good research “is to keep firmly in mind that the classic position of a researcher is not that of one who knows the right answers, but of one who is struggling to find out what the right questions might be!” (Phillips and Pugh 2010). Many peers I spoke to said they did not fully know their research question until the end. So why is there pressure and pretence up front? This may be understood in the broader research community, but initially, it felt like something that should be kept

personally quiet. *Pick a box and stay in it? A closed mode. What would John Cleese think!* The wrong turns and ology growing pains of the early-stage philosophical ponderings are expressed here to demonstrate transformation, (from feeling led by the process to becoming critical of it), and begin positioning the research methods and methodology. The main problem was, being a creative, the value in every method and subsequent ology presented could be seen as valuable at different stages of the research journey. Pick n'Mix-ology. The more academic papers you read, the more methodology becomes like astrology. Like star signs and horoscopes, it seemed that all could be applied to any situation with just a little stretch of the imagination if *you* could defend it.

3.1 Ethical Considerations

This research has been carried out closely adhering to codes of practice 8A "Research Degree" and 8B "Research Ethics" at Bournemouth University (2022) . The proposed work, project participation and consent sheets, data collection and storage methods etc. were approved by the Bournemouth University Ethics Committee, Reference Id 8972.

Volunteers for PonderLogic were invited from across all levels of media students at Southampton Solent University. My pre-existing relationship with the students made them a potentially vulnerable group:

"Dependent or unequal relationships can be defined as pre-existing relationships between participants and researchers or between participants and others involved in facilitating or implementing the research. These relationships may compromise the voluntary character of participants' decisions, as they typically involve unequal status, where one party has or has had a position of influence or authority over the

other” and it goes on to list “Teachers and their students” as an example (Bournemouth University 2022).

This was addressed through simple statements in the Participation Information Sheet indicating that I acknowledge being their tutor and that taking part would not have any effect on my relationship with them. If they had any concerns to raise them and that a second marker could be engaged with if deemed necessary (See appendix 4.3). PonderLogic was intended to be a comfortable space where information and conversation would flow freely. The tone of these statements had an impact. This aspect of ethics in advance, of anticipating negotiations, belittles the creative power of social relations (Strathern 2000). By inventing these catastrophes and sharing them on paper, I believe we can create them in the mind and may hamper the journey of both sides of the study. This was certainly the case for me looking back.

The student-lecturer relationship

By the time the full PonderLogic study ran, I had been working at Solent for one year. The “pre-existing relationship” with the students put them in a “potentially vulnerable group”. It might also “compromise the voluntary character of participants’ decisions” due to my position of “influence or authority” (Bournemouth University 2022). This was addressed in the participant information sheet in the “Student/lecturer relationship explained” section (See Appendix 4.3). I was concerned that such strong wording would put the young participants off and make it sound dry, but it was me it impacted most. This was interesting to reflect on and I can never truly know if that language did indeed “scare off” potential contributors but for me, it created a subconscious barrier

between us. It caused an unnecessary separation of roles within me. In those early days of figuring out “doctorateness”, moments and the language like the ethics process put an internal wall up between my creative, open self, and this new research identity. The new identity felt quite a closed, “over there” and guarded compared to the open and engaging lecturer I was in the room to the students. Personally, policing every process within an inch. Through the journey though, I did thankfully manage to evolve, merge and open this identity out. An example was shifting from lines of questioning in the clips I uploaded, to sharing my experiences when in their shoes. Experiencing the ponder wandering tones in sometimes lengthy monologies helped me to realise that they were not just giving answers that they felt would please their teacher. In The 13th Clip for Example, Echo meanders through some poignant, very personal life experiences for forty minutes! He could not have known the research value of his inner searching out loud, but they were pivotal. I have learned that being open is separate to and supported by rigour and integrity. If PonderLogic were to run again, I would be a lot more visible and promotional about the work with the students in a way I felt I could not be back then.

“Maybe, before doing something like that, you ought to have a pint with all the participants! And then maybe they will be more likely to put it in an open group or something” (Array, PLAA023).

Because we worked with students in the field at events like Glastonbury and with the outside broadcast truck throughout the year, we had much more of a “crew together” feel than a “teacher-pupil” feel at Solent. Array had expressed opening more after we had met socially and half-jokingly suggested pints. My

takeaway from this would be to meet with everyone at the beginning. By having them first meet as a group, they might engage in the open forum space to share experiences and insights. Something to work on in the next iteration.

How the content was handled

Working online, I needed to consider the ethics of data protection (Dicks et al. 2005). Mediacore supplied the platform, and it no longer exists. They were very reputable then and had an impressive portfolio of top universities using their platform as a closed, password-protected VLE plugin for delivery and assessment rigour. The participant information sheet (see appendix 4.3) also stated that materials would be stored locally on an encrypted, password-protected external drive. The small award of £6000 at Solent helped to purchase a high-end G-RAID drive for this purpose. The PonderLogic space required login and authentication, so ethical concerns around the “right to be visible” or an “online research footprint (Pink and Leder Mackley 2013) were dealt with securely. It is worth noting that my data was uploaded as part of this experience also, so my protection was a consideration as well in terms of extending the duty of care we feel towards our students as educators and participants as researchers (McNiff 2014). Once the participant clips were uploaded to the site, a full-resolution copy was downloaded and stored for coding. The online clip was then deleted. One of Mediacore’s selling points to universities was that once data was deleted, they would not keep copies, which came with the caveat warning that “once it’s gone, it’s gone”.

On sensitive information

Bouma and Ling (2004) discuss the importance of sensitivity in social science research where it is precisely that sensitivity that may open new insights into the nature of social situations. I created a “General Guide of Use” sheet (See appendix 4.1), which I then emailed to the participants and uploaded to the PonderLogic site. In it, along with file labelling guidance, I ask participants not to mention lecturers or institutes by name but to generalise with terms like “my University” or “the lecturer”. I felt that this would protect the participant should a controversial topic arise, and it would mean that I could use the footage, which otherwise may not be due to issues of libel. PonderLogic is a closed data collection tool. Ethical concerns raised by Pink (2013) surrounding the “right to be visible” and online publication or an “online research footprint” are not an issue. The ethicality of the process requires that researchers pay attention to the other’s needs (McNiff 2014). Outside of the paperwork and policies, I feel a genuine duty of care to my students in my day-to-day profession as a programme leader and lecturer. It is why I do the job.

Using the participant names within the thesis

In earlier drafts and at the transfer stage, only the clip ID was used to express participant quotes. For example, instead of “Wesley”, after a direct participant quote “, PLWN01” appeared. Realising the lack of participant identity when reviewing Mezirow’s (1978a, 1978b) initial reports during the literature deep dive, I felt it was essential to include my participants’ names when quoting directly from them in this thesis. This is their research as well. It would not exist without them. “I do need to say I will miss it [PonderLogic], definitely. Em, because it helped me realise some things that I didn’t realise from just talking”

(Array, PLAA001). As well as the original consent form (see Appendix 4.2), permission to use their names in my work was also recorded again at the end of our interviews in 2022/23 as evidence of consent. However, one of the recommendations during the viva voce was for me to redact the participant names. To comply, I have replaced their real names throughout with names inspired by their chosen creative industry fields. When queried, the examination panel were ok to leave the photographs of participants in the thesis.

3.2 A further note on the Reflective and Reflexive tones.

“We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience” - (Dewey 1938).

I refer to Braun & Clarke's (2006-2023) work a lot in this thesis, but it is important to acknowledge that even Mezirow called for reflection and reflexivity. He cites Jurgen Habermas as an inspiration for the importance of reflection in transformative learning (Mezirow 1991) , but Jenny Moon also highlights the importance of John Dewey, Donald Schon, and David Kolb alongside Habermas (Moon 2000). We were lucky enough on the EdD taught phase residentials to have workshops on critical thinking and reflective and reflexive writing with Jenny Moon in person. It felt very familiar. *I always think like this but didn't know there was a name for it.* This thesis uses a reflective tone to express my internal processes, feelings and insights at various developmental stages. The reflexive tone is an additional layer that considers external stimuli from the programme leader, lecturer, or first-generation student observation strands and how they influence and shape the research. By casting a reflexive eye over my creative industries journey, coupled with field observations, it becomes a rich source from which my research design and expression grow (Etherington 2004). The contrast between my position in life and others like my cousin, who sadly passed away having never experienced transformative education, may have been enough. However, the inspiration from Learning Without Frontiers 2012, coupled with achieving and progressing up through positions as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Programme Lead Manager, has informed the ambition to seek utility to share with others from this work. Each progression led to new

meaning perspectives (Mezirow 1978b), which, in turn, reflexively impacted how data was generated and interpreted throughout the project. Living actively in the reflexive mode meant that I was critically aware of the fact that we are caught in our histories and are reliving it and the cultural and psychological assumptions which structure the way we see ourselves and others (Mezirow 1978b, Braun & Clarke 2022) was evolving deeper with my career progressions parallel to the work.

A Craft Process Comparison

When editing moving images, each scene, location, or plot point is given the tone and pace required for that moment. It concerns the story's needs, not the editor's identity or style. The footage surprises you and offers suggestions if you are open and listening. These happy accidents are what make the work unique. Some prompts may fail, but the footage or data will appreciate your attention and offer better guidance next time. You form a bond with the project. The action scene is treated with a pace and style different from the love scene. We draw from various styles, tools, and insights from those who preceded us and when the project requires them. From my experience, educational research is alive, flexible, and open. It involves collaboration between researchers, participants, data generation, and analysis strategies. Focusing on a single question from the start may feel restrictive. Wearing blinkers at the outset may lead to overlooking important details. As researchers, we should feel free to contemplate and draw from various sources that best serve the exploration at each stage. *Ponderology*, if you will! Be a *Ponderologist*! Trust your creative instincts in your work and avoid overly restricting them. Specifying your intention too early and being unwilling to adapt may harm the outcomes. Allow the process room to breathe and take you on a journey. Trust it. Follow it. Ponder it. *The map is not the territory* (Korzybski 1994).

My transformation from Senior Transmission Controller in London to Programme Leader and Researcher in Liverpool is affording expression that would have otherwise not been possible. Within the literature exploration, there was a penny drop; *they are just humans figuring this stuff out as well!* Mezirow highlights developmental moments such as this increased sense of competency

and raised confidence as pivotal to perspective transformation (1978b). The struggle and arrival at articulating my framework was a huge milestone.

3.3 The PonderLogic Framework

Transformative Learning (Mezirow 1991, 1996, 1997) itself is a conceptual framework. It was only through engaging with the literature that this properly dawned. There was pressure from day one in the taught phase to have a “conceptual framework,” which always felt intangible. The “contributing new knowledge” pressure permeated everything in the beginning, feeling like everything you presented had to be newly invented, so “transformative learning” (TL) itself was never offered as *the* framework. To be fair, TL was only part of what I was trying to unpack. One rainy afternoon, during a reading session in the library, a diagram by Rogers (2003) gave me the colouring book to figure out a conceptual framework aloud for the first time while writing up my pilot transfer report.

PonderLogic: Emergent Framework. **WeZ Nolan 22/6/15 (Post-pilot)**

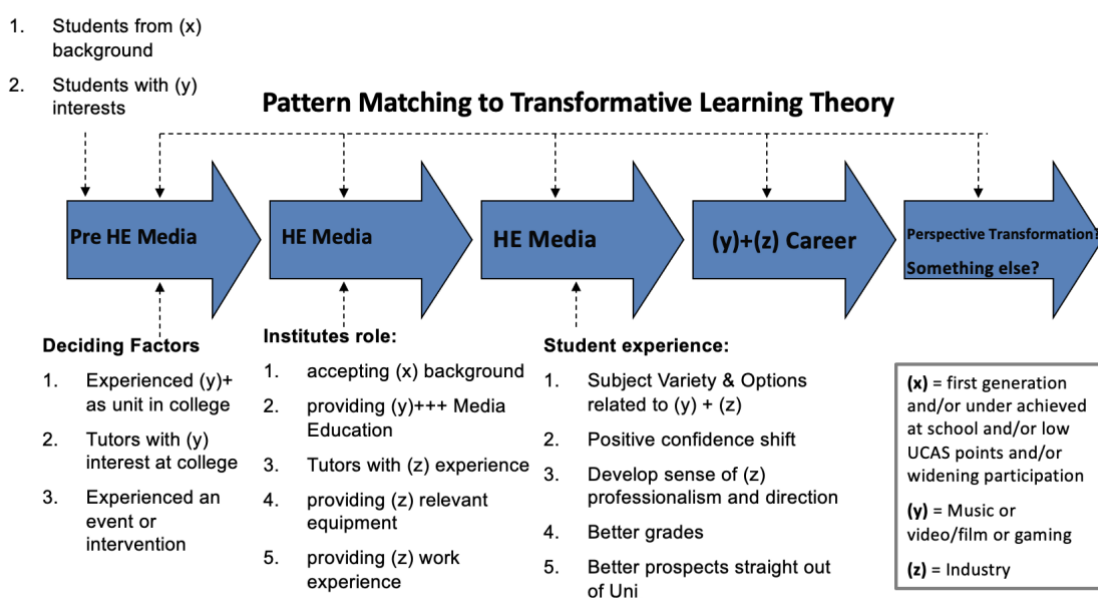


Fig 3.1 WeZ's Post-pilot Framework

Looking at Fig 5.1 now, it is a reminder of how much brain fuel and time it took to condense these swirling, global moving parts down onto a page for discussion. It was a big moment, having only been a lecturer for one year. A glimmer of hope that things bigger, often pondered, could be figured out loud and shared. I was also made acutely aware that I was a visual learner and

communicator. I needed to see it. Fig 3.1 shows my emerging framework. It is the first detailed articulation of my research hunch, and it helped design the subsequent explorations presented.

A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts or variables and the presumed relationship among them (Miles and Huberman 1994). My Conceptual Triangle (see Fig 3.2), compared to my Post-Pilot Framework (see Fig 5.1), is a much better framework expression and has been used in conversation with many colleagues recently beginning their doctoral journey. They appreciate the simplicity as a top-level focus aid and the methodological depth revealed once you unpack the relationship between the corners. Where the corners meet is your research.

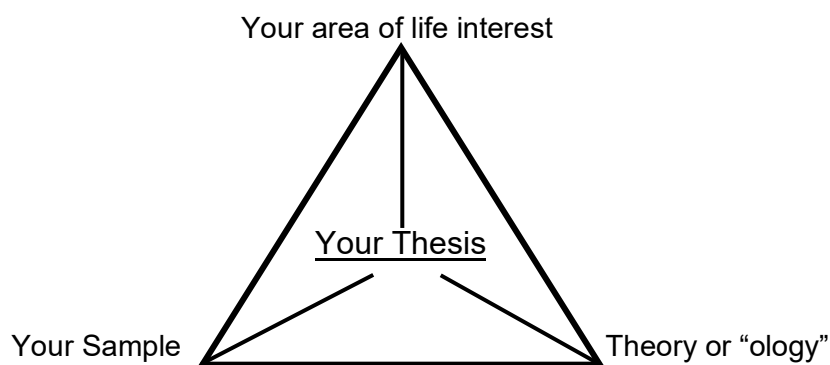


Fig 3.2 WeZ's Conceptual Triangle Template.

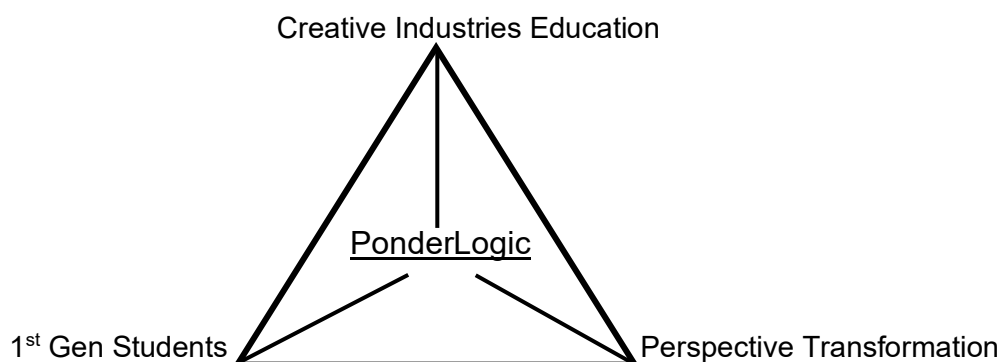


Fig 3.3 WeZ's Thesis Conceptual Triangle.

The Methodological Onion

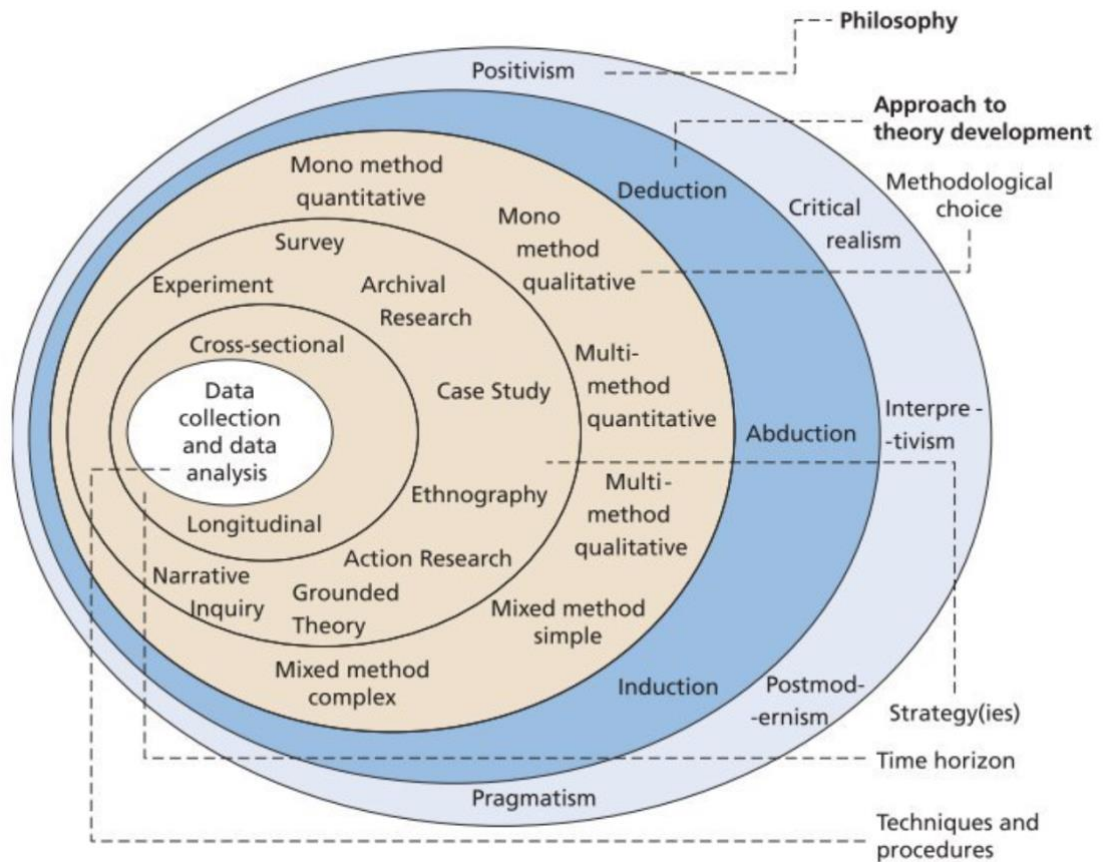


Fig 3.4 The Research Onion Saunders et al 2019

Written as a guide for Business Students, stumbling across the Research Onion (Saunders et al. 2019) cleared a fog. Working as a transmission controller for Aqriva London, we spent our days troubleshooting faults with schematics and routing. Asking for a physical tour of the facilities to see where all of this equipment was and how it fit both surprised and impressed our manager, Sam. Sam Alwan is one of the best managers I've worked for anywhere. When he first joined the team, he spent weeks on day and night shifts working with us in the bays, learning the job's difficulties, making rounds of tea at 4 am and used all of that to improve our area in the coming months. Following and understanding the schematics was never a problem. But, after the walk-through of the noisy racks in the highly air-conditioned building and returning to the transmission suite, I had a better sense of my physical position in relation to the whole. I had a new language to better communicate with the engineers during fault finding. The Research Onion (Fig 3.1) had the same effect. Being a visual person, seeing previously intangible links and connections laid out like this was

a genuine *Aha!* moment. I had a better sense of my position to the whole and a new language to better communicate with peers during fault finding. Having tried to condense ethereal concepts into a diagram myself (see Figs 3.1 and 3.3), I have huge admiration and respect for the simplicity of the Onion diagram (fig 3.4) Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019). Although aimed at business students, I feel that it is helpful for everyone.

3.4 Methodological Positioning

Some of my method aspects are straightforward in terms of methodological mapping. Others are more open. For illustration purposes, definitions here are referred to from Saunders et al. 2019, with an awareness of oversimplification and room for debate in the broader context. Mapping PonderLogic to The Research Onion (fig 3.4), we might say that:

The PonderLogic Philosophy is:

Interpretivism: To understand the fundamental meaning attached to organisational life. Emphasises that humans are different from physical phenomena because they create meaning. Interpretivists study these meanings.

Ontology: Complex, rich and socially constructed through culture and language. Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities, flux in process, experiences, and practices.

Epistemology: Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions, and interpretations—new understandings and worldviews as contributions.

The PonderLogic Approach to Theory Development is:

Inductive: Collecting data to explore a phenomenon and generate or build a theory. Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative methods of analysis. For Mezirow's pre-existing work, I was theory-testing. My theories are iterative, coming out of the exploration.

The PonderLogic Methodological Choice is:

Multi-method Qualitative: using more than one data collection technique. The Ponderlogic site, semester-long engagement, longitudinal follow-up interviews, field observations, and reflexive observations from personal experience. (Participants could also respond in audio, written, or moving images within Ponderlogic, but arguably, these are multiple *artefacts* using the same method).

The PonderLogic Strategy is:

Interpretive Ethnography: places greater emphasis on subjective impressions than on perceived objectivity. It allows for multiple meanings rather than being able to identify a single, true meaning, pluralistic approach, focusing on understanding meanings, with those being observed treated as participants rather than subjects. Reporting will reflect the participation of both the ethnographer in the text rather than out of it along with those being observed. Again, for me, this positions the reflexive voice encouraged by Braun and Clarke (2006-2023).

Ethnography is the study of culture or social world. It originated in the 1700s and 1900s to study so-called “primitive” societies. The word literally meant to write an account of a person’s or group’s ethnicity: ethno-graph(y).

-

Realist ethnography: closest to 1700’s origins.

Critical Ethnography: has a radical purpose designed to explore and explain the impact of power, privilege, and authority on those who are subject to these influences or marginalised by them. Critical ethnographers often adopt an advocacy role in their work to try to bring about change.

The PonderLogic Time Horizon is:

Longitudinal: the capacity to study changes and development over time. Ponderlogic ran for the academic year. Then, the follow-up interviews were gathered five years after the participant's graduation.

Techniques and Procedures – Data collection and analysis are:

PonderLogic from data collection at the pilot stage to data gathering in the full study: Pattern matching (Yin 1994) during the pilot, the Transformation Cycle (Mezirow 1978a -1994) in both and Reflective Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013,2023) for the full study.

One stage I feel is missing from the onion:

Outputs:

Doctorate Thesis: Reflective/Reflexive

Pick n'Mix-ology then...

Here is where it all felt tricky. As a strategy, ethnography is the field chosen to plant the boots firmly. A stance to explore students' "mindsets" and "frames of reference" (Mezirow 1991) from. But, looking around, Action Research makes sense as an emergent and iterative inquiry process designed to develop solutions to real organisational problems through a participative and collaborative approach, which uses different forms of knowledge and will have implications for participants and the organisation beyond the research project (Coughlin 2011). PonderLogic was iterative. It felt like a collaboration with the students. A journey. The "organisation", in this case, might represent the University. You could also argue that all of *this* is a fit for this research. There is an emphasis on "planning action, taking action and evaluating action" (Saunders et al. 2019). This research's "next steps" proposals towards experience design could be mapped under the Action Research umbrella. However, Ponderlogic was purely data collection, and no new action was suggested, taken, or assessed for effectiveness to improve during the research period with the students. This seems clear now, but initially, it was felt that many strategies could be sold as "the one". Narrative Inquiry might be ground to walk in terms of attempting to collect "complete stories" (Chase 2011) or the personal context to the research inspiration and thesis style. The most challenging strategy to separate from PonderLogic is the Case Study. An in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life settings (Yin 2018) leading to rich,

empirical descriptions and the development of theory. There seems to be a specificity of focus within the case study that does not feel right.

Marshall and Green (2010) share a story to help mentally unfreeze us from the pressures of having an “original contribution”. A large concrete block sits in an engineering department; they invite us to imagine. It has been hit with hammers numerous times for multiple projects. For each project, it has been hit from a different angle. So long as the angle has not been used before, the project could genuinely be considered an original contribution to knowledge (Marshall and Green 2010). *Aha!* Ethnography and PonderLogic feel right in my hands. It is my angle to swing from. Another researcher could hit my data block from a different stance, learn other things, and have outputs alien to me. Realising this makes me want to return to Mezirow’s original 1970s study data and interrogate it with my system of RTA and NVIVO. To take an experienced design swing at it all. There may also be a personal unconscious rebellion against labelling when engaging with methodology. A rejection of being placed in a box, perhaps.

Maudlintowner. Weirdo. Waster. This is not “imposter syndrome”: I was made to feel unwelcome. Labelling, particularly early in the journey, also feels closed, and the gut instinct is to remain in the open mode (Cleese 1991b, 2022). Pick n’Mix-ology is open.

3.5 Digital/Video/Ethnography 3.0?

“The intellectual is so hung up on the disease of words that nothing exists unless he writes it down” – Timothy Leary, 1965.

The rise of digital technologies has the potential to open new directions in ethnography (Murthy 2008), which has adapted to these technologies over the decades. Analogue technologies, such as audio tape, videotape, film stock, and pen-to-paper, have historically been widely used in social and psychological research (Gibbs et al. 2002). The move from analogue to digital and then to the web removed physicality and potential restrictions of time and space from the equation.

PonderLogic invited participants to record and upload regular contributions anytime, anywhere, as little or as often as they liked. Using new technologies like this has been referred to as Digital Ethnography (Murthy 2008). Others offer

“Ethnography 2.0” (White 2009; Vesa and Vaara 2014), a critical, collaborative and enabling methodology that uses digital video and digital technology as an approach to experiencing and understanding a specific and cultural process (White 2009). If the terminology is to be updated, we need to move away from the graphing of ethnicities and the etymology of ethno-graphy. The inclusion of “video” and the illogicality of “digital video” also dates the definition (White 2009). I inherited a module at Bournemouth University once titled “Digital Film”; it grated on me as the formats could not be further apart. *Moving Image* works! Also, with the emergence of Web 3.0 as a decentralised movement, would we end up with Ethnography 3.0 or Research 3.0? In an earlier chapter, we imagined a world where AI might glean the web’s available data and spit out research papers instantly. We are already there with the most recent update of ChatGPT. Research 3.0 would not need peer approval to publish as decentralised platforms could be constructed in a flash and build to Vol.300 within 24 hours making it sound very established indeed. In these times, with corporations like Google and Amazon issuing their own certification, the university peer review system may not be as relied upon or seen as reliable as the AI data pools and influence grows. *Maybe an AI engine could be truly non-biased!?* “Research 2.0” is defined as “the application of new practices that focus on opening up the research process to broaden participation and collaboration with the help of new technologies that are able to foster continuous engagement and further development” (Ullmann et al. 2010). PonderLogic, as a data-gathering system, also fits this description, and it has an opportunity for engagement and further development within the community that never quite took off. I will expand on this in-depth shortly in the data section.

Using moving images in research has also been referred to as Video Diary (Noyes 2004). Pink once argued for “a future-oriented applied *visual anthropology* that engages with the everyday” in an article called “digital-visual-sensory-design anthropology: Ethnography, imagination and intervention” (Pink 2014). Although Pink makes agreeable arguments within the papers, for example, highlighting a shift away from the scientific approach through technology and the specificity of video needing to be engaged with anew (Pink 2001), there is a separation of intention. Where Pink differs is the over-complication of terminology and phrasing towards over-intellectualising and

exclusion. We need to keep our language simple and accessible to encourage engagement from industry professionals and undergraduate students. “Video-aided Ethnography” (Muntanyola-Saura 2012), “Video-based Research”, (Savage 2012) and “Video Ethnography” (Shrum et al. 2007; Voilmy et al. 2008; Spinney 2011) have also been floated. I have expressed my reasons for dropping “video” from the discussion, and that is also why the terminology outlined here still feels like it has one foot in the twentieth century.

Opening an ology! (word play on “apology”!)

In the spirit of introducing my term “Futurecomfy” to general acceptance, I also offer the following terminology as examples. By focusing on the digital nature of content in the twenty-first century, the terms are Futurecomfy. They acknowledge their existing relationship with digital images, audio, and the written word and are ready to embrace the Metaverse and other immersive or Web 3.0 innovations to come.

3.6 Didgeography

“Didgeography is a digital research method applying technology innovations to capture responses from research participants on a shared platform”.

Response data formats may vary, but they will be digital. Lines of enquiry should be posted in the preferred format for responses, but they should remain open to any format a participant wishes to use in any given place or time. Didgeographic research is not geographically bound; it can be carried out with digital natives globally.

3.7 Autodidgeography

Autodidgeography is a process within Didgeographic research.

Autodidgeography invites researchers to reflect on personal developments notable in their tone and participation with the shared platform during data collection and analysis.

PonderLogic is Didgeography.

Method Question coming out of the methodology.

Capturing any changes in “mindsets” and “frames of reference” brought on as a direct result of attending creative industries education could potentially evidence perspective transformation (Mezirow 1978a -1994). The method hunch was born out of a craft-enhanced instinct. Inviting the participants to contribute whenever they wanted to might capture moments of development nearer the event versus a series of documentary-style interviews set weeks apart. This may also generate empirical evidence that is often flagged as missing from the field by Newman (2012, 2014), Keegan (2000), and Taylor (2000). Pink describes videoing people or culture ‘undisturbed’ (2013) as impossible or inappropriate. An aim was to test whether PonderLogic offers a more unintrusive style of data collection by allowing participants to choose when, where and for how long they can record. Reviewing the clips as they came in, new lines of enquiry might be devised and uploaded for the participants to respond to next time. This iterative process might offer a critical test of the value of the transformation cycle in modern creative industries education. Months of term time would be spent critically analysing the phases against the student’s experiences as they lived it. A distinguishable factor of this research, in relation to other studies in the field, is the potential to share all the research data online. We cannot see Mezirow’s 1970s study as it mainly consisted of interview notes, field notes, and notes from telephone conversations. The PonderLogic clips could be shared on a platform. New knowledge is expected to have two characteristics: it is shared and can be verified or challenged. Research of this nature “is expected to show evidence of original scholarship and contain material that can be published or exhibited” (Candy 2006). There is an opportunity post-doc with this work to further innovate with an immersive thesis experience. Mezirow believed that there is no higher priority for adult education than to develop its potential for perspective transformation. That this will involve a redefinition of our priorities – in terms of goals, functions, methods and modes of research and evaluation (Mezirow 1978b). Data generation through PonderLogic and RTA analysis is my first attempt to address this. The method question is, therefore,

RQ5: Can giving participants ownership of regular moving image contributions in an online research space provide transformative experience insights beyond standard pre-arranged and structured interviews?

04 The Data

How Data was Generated: PonderLogic & Interviews.

This section will express how the PonderLogic Didgeographic experiment was run, the fruits it bore, and proposed improvements were it to be run again. Then, we look at the longitudinal data gathered through recorded graduate interviews, a very different process and a critical comparison regarding the method question. Based on the experience, this Ponderlogic method of Didgeography promises significant advantages over staged interviews. It is spontaneous; the participant chooses when and how to respond, uses their own technology, and gets as close as possible to being 'unmediated'. The method drew responses from the participants beyond what I had directly asked, as Echo, one of the participants, commented: "PonderLogic was one of the first steps that allowed me to start being more self crit-, well, self-reflective and less strictly self-critical. More... what can I do with this?" (Echo, PLEE2022).

The PonderLogic name was subconsciously approved while watching John Cleese's talk on creativity. He said the most important part of any creative endeavour is "simply time just to sit and *ponder*", (Cleese 1991a). "*Ponder*" has surfaced many times as a key component, phrase, and practice for this adventure. The John Cleese clip felt like a sign to stick with it. The second half of the phrase is a nod to what we were all pondering together here as researchers, participants, and humans. What is going on? What is the reason? *PonderReason? No, Reason is already an audio production software.* What is the point? *PonderPoint? No, I don't like it.* Transformation? *PonderTransformation? Yikes!* That's not logical at all; what is the logic? Logic! *PonderLogic! Aha!* This led to PonderLogic being the name given to the Didgeographic research experience designed to capture the participants' journey while they were still studying at Solent University. *Didgeography* is my term for a digital research method that applies technological innovations to capture responses from research participants on a shared platform. I searched my craft experience for something beyond the simple interview method familiar with documentary filmmaking or basic research awareness. In real-time, was it possible to capture the extent to which first-generation students in creative industries education undergo the transformation cycle (Mezirow 1978a-1994)? It is a problematic question on many levels but one that drove the method hunch

all the same. Each time, the question arose: *How do we capture moments of transformation as they happen or as close to the moment as possible?* The gut instinct felt the answer was in the technologies available to us now, that Mezirow was not afforded in the 70's. Mobile phone technology in 2015 meant most people now carried cameras in their pockets with audio recording capabilities. Students also had access to laptops with cameras. If they did not own one, Solent had a loan scheme, as access to software is essential to creative industries training. *What if people could be encouraged to record short ponderings as they occurred and share them in a secured space for analysis?* An experimental, qualitative study based on inductive testing of the ten phases of transformation, according to Mezirow (1978a – 1994), while remaining exploratory and receptive to new insights.

James Cross at Mediacore Canada was generous enough to offer their platform for the work (see Appendix 1.3). Efforts went into obtaining this more closed, personal space, rather than using the open YouTube, Vimeo or another platform in an attempt to give the project a sense of identity and comfort. Instead of "WeZ's YouTube project", we would talk about "doing PonderLogic", sharing ideas and feeling part of something else was worth the effort to set up. When directly asked if a more familiar platform like YouTube would have been better, the participants replied: "That might have actually put me off 'cause I think that might have felt a bit more public. Whereas this feels like, you know, it's very closed it's like, only going to one person", (Jazz, PLJS023) and "I think I would have opted out" (Mother, PLMM023). The negatives figured out loud when asked tended to be about Wi-Fi or familiarity. For example, "It would be less personal but on the other side would be slightly easier to access, I think, like through different platforms like, because most of the mobile phones have YouTube Apps and stuff like that so, so it's a trade-off I think". (PLAA023). This comment surprised me as Mediacore did have an application for mobile devices that students were encouraged to download and use. So, it may be a nod towards familiarity regarding which apps they check or interact with regularly.

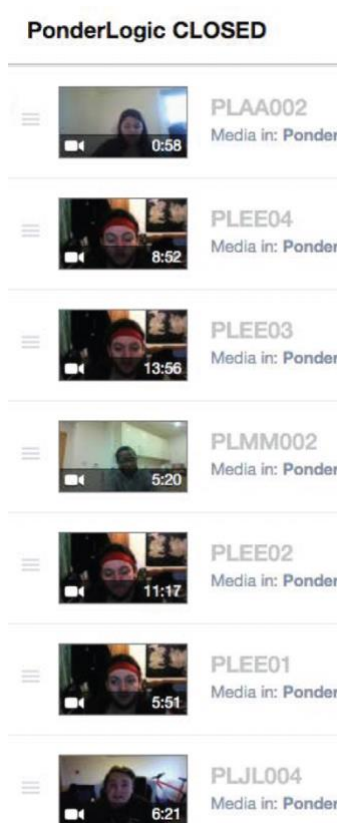


Fig. 4.1 Labelling

The Participant Voice and Labelling Logic.

Before exploring these processes and data further, however, I should expand on the participant quote labelling system you are experiencing. We handled a lot of data as a senior transmission controller for Setanta Sports and Arqiva/Disney. Every second of media to air must be recorded, scheduled and played out in its exact slot, or it will cause chaos and fines at worst. That “digital housekeeping” craft mentality permeated the research planning:

PL_PEE0001 = PonderLogic Pilot, Echo Edge, clip one.
 PLEE001 = PonderLogic Full Study, Echo Edge, clip one.

PLEE2022 = PonderLogic, Echo Edge, 2022 five year catch up.

Because the participants would generate their own materials for upload, we all needed to follow the same labelling convention. To this end, a document was created (See Appendix 4.1) with notes explaining the preferred labelling, uploading, and recording processes for them. Operational and technical documents were often generated to help staff in Transmissions, and my industry skills informed this research design once more. These early process decisions were something I would learn to appreciate hugely as the full study went on and the various data coding stages were engaged with. If a participant clip is labelled PLXX001, you know it is a response to my question clip PLWN001 and so on. The clarity of clip identity and its relationship to the process stages are very important. When you are deep in coding and your brain is frazzled due to term time programme leading and lecturing commitments, you are forced away from the research for long periods. Your clear labelling will get you back in the game quickly. This is craft-informed research. *Treat every project as if someone else is going to finish it. And, revisiting old or long-shelved projects that “someone” can end up being you. Naming is an integral part of the journey that should not be taken lightly.*

4.1 The PonderLogic Setup

This study was conducted at Solent University in Hampshire, on the south coast of England, which is around 70 miles west of London. I was hired into the Media Technologies team, where I mainly delivered the “arty” modules within their BSc modules and some BA delivery in the production school. This was one of the best teams I’ve ever worked with under the leadership of Sean Lancaster, the Academic Enhancement Manager at the University of Bristol. Sean had been a broadcast engineer for the BBC and was a great mentor in encouraging my approach to education and how to get the best out of a creative team. We shared our office spaces at Solent and worked closely with the technicians. Something I would take with me and recognise as unusual and a point of tension at other institutes. PonderLogic reveals that this environment was an important transformative factor for participants. The relationship between academic staff, technicians and students at Solent created an industry-like environment. The programmes were small, 20 or 30 per level on any pathway, and the foundation route was also popular at Solent. At the time, Solent took pride in its widening participation heritage and felt familiar in personality to Coláiste Dhúlaigh Dublin.

Learning from the PonderLogic Pilot

Four students took part in the Ponderlogic Pilot. They were male, aged between twenty and twenty-five and attending the BSc in Audio. Forty students would initially have received the same invite through student email on the VLE, so the four who volunteered were random. They uploaded between five and ten participant clips each over the six-week run. Six research question clips were uploaded weekly for them to respond to.

One of the key questions going into the method test was RQ5: Can giving participants ownership of regular moving image contributions in an online research space provide transformative experience insights beyond standard pre-arranged and structured interviews? The answer, even from just the pilot test, was yes. Participants started to capture thoughts on the camera without research prompts. This was exciting as the hunch to set up the PonderLogic experience was an attempt to capture moments, beyond recollection at arranged interviews, closer to them happening. A great example of this was

Tally's clip PLPTLXRTA. (Label = PonderLogic Pilot Tally Larby Extra. Tally had labelled it "XTRA" outside the six direct clips I had uploaded.)



Fig 4.2 Still from PLTLXTRA

"Walking through the train station tonight, I sort of, not that I didn't feel like 'em... a student... I dunno I was just, walkin' through the train station. Everyone was goin' to the pub or everyone was goin' nightclub and everyone was buyin' booze and stuff like that and it just seemed unreal. I was like that [mimics look] how can they be doin' that. I got so much work on em with uni and stuff

back home as well I-sup, I suppose I'm goin' back home a lot more this year as well with working in the rugby club, band and stuff, it just seemed weird it was like... I always thought I got three homes. I've got home, I've got a second home in Southampton and I've got the rugby club (laughs) I always feel like they're the three homes type of thing so it's weird I, that's sort of my triangle sort of thing. But anyway, my train is about to arrive I shall catch you later." (Tally, PLPTLXTRA).

Getting the "new upload" ping to my phone and then seeing this clip was exciting for several reasons. This was the first clip that was not a direct response to any of my 6 question clips. Tally was walking to the train station, seeing something that made him ponder university life, and he took out his phone camera to capture and share those thoughts. *Brilliant, hunch proven?* Not necessarily, but these moments made the research promising and injected energy into a process that was hard to fit around the daily grind of academia. It also had a depth of honesty and a layer of figuring out loud at the moment that, arguably, you would not get in a formal interview setting. It was a positive nudge amongst uncertainty that filled me with encouraging forward momentum. You can see Tally in the clip going through the motions. He reflects on how much older or more mature he felt than the other students. Even though he was still a student and potentially only separated by one year, his focus had changed. "As we move forward to new perspectives, we can never return to those in or past (Mezirow 1987b). He wasn't sure why he was capturing the reflection, but it is

precisely what I had hoped for regarding this research and the honesty of the moment. It was hunch-affirming. PonderLogic was working.

Zapper speaks to the camera having returned from a trip home:



Fig 4.3 Still from PLPZR002

“Ehh, just got back from seein' my mates over easter and umm, I dunno it felt a bit weird they were eh... There was a lot of talk about what I'll be doin' after uni, and em I had a lot of prospects but, compared to them, they're just, well money wise there's a lot more for me that I can do and there'll be a lot more opportunities than they thought I would

and ehh, yeah... They're eh, they're a bit... they're happy but it's a bit, it's a little bit awkward 'cause... well, in a year I'll be earning well over what they're earning already and they've been working for four or five years already. So, hum, that's pretty interesting.” (Zapper, PLPZR002). (PonderLogic Pilot Zapper Reynolds clip 002)

After talking with friends back home, Zapper realised that their career options and salary opportunities were relatively low compared to the possibilities and conversations he was now having on his degree with staff and industry guests. It is a pivotal clip as he has yet to figure it out entirely, and the details are in the pauses and what he is not saying. It speaks to perspective transformation phase 02 (Mezirow 1992), Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame. It also highlights the separation from the life you might have had back home, and these new opportunities are now opening up to you. A mindset shift I am very familiar with. It is a strange *domestic dichotomy* of always being from your town and people but also becoming something more. You hide successes in discussion when visiting home so as not to come across as arrogant or belittling their positions. But then you also absorb a lot of negativity for subconsciously showing how fixed they are in life simply through your movements, progressions, experiences, and opportunities in the broader world. The strains between wanting better for yourself but remaining humble, acknowledging and respecting the life you leave behind can be a harsh constant. Zapper is dealing with this unexpected life flavour for the first time in the clip. This “Disorienting

Dilemma” (Mezirow 1978a) perhaps. The pastoral side of lecturing and programme leading often deals with this in students from first-generation routes.

Another reason Zapper’s clip was important is that it triggered my sense of familiarity and may have been the seed to shift away from direct questions later in the full study and more towards shared experiences. In my fourth clip on the pilot, you can still see Personal Process Policing at play in terms of not feeling “allowed” to ask the direct question Zapper’s clip prompted; “Are there any surprising realisations throughout your study? Anything that made you look at yourself or things differently? It would be great if you shared those moments with us as well”. (WeZ, PLPWN0004).

Regarding the method question, it is felt that Zapper and Tally’s clips demonstrate the true potential of the PonderLogic method. Both clips exhibit a very different type of data gathering compared to the documentary interview we teach students. How would a production crew arrive at Tally’s candid train station clip? The idea that a crew going to a train station with poor lighting and sound at night to record a 1-minute 25-second clip might produce the same results does not seem plausible. Or that a crew intruding on a student’s place of work during their lunch break, like Zapper’s clip for 1min, could capture the same unformed thoughts is a significant contrast to hold on to. This method fills the time gaps between the standard serial interview technique (Crang & Cook 2007) that the hunch was designed to do.

Data Dates and Numbers

“I knew I had a massive gap when it comes to uploading during dissertation time but then, I honestly didn’t have a life then and that was my only focus. It was dissertation. I didn’t even visit my parents at Easter and it wasn’t because of the time it was just because I was so preoccupied.” (Array, PLAA023).

The first research clip, PLWN001, was uploaded on December 6th 2015. The transfer had happened in September, and part of the logic was for the students to have experienced some of the term before they could comment reflectively. *How can they comment on their experiences in week one?* Personal factors

were the pressures I felt immediately after the short-lived relief of the viva success. The logistics of finding full study participants, the ethics forms, learning the UK HE ropes in my new lecturing post on top of module leading, level leading, living in a new town, and carrying out this research was a cold-water bath, having focused on the viva for so long. Only in academia have I experienced an end goal resulting in even harder beginnings.

So, the first research questions clip from me was December 6th 2015. My 25th and final clip was uploaded on July 6th 2016. Out of the eight participants who regularly uploaded, six stayed with me to the final clip—174 participant clips, with my 25, totalling 199 clips. The pilot clips carry research value, so adding them gifts us 200+ clips. They varied in duration from 1 & 2mins to a mammoth 40min 13th clip from Echo. I unpack the 13th clip later in-depth to demonstrate how rich and different the data this method generates can be when coded. The last participant clip was uploaded on August 24th 2016. It was not the original intention to run this long, but comparing the pilot to the full study, Parkinson's law seems to have had an impact. Parkinson's law states that work expands to fill the time available for completion and that effort is adjusted accordingly (Judith F. Bryan 1967). As we will discuss later, some participants began to binge-respond to clips instead of weekly. This led to clips being viewed "later" and not responding to immediately in favour of more pressing university demands.

"I been doing them in binges. Quite a number of episodes at one time. And I apologise for that but, yeh, you get caught up with things... it's only a short period of time and so." (Chalk, PLCD023).

When I asked, by "short period of time", he meant that they felt like a short, quick thing to record so they could be put off "for now". Parkinson's law strikes again. The students on the six-week pilot had similar pressures but had a sense of urgency about them. They engaged weekly and went beyond basic asks, as Zapper and Tally did in their extra clips. I believe the weekly pilot engagement led to the train station and workplace epiphanies that never quite materialised in the same way on the full study. This may have been due to the short-term nature of the pilot exercise versus knowing it was going on for months in the full study. Something to reflect on when I run it again. My initial concerns about

binge responding and even being dismissive of those who did not complete and respond to all the research clips eventually turned into an appreciation for every and any effort when doing the coding in depth. Every second of contribution mattered. I soon learned that the complexity was in *what* was expressed, not for *how long* or *how many* times. The initial negative concerns turned out to be more PPP anxiety and researcher growing pains. The eventual realisation that the journey of discovery was not in the exact planning. These are things that I was aware of in travel and life in general, but that had not been considered in the perceived rigidity of research. However, I was delighted to find them there. *The map is not the territory.*

The Participants

The research participation call, for first generation students, went out via Southampton Solent's VLE which was "mycourse" at the time. The Participant information sheet describes, "First Generation, for the purpose of this research, means that neither parent has previously attended, making the participant the first in their family to do so." (see Appendix 4.3). This would reach students across the creative Industries programmes and range between BSc and BA degrees. Randomly, twenty-five students responded with interest (see Appendix 4.4). Out of the initial twenty-five respondents who were invited to the site, nine uploaded a first clip. Eight continued to upload over the coming months, with six going to the end. Their ages ranged from 19 to 44.

Of the six that finished and completed the PonderLogic experience, three were female, and three were male. Chalk is from Northern Ireland. Array Polish. Mother African. Echo, Jazz and Atlas are from the UK. Beta from Hungary and Lavo from the UK also made contributions up to a point that disappointed me at first, and I almost dismissed their contribution. I had a change of perspective during NVIVO coding, and their contributions were also found to be invaluable. It was a huge research lesson for me. Each clip is a treasure trove for discussion and a learning journey. I had adopted an odd, dismissive attitude towards the ones who had not uploaded a response to every clip. Beta felt she had no response to some of the clips when I asked her about not doing them all. Sometimes, it was a language barrier; other times, there was nothing to say. Which is fair; I should not have expected them to have responses every time.

“I skipped clip number 6 'cause I didn't have a clue what to say, but hopefully once I start going through those again, I will have an idea, so I will go back and record that one.” (Array, PLAA007).

4.2 The PonderLogic Experience

“I quite like reflecting. And it's obviously very cringe, and you beat yourself up mentally over it. But it's a part of life. That's how you learn.” (Atlas, PLAH2022).

In her most recent interview in 2022, Array was surprised that not more students had engaged with PonderLogic as it had been such a positive experience for her. “Because sometimes when you're overwhelmed, you need to like to get your thoughts, like ducks in a row, and that [PonderLogic] really helped to do that” (Array, PLAA2022b). Pondering why more people may not have engaged with it out loud, she arrived at reflection, and being personal might be difficult for people:

“I think it's also like hard for people to like, talk about themselves as well. Most people don't want to. It kind of... we just want to distract ourselves from “it”. So, I think that could be a big factor as well. Why people don't want to, or like not everybody would want to do it.” (Array, PLAA2022c)

The “it” Array refers to is one of the more challenging insights from self-reflection. The “why” of your situation and the honesty required to look at it correctly can be complex. This is something I take for granted, having been self-reflective my whole life and, at the time, had never considered as a reason why more people may not have volunteered and engaged. Realisations during conversations like this make you appreciate, as a researcher, just how honest and open these participants were in sharing their experiences with me. And the gift of it all. “I didn't like that very much. I'm getting better, but I'm still like, you know... trying to talk about yourself is... there was a lot going on, you know, we were still very young and there was just stuff going on constantly.” (Lavo, PLLOB2022). What they gave during a stressful and hectic development time was enormous. The file labelling, uploading, and effort required sometimes to dig deep and share personal insights and information is continually humbling. It

is hard to express what engaging with PonderLogic did for us on paper. Still, as we lead up to the data analysis, it is important to reflect on some key method outcomes and express my gratitude to these participants. I would have nothing without you.

Me as Researcher Participant:



Fig 4.4 PLWN009 Still from *The Shard London*

“I liked the fact that you were recording them in different places. Like there was The Shard or on London Tube ones. They are not just like one thing like my replies that are in my room”. (Array, PLAA023).

With all the planning and craft hustle involved in accessing the Mediagore platform and arranging participants, I hadn’t considered how my research questions would be posed. It was literally at the moment of posing the very first research question that the decision was made to use moving images (see Fig 4.5).

I can’t ask them to create and upload clips if I don’t?

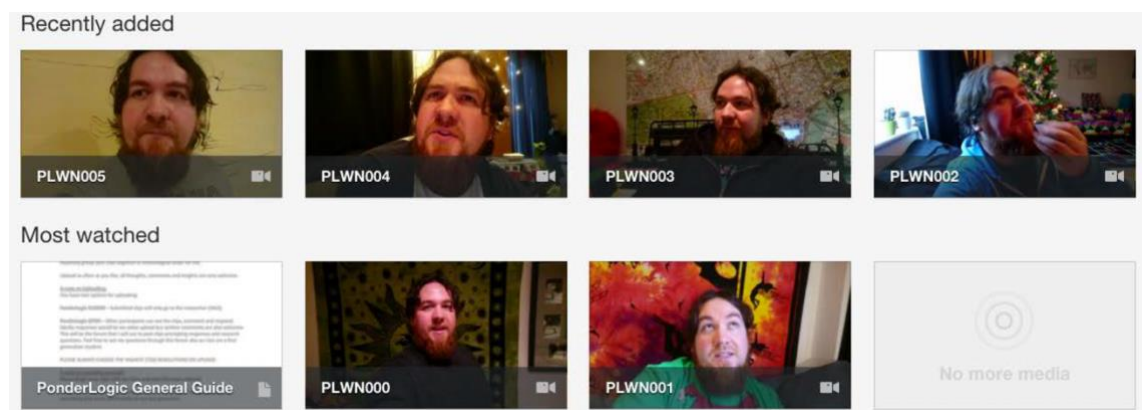


Fig 4.5 Screenshot of some WeZ Uploads

The PonderLogic space allowed for posting text, audio or moving image content. The process was that I would have a few questions as bullet points to address. Record the clip and upload it. Then, put the text bullet points underneath the clip so that viewers could see the points to respond to without having to click play again or take notes. The easier this could all be interacted

with, the better the engagement might be. Because they were media students, one participant had mentioned not uploading because they were concerned about quality. So the following clip I recorded was by a noisy roundabout on a windy day, making the point to not worry about quality or production value. Just be comfortable.



Fig 4.6 PLWN020 still from Glasto

Looking back on them now is surreal and full of transformative insight. It captured a critical crossroads in my life. Life moments like recording a clip from the top of the shard the night before getting married (fig 4.4 above). A marriage that only lasted a few short

months. It is complex but poignant to revisit. To Lemmy from Motorhead passing (PLWN003) to one whilst working with the students at the hugely transformative Glastonbury Festival (fig 4.6). These experiences play an important role in mindset and perspective transformation. This is what it meant to Jazz:

“...seeing Glastonbury in video 20 just reminded me of that experience, um, how incredible that was like. I was just walking around in awe ... And the fact that my stuff ended up on like, BBC 2 or something like because that was very strange but amazing. And it’s just one of those things where it really made me feel like I was, I was doing it, you know... I was really becoming part of the industry and, like, the start of the path that I’m going to be going down.” (Jazz, PLJS020).

Jazz got a sense of herself having a career in creative industries for the first time, which was validated by the major broadcaster screening her work. There is also a passion and energy for lecturing and being in education that is nice to be reminded of in the clips for me. The bureaucratic grind of Programme Leading has dampened spirits somewhat lately. Seeing these recordings and hearing the participants in the 2022 interviews counted me amongst the passionate lectures they got the most from, which stirred both sadness for what

I have slightly lost and offered a path towards finding it again. It isn't easy to express the many transformative fruits PonderLogic continues to provide.

It was a UK HE apprenticeship.

Something significant that had yet to be envisaged at the planning stage was the personal impact that participating in PonderLogic would have on my early lecturing career. There was a moment before turning the door handle and walking into the first lecture at Solent, for example, when a great realisation dawned: *Irish! I'm Irish, and these students are English! What if...* A sudden culture shock landed, however, momentarily, but not insignificant. *I'm a foreigner!* Through engaging with the students and their stories in PonderLogic, I learned about their pathways to university first-hand. A-levels, GCSEs, College pathways. This was all alien to my simple primary school, Secondary-school-and-done experiences in Ireland. It led to better engagement with the student's journey and needs. PLWN015 is an excellent example of this. It shows me learning for the first time, the struggles of the financial situation of the students in UK HE and how the loans were determined, which came as a bit of a shock to me.

With the grind of delivery, assessment, and admin, we can sometimes operate without being aware of these students' struggles. At your next staff meeting, replace the word "student" with "people" and see how different the conversation sounds. Much of what was learned from the participants fed directly into my teaching sessions and design. Particularly in the personal development and career-focused modules. Even the recent 2023 interviews have fed into initiatives, and PonderLogic has informed programme design, which will be discussed later. During Clip 19, I tell them how much I am learning from it all and how appreciative, surprising and unique it was. Insights into halls of residence, anxieties, workload, and support are also fed into delivery. Was I a researcher then? Or a participant, or training somehow? Back then, I might have felt one might taint the other, but now I say all and more. Researcher Participant and experience beneficiary far beyond just data fishing [sic]. This is one of the many arguments for building and developing PonderLogic into a bespoke research tool for peers and students to benefit from in their programmes. PonderLogic would have been a great tool to have during the pandemic.

4.3 Journey Familiarity and Bias

Some notes in the PonderLogic logbook (See Appendix 4.5) highlighted that exposure to the subject area during college played an important role for some. This helped me unpack parts of my journey as milestones for progression. The part-time music technology course at Pulse in Dublin made me think, "*Hang on! This isn't like school!*" and eventually led to Coláiste Dhúlaigh. On that same log page 4 (See Appendix 4.5), there was an observed change in adjectives when participants talked about their education before Solent.

School = "Crap, bad, uninterested, lack of motivation, doing bad"

Uni = "Love it, proud, great, motivated, doing well"

It took some time to understand that although my personal transformative experiences of education were informing this journey, the work here was not to "prove" my own story *again*. It is giggle-inducing now to look back, but at the time, I remember standing up and thinking: *It's over. This isn't going to work! It's over! I have no research project!* You might ask what caused such a devastating blow to this early career researcher's experiment? I would answer Tally Larby, who took part in the pilot study. Participants expressing negativity towards their schooling and positivity towards creative college and university chimed with my Christian Brothers versus Coláiste Dhúlaigh narrative. Then this happened:

"Within a few months of being in secondary school, I had completely changed what I'd learnt and sort of how school was. *I particularly blossomed*, so to speak, um in my last two years at school, year ten and eleven... *I really enjoyed GCSE*, my options, doin' PE. Always wanted to be a PE teacher. That's where I particularly wanted to go and *I really had good schooling. Cracking school*, um, made some great friends" (Tally, PLPTL005).

It was gut-wrenching. *This can't be right!* He enjoyed school!? "Blossomed", "wanted to be a teacher", and the seemingly fatal blow, "I really had good schooling". *What am I going to do? This was all wrong! Oh! No!* It is funny to reflect on now, but it was critical in my levelling up as a researcher. This taught

me several things. That learning journeys are complex. School bad + Uni good = Transformation was an unworkably basic concept to hold on to. This side of the years of reading and weeks of deep data coding warrants a laugh in appreciation of the fledging mindset and how trivial something like that seems now. It also taught me to step back. To be open and to wait. As you gather the data, you do not know how these things will link up later and their impact. Some moments feed directly into the investigation as evidence, but others impact your personal development as you learn your research craft. Tally's clip bothered me for days; it was a real crisis of direction. But it was such an important learning curve that I am grateful for it to have happened during the pilot as it levelled me up before the main study. It made me acutely aware of my subjectivity. Viewing subjectivity as something valuable rather than problematic is a key aspect of a qualitative sensibility. Your subjectivity is essential to the process of reflexive TA; it is the fuel that drives the engine, and reflexive TA does not happen without it (Braun and Clarke 2022).

Data Fishing and Tone

When you arrange to interview somebody, you set a date, place and time. You bring your equipment, capture it, and the footage is "in the can". Done. With PonderLogic, the researcher clip is uploaded, and you don't know what day, place or time anyone will respond. Or indeed, if they will respond at all. *What happens if there's an empty can?* It is like interviewing eight people at once but nobody simultaneously. Handing over the responsibility of responding to the participant was a considerable, stressful and rewarding risk. Unlike industry, where meetings have a point, and you are left with a to-do list, academia wastes a lot of time on long meetings about meetings. You get nothing more than a live review of the week's emails and no tangible outcomes... most of the time. During the first week of the PonderLogic experiment, the first PING came in one of those draining meetings. The Mediacore app notified me that a clip had been uploaded. *I've just done some research! Just sitting here! I've done some research!* Excitement swelled in me, and it felt like something new and important. It felt like digital fishing. Over the weekend the bait was set through recording and uploading the research clip, then the wait. Hungry for shoals of experience on the banks of student life with a bucket of hunch and a digital rod. Even if just one or two bites came in that week, it was enough for new

perspectives on the bank to inspire new lines of enquiry that coming Sunday. My 4th clip (PLWN004) is an important example of this, as it was directly inspired by Lavo's third clip (PLLOB003) as he shared his journey to university:

“...my path to Uni was I couldn't get back into my secondary school to do A levels. Simply because I didn't get anything higher than a C. So because I went to a grammar school that wasn't good enough so, they couldn't let me back in” (Lavo, PLLOB003).

Faced with this *disorientating dilemma* (Mezirow 1978b), Lavo had just three existential days in which he describes finding a BTEC in music and music technology. He saw the experiences on that course and interactions with the tutors as positive and encouraging in ways grammar school had not been. These insights from Lavo shocked me and led me to conversations with students and colleagues about how these grades are treated in such a draconian manner. This then fed back into the following week's clip from me. The journey would continue like this, with the most notable changes from myself being to ask fewer questions each time and share experiences more. I developed an awareness of the questions not mattering so much in terms of opening the stream of consciousnesses, that it was more so the sharing of experiences or situation prompts:

“I think when I started where you are now, when I started media college, I think if I had to listen to some of the negativity around it, I might not have went ahead with it. And I definitely wouldn't have experienced some of the things I've experienced as directly linked to the course or, you know, as a result of being on the course... and that's what I kind of want to tease out today... things that you've done as directly part of the course that you would never have done if you had not have come to media university... things not directly involved with the university course... things that you've done, things that you're going to do, things you expect to do, things you didn't realise you could do”, (WeZ, PLWN004).

This fourth clip is about three minutes long, with prior clips of more direct questioning being around one minute. Subsequent clips came in around two minutes but kept the conversational, relaxed sharing tone.

Sundays were chosen to upload based on feedback from the Pilot on it being the best day. Students felt that day was when they got their minds on the week ahead, and as people were travelling back, they might watch the clip and respond during the week. It was never that regular, however, and if I had spoken about it more often amongst the students and promoted it more to participants, it may have encouraged more regular engagement beyond direct responses, just as Tally (PLPTLXTRA) and Zapper (PLPZR002) had done. I felt that my over-involvement could somehow taint the work in person or overpromotion or prompts. I imagined an examiner saying they were coaxed and the data was no good. PPP again. Below is an example of my email after the second clip was uploaded. This differs from the tone I usually use to engage with my students. There is an air of trying to be something else here, a professional researcher maybe, that may have read as odd to the students compared to the usual, relaxed terminology of our daily interactions:

“Dear PonderLogic participant,

Thank you for your continued help.

A second video from me has been posted and a third will soon follow. May I please urge you to upload any thoughts or ideas you may also have around the topic. Relay discussions you may have had with friends, family, college friends, lecturers ... anything really that has made you think about your position in life in a different way and as a direct result of having gone to media University.

Please do respond to the clip and add as you please.

I am also interested in feedback on how best I can facilitate responses? Do you need more from me or can you simply go ahead and upload a few pieces from now on?

ponderlogic.mediacore.tv

Regards,
WeZ”

Given their age and attention span for official emails, something short and snappy would have been far more appropriate. Overreliance on official email as

the means of contact may have impacted regular uploading and contributed to the binge habits of some participants. Looking back, I felt the official email was ethically “safe” and research-sound. This was coupled with a misguided paranoia that it needed very little encouragement from me for academic rigour and to be left “over there” to happen naturally. Of course, this was not the case, and if PonderLogic were to run again, it would be spoken about and promoted freely and openly. I have since learned that no matter the initial motive for recording a clip, even if it began as a direct response to questions posed, the spoken-out-loud stream of consciousness beyond the planned answers is where the research treasure was found when coding. PonderLogic was not a flop by any stretch. The excitement of Tally and Zapper recording unprompted during the pilot test led to a misplaced sense of failure during the full experiment when other students did not record extra clips. This is all recognised as part of this research apprenticeship now along with a growing ambition to develop the PonderLogic tool to carry out further research with creative industries students globally.

Research Enquiry Tones

“You all come from different stories, but there are three things that you all have in common: a sense of change and development in yourselves now at Uni compared to beforehand. The three things seem to be *independence, confidence, and choice*. If you can, try to unpack that a bit for me...” (WeZ, PLWN007).

The tone of the researcher clips began to change over the weeks and as a result of having been through the pilot study. My own experiences started to permeate the responses as the weeks went on, and in week 7, above, some noticeable themes from the clips were fed back to fish for further insights. In the clip, more depth is invited on what those three areas might mean to them and how they recognise change in those areas:

“Personally, those three things really have changed since I joined University. Um, the first thing I would say is the choice because I made the choice to go to University, and I chose this particular course” (Array, PLAA007)

“But then when money sort of ran out and because my family can't help me with that, I was just like, oh, it's down to me now, is it? Oh dear! Oh, I shouldn't have spent that much! But, like, yeah, so I had to deal with, like, my overdraft and stuff. Becoming more sensible then once I realised it is on me like, this isn't anyone else's fault. This is me now!”, (Lavo, PLLOB007).

“I had a little, I had a little think. And I was thinking. Independence: being able to do it on your own. Confidence: knowing that you can do it on your own. And. Choice: choosing whether or not you should do it on your own. I guess that's what that says to me” (Echo, PLEE007)

Even though the initial prompt was about independence, confidence and choice, a new layer of financial considerations emerged across the response clips that informed the next research call. This was the gift of PonderLogic. Any new line of enquiry could be recorded and uploaded instantly without having to go out and arrange eight more new interviews based on new queries arising from the footage. Also, this was eye-opening as the UK Student Loan system was something I had yet to experience first-hand. A common, what I would call “taxi driver narrative” was that students were getting everything handed to them and had it easy. Financially, however, it can be pretty tricky, and not everyone gets enough to cover much beyond their course fees, particularly those from first-generation backgrounds. The pressure for part-time work must impact students' performances on full-time courses, therefore impacting transformation potential. Knowing this gave me compassion as a lecturer and later as a Programme Leader. As a researcher, it also exposed avenues to test the transformation cycle (Mezirow 1978a-1994).

Much like the decision to create moving image researcher clips, asking them to share their experiences without sharing mine began to feel unnatural. *Why was I hiding my own experiences? Would they taint the data?* When lecturing or engaging with the pastoral side of the job, sharing personal insights and experiences was found to help people open up. They are not the only ones going through particular challenges and tests, as it can sometimes feel in life. I was also first-generation, so PPP should be set aside, and a more open approach might be reciprocal. To not share, and fear tainting, was to presume

that they might robotically agree or somehow be influenced by my sharing. Instead, trust was afforded, and a community of shared experience and appreciation was gained. In my 9th clip (PLWN009), for example, overlooking London from The Shard, I pondered friends and life across the city:

“...if I had never started media college, I would never work those jobs. I never would've worked in London for those companies. So I'm just wondering, is there any em? Has your life or friendship circle extended because of media education? Have you met people, you know, mates for life, that kind of thing? Do you click with people at the uni a bit more than people, you know, traditionally back home? Kind of sad to say now that I've been at it for so long that, that's definitely the case for me. Most of the mates that I'm closest to work out there [looking across London skyline] for BBC, Sky, emm places like that, and I do have a lot more in common with those guys over the past 10 years than I do when I go home because we've all moved away. We've all had to keep moving for this industry 12, 12-hour shifts. It's difficult. Guys back home haven't gone to uni, so they don't really get any of it. And I'm just wondering what kind of, what are the, some people call them learning gains, but what are the other things outside of the actual coursework that you guys are getting from this experience? You know, friendships, bit of romance? Any of that kind of thing?” (WeZ, PLWN009).

This is an emotional clip for me to review as there is a slight melancholy the students would not pick on that I was unaware of at the time. The fact that none of my old friends from home would be at the ceremony in the morning made me reflect on my lasting friendship circle, being the ones from creative industries, education, and work. And that there was a disconnect and achievement denial when visiting home so as not to upset people there. That they are in the same situation as when you left can lead to pent-up frustrations being aimed at you. This “in-between” area of no longer fitting at home but also not fitting in your new life grows as a point of interest for future works. From a research perspective, PLWN009 is an interesting exchange as, in review, I realised that some of the students are potentially too early in their journey to relate. And that's ok. Sharing my story would not taint their responses:

"I'd say, to a certain extent, yes. I wouldn't have met some of the people that I have without this course, so yeh I feel like I've made some lifelong friends. Others, not so much [laughs]. It's a hard one to say whether I click more with people here than at home because I've known people at home longer, and we know each other better than anyone here knows me. Yeah, I think it's quite difficult to say in that sense. (Atlas, PLAH009).

"I think one of the things that I realised quite like WeZ is actually that when I go back, it's really odd. Sort of the friends who I still stay in contact with actually seems to be the ones who are, have all gone away to University who, we all come back and we all meet up. And I think they're the ones that I better click with at the moment. Yeah, maybe if I moved to stay back in Northern Ireland, I might click with my other friends a bit more. But, because they are in Northern Ireland and going to University there, they actually tend to stick to themselves. So that I didn't expect. But thinking about it now, is a big learning curve and actually I realised what, I realised why it happens." (Chalk, PLCD009).

Reflection is captured here from being asked to look at your current university life and your social groups at home. *Is it transforming?* The reason we have spent some time on these interactions is a small attempt to express how rich the exchanges are across all 23 prompts. From Latin, the prefix "trans" is "to cross", go "beyond", or "change". To *transform*. Personal change can be challenging to achieve, recognise and capture. The core values of this research are to record moments of transformation awareness as data for both researcher and participants, as in clip 09 above, to test the validity of Mezirow's transformation cycle (1978a – 1994). And then, to determine what, if anything, we can practically take back to Creative Industries experience design from these foundations. However nerve-racking handing over the response ownership to the participants was in the beginning; after collecting all of the data, it is firmly believed that the PonderLogic method aligns well with addressing the lines of research enquiry within this thesis.

4.4 Going Longitudinal: Arranged and Structured Interviews

“... maybe that would be a good thing to do this thing again in a couple of years and say, because with time, you have a different perspective on your experiences. So maybe in a couple of years you might look back at University and think that was a good experience or was a waste of time or whatever you might actually think again so...”, (Array, PLAA019).

Array, speaking in 2016 above, did not realise how close to the mark she was in terms of really being able to test the extent to which they may have undergone the phases of perspective transformation and in terms of the method question. The idea of waiting five whole years after the students had graduated to catch up longitudinally would have, at one point, seemed implausible and anxiety-inducing to me under the pressures felt to complete. During the taught phase of the EdD, I suggested that PonderLogic be a “cradle to grave” experiment that follows students from the first day of their first year through graduation. Supervisors deemed this too long, and in hindsight, it would have been an unmanageable amount of data for me to code and interpret alone. Had this been followed through, the reflections now might have been that an interview years after graduation would be more suitable in relation to the research questions. Noting some concerns in my PonderLogic logbook, a note on page 20 reads:

“9 of 17 responded and we are 7 weeks in. Maybe posting every two weeks better? [sic] Less than half but still a lot to work with. PonderLogic might work better with graduates? No deadlines”.

Sitting on the first interview session with Lavo on September 5th, 2022, there was an overwhelming sense of *this; it was meant to be all along! This could not and should not have happened any other way. It would mean nothing without this*. It all suddenly felt like “proper research” to me. It was much-needed validation and inspiration to continue. That this research was important, having felt like a failure for so long. Had this been written up in 2017 based solely on the PonderLogic experiment alone, it would have felt like a big essay, and I would not have arrived at the Frame of Reference Model for Education design (FORM) or the 13-step Transformation System (TS13) that I can now propose.

And truthfully, as a researcher then, I was not ready. The Longitudinal aspect was not entirely by design, and I don't believe it would have been approved had I pitched it. They were keen to have you finish part-time in 4 to 6 years. When you consider most part-time programmes run double the full-time offering, producing an 8-to-10-year doctorate of value is more realistic. No, it was part serendipitous, part opportunistic and part reactive to some major life events. But essential having lived it. There was never a pause. I made several career progression choices that consumed my time. First as a Programme Leader at Bournemouth University and then on to Liverpool John Moores University as a grade 09 manager. These intense, time-consuming years of observation and experience have greatly benefited the position I now write from. The research never paused. These upward moves gave me access to conversations and new meaning perspectives that feed into my work. It would also bear fruits in terms of a critical level above previous experiences through engagement with policy, programme design, and bureaucracy, which are hard to imagine writing this doctorate without now. An organisational ethnography of sorts. Programme Leaders also have full-time lecturing loads, and things like periodic programme reviews, where you rewrite an entire degree on terribly formatted proformas, take over the time you had initially mapped out for your research. Some new bureaucratic demand constantly fills the space where you once daydreamed research would fit.

In truth, since the final Ponderlogic clip in 2016, this work has taken seven Augusts to complete using my annual leave. It is a process that I have learned to cherish, as it gave me invaluable periods to ponder the data concerning my surroundings and arrive at far more significant and fully considered conclusions. I would make the case that all doctorate research would benefit from extended periods of pondering and longitudinal data triangulation. To live with the work. The global pandemic from 2020 also put a massive strain on time and effort in moving production courses online. In 2017, I lived through a sensitive marriage annulment and, on the 4th of December 2020, my father, Bernard Nolan, passed away aged 65. May he rest in peace. From beginning this doctorate as a transmission controller in London, I have had six addresses across four towns. London, Southampton, Bournemouth and Liverpool. The one constant in my life is this research. PonderLogic is never far from my mind conversations or

observations as I move through the halls and ranks of UK HE. This, coupled with the initial instinct to follow up with participants after graduation, led to the 2022/23 interviews.

These arranged and structured interviews would also prove useful to carry out a tentative method comparison to the Didgeography of PonderLogic. From experience as a student and observations as an educator, most only understand what university was about a couple of years after graduation. The longitudinal aspect of this research emerged intuitively as work and life demands increased in parallel, and this time is now greatly appreciated as field observation feeds into critical and reflexive thesis narratives and potential research outputs. Being first-generation, from a non-traditional background and alone in this endeavour may also have fed into taking longer than most to get here. But instead of shame and regret of how long this has taken me, I am proud and ready to own my “Doctor of Education” title in ways that would have felt uncomfortable submitting a thesis after just four years part-time. The 2022/23 interviews solidified that developed identity.

The arranged and structured interview sample and format.

The first interview was conducted with Lavo on September 5th 2022, and the final interview was conducted with Jazz on May 5th 2023. Both being on the 5th of the month is a coincidence that I only now realised! Of the eight participants included in the PonderLogic experiment whilst they were at university, seven generously gave more of their time for the five-year catch-up interviews. Mother did respond once to say the email account was working but did not further engage in arranging an interview with me. The interviews were conducted over Zoom, and before each interview, they were sent these prompts:

What do you remember most about your university experience?

Why?

Were there any pivotal moments of change that stood out?

Internally, on a personal level, do you believe your University experience changed you or your life?

Why?

Externally, on a societal or social level, do you believe you or your life was changed by your University experience?

Do you think it would have been the same if you studied a subject that was not creative industries related?

If you were designing a creative industries programme now. What elements would you consider “must haves”?

What do you remember about PonderLogic?

Overview of the arranged and structured interview process

Here, we look at the interview process and some of the insights gained from this method. Using Zoom was deemed more in line with the online didgeography ethos this research started with, and post-pandemic, it was a common practice. One downside of the longitudinal aspect may be that how I used moving image might have been seen as more innovative pre-pandemic.

I talk too much!

When coding these new clips in NVivo, a Top-level code was given to “I think I talk too much”. It has 37 references coded to it! There would have been more, but it became more accepted as the analysis developed. Having spent so many years with just the participant’s voice on the clips, when mine interjected, it was frustrating. *Just let them talk!* And *Why are you still talking WeZ!* That was until a step back was taken, and the research value of the exchanges was fully acknowledged. What was being witnessed was the researcher pondering the year of findings and connections out loud. Prompted by the fresh perspectives and ability to pull threads with the participant live in the moment. A new Top-Level Code was created for “Figuring new insights out loud (where it is going)” and has 30 references coded to it. A critical example of this to express happened during the conversation with Echo. He was reflecting on his time working part-time in Halls of Residence for the University. Something that “stuck in his head” was seeing the same patterns and issues in the new students the following year. He pondered how people from tidy homes who were more looked after did not deal well with flatmates leaving dishes in the sink and would kick off disproportionately, in his opinion, and that those who went straight into a rented house with fewer people did not encounter that. During that conversation, a clarification nugget dropped and was captured:

“Oh, that's really interesting, actually, because you just gave me some ideas of how to maybe separate it out. Because, you know, when you,

one of the, one of the things with Transformative Learning is they talk about Perspective Transformation, but we have different perspectives for different areas, and I think you might, you might have hit on something there in terms of general growth and academic growth or vocational growth, or jeez, there's even domestic growth, you know", (WEZ, PLEE2022).

The PonderLogic clips have been viewed, reviewed, analysed, coded, and re-coded so many times that it would be impossible to quantify the hours I've spent and my depth of familiarity with them. All of that information swirls around in the subconscious of the research. These moments of interaction can suddenly pull the swamps of possibilities to a blade of focus. Moments of clarity and output potential are only now made possible through the whole. For example, these interviews would be very different and potentially void of the deeper lines of questioning or insights without the preliminary knowledge I had gained through PonderLogic. This participant observation is important to hold onto as I began this doctorate research from outside, in industry. This doctorate enabled and benefited from a period of assimilation within the UK Higher Education system. The realisation from these new interviews was that this has resulted in a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the journey and potentially transformative dynamics.

Deeper Questioning: The "Route 66 Effect".

Years back, working freelance in Dublin I was offered a trial at editing a segment for a feature documentary. The footage captured the experience of a group of ordinary people who raised money for charity, trained and rode America's famous Route 66 on Harley Davidson bikes. The producer loved my cut and invited me to edit the entire film. After spending weeks amongst the footage, we were eventually asked to the screening, trawling every frame for story arcs and visual journeys. None of these people knew me, but I knew their deepest worries and hurts. The nature of the trip across America resulted in some very candid and emotional pieces to the camera where people expressed making the journey for loved ones lost to cancer and experiencing cancer themselves or going through breakups and mental health struggles along with all the frustrations and challenges of the almost 4,000km trek. I had lived it all a

thousand times in the footage with them. Then, meeting them in person, I greeted their confused faces by name and asked how partners or pets were by name. It was surreal, like some sci-fi experiment where you could download all the information about a new social group before you met them. The lightbulb of realisation came on with the house lights as the documentary credits rolled. *Ahhh, he's the editor; that's how he knew my name.* Then, with some drinks came the next surprising layer. Some people approached with a sense of paranoia. They had said too much to the camera; they couldn't quite remember what, but they knew it was personal, and they now knew that I knew! This led to awkward exchanges and to play down how much was said or had been seen or remembered by me.

Carrying out and reviewing the 2022/23 Participant interviews that Route 66 experience flooded back as being in a similar space. I will refer to this as *the Route 66 Effect*. The Route 66 Effect recognises that your experience with individuals has been impacted by digital familiarity before interacting with them. There was a slight difference here, as the students were not strangers to me like the Route 66 Riders. We had learned together. Worked together at events like Glastonbury and other smaller local gigs and socialised together at networking events and field trips. However, the personal insights shared in PonderLogic differed from these surface-level professional or social exchanges. During the interviews, a depth of familiarity emerged and steered the interactions due to the Route 66 effect and my deep knowledge of their experiences. Another interesting layer is that the participants admitted remembering the PonderLogic experience in the five-year catch-up interviews but not exactly what they said. On the other hand, having analysed the data in so many different ways over the years, I had very lasting memories of what they said. The key points remained fresh for me and came flooding out in conversation. Assimilation or acculturation in the broader cultural sense does not quite capture the Route 66 effect. This is on a deeper, personal, and individual level. A feature of the Didgeographic research process is somehow downloading a version of a participant into the researcher's psyche over time that manifests as *knowing them* without being part of their physical lives. *But what if they were lying? You'd have a different Route 66 Avatar of them!...* The Process police shout. Of course, this could be the case. Still, for this analysis,

coupled with my lived observations of the students on the programme, we will take the data to be an accurate representation of who they were at the time of recording both the PonderLogic clips and their interviews.

Before the 2022/23 interviews, I did not review their clips and notes. The Zoom calls were usually during busy workdays, either coming from a lecture, another meeting or another administrative chore. But when we spoke, the Route 66 Effect kicked in. All this background knowledge of their lived experiences, struggles, home life, loves, laughs, woes, and more all came to the surface in our conversations. Things a typical lecturer at the top of the room during their studies would never have known. Things revealed through PonderLogic afforded insight into these people and their inner workings during a time of significant change for them at university. After each interview, I sat in a moment of surprise and appreciation for how much I *knew them*. At how much I *knew* the data and a renewed appreciation for how much they had openly shared during the experience. During the five-year catch-up, it was essential to steer the conversations back to the seven structured questions for comparison and analysis. Still, between these, the discussion often went into a territory that warranted a Top-Level Code named “Not typical Q’s due to PonderLogic & being part of their Uni experience”. The term “Route 66 Effect” only emerged as this section was written. Had it existed when coding, that would have been the label. It has 45 references coded to it as examples. It was a surprising insight when considering how someone ignorant of the PonderLogic data might have conducted those interviews with just the seven key questions.

“... you seem more confident. You were very timid in the videos; you’re very cautious. I’m kind of impressed and proud and inspired that you didn’t... you went through a pretty dark time on your own for that final year, and it didn’t turn you off learning. That’s amazing, really” (WeZ, BH2022).

“one of the things that come across very strong in your clips was that you em, you, you moved around so much that then, when you saw students who had like, one home for their whole lives, you were kind of like; “that’s mad, that’s like, I can’t imagine having that”, and you almost really struggled with it. “Would that be boring?” or “Is that something I would have liked”... (WeZ, EE2022).

“...that's amazing because you can really see it in the video clips that you were like buzzing. I always said, “he's hooked”. And do your family get it now because they know? There was a sense of them “getting it” when they saw you on the telly? (WeZ, LOB2022).

“...and that seems to be a very strong message from your clips as well that you kind of, I think, even mentioned once you were inspired by a teacher in college that was opening up an amplifier, and you were like, “Oh, what's this”? You got interested in him, kind of, you know, rearranging things and making the amplifier better. And I think I'm wondering if that... how important is that little bit of inspiration and encouragement in terms of your own journey? (WeZ, AA2022).

“... you could see it in your video as you were kind of going; “I've done this course, but I'm probably not going to do anything related to it”... and you kept saying, “I don't regret doing that, but I can't see myself working in anything audio related” and “I can't see myself ever doing any more of this study either”. And then, what you're telling me now is, five years later that the first thing you did was *more study* and are now *working in Acoustics*! That's amazing. (WeZ, AH2022).

4.5 RQ5: PonderLogic vs Arranged and Structured Interviews.

Here, we explore some format comparisons related to the method question within the context of this research. **RQ5:** Can giving participants ownership of regular moving image contributions in an online research space provide transformative experience insights beyond standard pre-arranged and structured interviews?

PonderLogic Participant Behaviours

Savicki and Price (2021) used Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) to explore reflection as a vital component of the transformative learning process. They used a 2007 version of LIWC software to analyse reflective essays generated by undergrad students who had taken up study abroad opportunities. Their research keeps coming to mind regarding how much they would miss with just words scanned in documents by comparison. I was seeing and hearing the

students in their recordings. Their tones, moods, eye movements, pauses, smiles, frowns, the things they were not saying, or moments of realisation flash across the face are vital points of interest, discussion and coding in research of this nature. As humans, we express so much beyond words on a page; for some of this, there may not even be vocabulary. I will never have a word or words to describe what I went through when my father suddenly passed away. It was a devastatingly transformative experience I could never convey on a page where I was an expert in twenty languages. However, you would get it if you saw me talking about it. It is in my eyes and my energy.

A Top-Level Code was created in NVivo for “PonderLogic Participant Behaviours”. It is a small collection of moments that stood out as something that may not happen in a typical interview. “Sign Offs”, “Pondering”, “Thumbs up”, “Tech issues”, and “Interruptions off camera” are just some of the Sub-Level codes created. Things said in the research clips that would be out of place in a standard interview also became of note upon review. As you read these, imagine a top BBC presenter interviewing a Prime Minister live and saying the following:

“I’m in a bit of a funny mood today, Lemmy from Motorhead [sad look off camera] ... There was a memorial for him last night, and it was streamed live on YouTube from the States, which is quite unusual” (WeZ, PLWN004).

" It might be a short one today because I have a flu. A student brought the flu to class on Wednesday and decided to give it to me. So, thanks for that student! [eyebrow raised to camera, tissue in hand, coughs]" (WeZ, PLWN007).

“Apologies for yawning; it’s the Easter holidays next week, and there’s a lot of assessments and all kinds of things going on at the moment [yawns]” (WeZ, PLWN012)

Of course, they could have been recorded again, but not doing another “take” for perfection was intentional. The students needed to feel they could hit record

and not worry about interruptions. Whether they be bodily, pets or other humans off camera. It needed to be relaxed and as natural as possible. I recall doing another take or two in the early clips when I was sticking to planned questions more than shared experiences. This was due to reading out prepared questions, which later became bullet points in the full study, as more experience was shared. They were one-take uploads, warts and all.

“I'm sure you noticed the theme in the background [ace of spades on speakers] ... RIP Lemmy. I was never really a massive Motorhead listener, but I was always into that sort of stuff, as you can see by the Pink Floyd poster behind me. Nevertheless, he was a very instrumental person in that field. But yeh, it seems like months ago that that happened now. But yeh. Signing off.” (Atlas, PLAH004).

Beginning a recording is easy. Name, date, time response. Ending clips was a familiarly awkward space to me, and eventually, in my clips, I began to say, “Keep Pondering” or “Thanks for Pondering”. The sign-offs of the participants were also interesting. I would go as far as to say it was the only moment of awkwardness or at least the most regular. The exact moment to stop recording and what the final word should be seemed to be a regular moment of great consternation. Mother, the older African lady, would always sign off in an unsure, timid tone, praying, “I hope it helps”. *Of course it does! You matter! Thank you so much!* I wanted to tell her each time but could not. Others were more rambling; “Yes, we're talking 20 minutes. [long pause] 4:00 in the morning, and I'm probably going to be awake for another hour. [pause] Yeah, that's it for this one. [pause] Just [clip ends]”, (Echo, PLEE012).



Fig 4.7 PLAH006



Fig 4.8 PLAH022

Atlas sometimes started clips by coming into an empty shot from underneath, pulling a face (Fig 4.7), and then launching into the responses as normal. In clip PLAH022 (fig 4.8), he comes on camera, uses it like a mirror, shakes his hair out and says, “F***’s going on there?” (Atlas, PLAH0022). Presumably, he meant about how his hair looked and not about what he was doing shaking his hair out on the recording. Imagine the prime minister in a BBC interview coming up into a shot like that, fixing his hair and saying those words. Moments like this were warming during the experiment as it told me they were comfortable being themselves and were not afraid to upload these moments as they were and not do another “better” take. Atlas did talk about being the class clown in an earlier clip, so maybe that was coming out a little, but at the same time, he could surprise both himself and me when pondering out loud: “Wow, that was deep. Proud of myself on that analogy. Emm Yeh”, (Atlas, PLAH005). He had been considering maturity and what some of the critical differences were now, compared to before attending university:

“Living on your own and having to pay bills and stuff sort of gives you an appreciation to how small you are in the universe. You always take these things for granted when you're little because you are just used to them happening. Like, em, having meals cooked for you and having clothes washed for you.” (Atlas, PLAH005).

My prompts in PLWN005 were very much about the path to University and very education-focused—nothing about the universe at large. There was one question amongst eleven about the person: “If you cast yourself back to then, and to where you're at now, what are the differences that you see in yourself? (WeZ, PLWN005). This one line of enquiry, amongst all the other bait, got a bite in Atlas’s subconscious stream and was reeled in. Had this been an arranged interview, I might have steered the conversation back towards that education focus and missed this nugget of universal wisdom that fell out of Atlas. Having the space to ponder out loud, uninterrupted, he also gifted us this:

“It's taught me that you can't just float by in life if that makes sense. You can't just float on top of the water and expect the tide to carry you. At some point, you're gonna inhale water and be drowned, so you've gotta

swim every now and then if you wanna get to somewhere” (Atlas, PLAH005).

After a pause, positive self-awareness flashes across his face:

“Wow, that was deep. Proud of myself on that analogy. Emm Yeh”,
(Atlas, PLAH005).

What Time to Ponder?

Within NVivo, a case was created to capture the time of the recordings. Students were prompted to begin each clip with the time and date as this was considered a potential point of discussion for comparing the PonderLogic method to arranged interviews. “Today is Wednesday 13th of January 2016. Time is 22:33” (Mother, PLMM002). Interestingly, most clips were recorded outside of working hours, after 5 pm up to midnight. Sometimes, it is even as late as 3am and 4am with Echo. By contrast, the arranged interviews happened during the polite, working day hours of 10:00 and 17:00. Professionally, arranging an interview at am, midnight, or even 10pm would feel like a completely unreasonable request. It would feel like putting the person out even more who is already giving their efforts freely. However, something about the PonderLogic method made it okay for the participants to ask about this unsocial timing *of themselves*. Sitting and recording in the wee hours or at the end of an already very long day seemed okay. It may also reflect a student's late hours versus a working professional in a nine-to-five job. It may also be Parkinson's law causing the students to push the completion of this short video task around the clock, well into the night, rather than having an arranged time for which they need to show up.

Another time-related quirk of the PonderLogic method is the ability to ask questions once but carry out research indefinitely for any number of people. As a researcher, I record one prompt clip and upload it. Any number of people with access can then respond anytime, anywhere. If the site was still up now, new people joining could respond to five-year-old clips, and they would have value. For example, PLAH007 and PLMM007 were recorded in March, one month after my PLWN007 clip from February 7th. After reviewing them, the later responses felt as fresh as the day mine were recorded. You can't tell. It is an

important logistical point to note as it is incredibly freeing. It also means the clips could be used again for new batches of participants in any part of the world and be set to release at a particular time.

Had I gone down the route of arranged interviews as the sole data capture method, it would have been almost impossible to capture 23 separate interviews with each participant and keep a full-time job down. It would have needed a team of people, which would have added further scheduling complications and costs. For example, it would have been noted in the following interview if something interesting, like finances, came up when reviewing the clips. Contact must then be made with all eight participants, and a convenient time and place schedule must be set for meeting when available. Then, this process would have had to be repeated 23 times over a term with eight different people to achieve the same number of outputs around their study and part-time work schedules. With PonderLogic, any thread could be pulled at any time, and a clip could be uploaded interviewing everyone at once and from anywhere. And I did not need a crew to achieve it.

What Place to Ponder?

My research clips were recorded in parks. On the London Tubes, in university classrooms, at home, in the office and on noisy streets. The street intentionally showed students in the media courses that production value was not an issue. You can do it anywhere. This would prove a technical and logistical nightmare. Places like The Shard, London Tubes or University campuses would require permission with a large camera or crew. I have worked for many years as a freelance camera operator with a lot of corporate and factual experience. I also teach non-fiction documentary filmmaking. The hunch to bring a moving image into this space comes from that experience and is also the reason for compassion. Using your mobile phone meant that the small handheld device went largely unnoticed in public as if you were Facetiming someone, which had become common. It also meant research could fit within the busy work schedule. Participant clips could be reviewed on the train from Bournemouth to London, and research responses could be recorded and uploaded on the tube. PLWN007 I am struggling with the flu and would have cancelled an in-person interview due to my energy levels and not infecting the other person. Recoding

a two-minute clip to a mobile phone that day meant the work could continue instead of a journey with a kit to a location and people being cancelled. Participants responded from their kitchens and lounges, but mostly their bedrooms, which are very personal spaces. Arranging a 3 a.m. interview in a student's bedroom would seem inappropriate to the point of never being seriously considered. However, these spaces are comfortable and private for the individual, potentially enabling the open and honest monologues that emerge.

Void of Ponder?

"Who are they talking to? Themselves? The Camera? Me" – (Logbook pg. 21). The most apparent difference in review and coding between both formats was the sudden appearance of the researcher's voice in the interview clips. Having been used to the pauses and breaks in the original 23 clips leading to some more exciting and honest insights, it was frustrating to hear my voice now filling those spaces. There was a duality of wanting to give space to respond but also being aware of needing to cover all seven questions for parity and then a top layer to make this all feel like a natural and flowing conversation each time. I remember, specifically with Atlas's interview, feeling like I had spoken the most and that maybe there was a tendency to fill the silences too quickly. Perhaps he could have spoken more each time, just a little longer on a pause. Or, I might be too critical of myself, having spent so much time with just their voices in the clips that I felt like an intruder to myself. It wasn't even the usual *hate the sound of my own voice* reaction. That was fine; it was more *Gah! Just let them talk! As I transcribed more of my own words, why didn't you let them explore that more?* If I had gone to the following research question on the list rather than delving further. This was not an issue in PonderLogic. Imagine interviewing somebody and having an entire week to think about your next question. That is what Ponderlogic was like.

On page 40 of the Logbook, an observation was made that "pondering alone allows Ed to get to these points. In a one-to-one interview, you might rush or interrupt". This was written in April 2016, and having conducted the interviews in 2022, I would now reinforce that and agree. The interview process felt like I was getting the most out of it. It was for the researcher; all my figuring out loud and

meanderings were the internal processes of all the digested data and research questions, finding purpose and conclusion. The structured interview did not feel like the best way to garner personal insights from the participants. Having conducted and seen many interviews over two decades in the industry, it was odd to feel like it was the inferior method by comparison suddenly. One format suits documentary or entertainment, perhaps. PonderLogic is room to listen to yourself; it is the shared figuring out loud of a perspective development through Didgeography.

Technical Issues.

" Ok, so let's try it again 'cause the first time was not working. It's working this time", (Beta, PLBH008).

"Eh, sorry, I just had to make a re-recording of this clip 'cause I couldn't find the one I already recorded" (Mother, PLMM017).

"Well... I've just sat here and spoke to this camera for about 16 minutes without pressing record. [laughs]" (Echo, PLEE001)

And again, in clip 14:

"I've just spent 15 minutes talking to a camera that wasn't recording. This is great, great stuff for someone who's studying media." (Echo, PLEE016).

"I've got to try remember what I said because, being the great media person that I am, sound guy, I had the wrong input on my audio, so just basically me mouthing off without sound; so yeh sorry, I'll try remember what I said now.", (Lavo, PLLOB013).

"Hello, so I just did a clip for the 9th response, and it didn't record because I'm stupid. So, it's annoying because I actually managed to say pretty cool stuff and it's just gone. So going to try to recreate that now. Em, It also is like it's scripted now because I'm trying to say again what I've already said. But, yeah, just gonna try to respond." – PLAA009.

That they felt the need to apologise for clips I would never see is fascinating. I would never have known if they had just recorded the clip without mentioning it, but it helped me appreciate their commitment to this project. They needed to record a clip, label it correctly and in sequence, ensure they knew exactly where it was stored (Mucha fell foul of this), and then upload it. Twenty-three times each. The effort from those who finished is humbling. Each clip offers a wealth of insight, and it is a daunting task to elaborate on the processes I engaged in analysing all 200 of them here. To demonstrate the depth of coding and thought processes engaged with on every single clip, a deep dive into just one might expose the layers of research value and mental gymnastics triggered by coding the perspective transformation phases (Mezirow 1978 – 1994) to the data along with gathering other potentially useful insights. Clip 13 from Echo was chosen for this demonstration to express the unique quality of PonderLogic.

“Oh, wow, I've just realised I have been talking for forty, nearly 40 minutes. Oh wow. I am so sorry [laughs]. I'm so sorry. You have to watch all this. I will wrap this up then... um.” (Echo, PLEE013)

Method Conclusion: Limitations and Future Directions

Binge Pondering was the first personally perceived limitation of the experiment as it ran. Holding on to the Tally and Zapper moments during the pilot, where they recorded without prompt randomly during their day, they felt like validation for the method of giving more beyond a structured interview. This sense of the full study failing is only dissipated fully when the data was deeply coded. It was quickly realised that the ponder monologues, beyond the questions asked was the real catch in the data fishing. The ones who had responded weekly like Echo for example, had not recorded outside of the prompts and that may have been down to how that was, or was not encouraged in the communications. They may not have known the research value of doing it. Every clip offered gave me so much to work with in relation to the method question, the perspective transformation exploration and beyond. Doubting it, looking back now, was my early researcher insecurities playing out. I still believe that there is a way to encourage spontaneous ponders outside of the research response clips by more open communication and expression of this as an intent. This is something to consider when developing the bespoke tool.

It's all moving images online now.

The pandemic of 2020 resulted in a massive uptake and reliance on video platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams for work and social purposes. We were locked in our homes and countries. A technology that was once the stuff of science fiction, a handheld device where you could hear and see another person on the other side of the planet in real-time, became the norm.

Production education continued, often to blank silent screens online. I did my job interview for LJMU online in pyjama bottoms with a shirt and tie up top. I also viewed Houses online and moved from Bournemouth, having only seen a moving image walkthrough. TV hosts were broadcasting from their gardens through tools and platforms available to the average person. PonderLogic, when it ran in 2015/16, was ahead of its time in that sense. There was a deep feeling of *innovation loss* with this new upsurge in videoconferencing and PonderLogic being *too late* now. However, the reflexive research query loop from participant to researcher - back to participant – weekly still feels innovative compared to a closed method like a video diary.

Why this is not just a Video Diary

What makes Didgeography and Ponderlogic different from video diary methods is the reflexive positioning of the researcher as part of the group generating data. The Didgeographic researcher shares the explored subject's lived experience and does not merely ask questions from the sideline. I believe this generates a different kind of data and a different kind of experience to the video diary methods used by leaders in the field, such as Pink (2007, 2012), Whiting (2018, 2014), Gauntlett (2006, 2011) and Rose (2015). In his 2014 article, Whiting writes about the researcher's not so "absent" presence within participant "videos". However, it discusses potential methodological issues, and I am championing it as a positive research design intention.

Zoom rather than face-to-face interviews

Pre-pandemic, choosing Zoom to record the five-year interviews might not have even occurred as an option, but it felt right in terms of the online nature of this Didgeographic experiment. The PonderLogic clips were recorded at home using

local technology, and it felt in line with the project to do the same now. There may also have been subconscious convenience at play regarding the logistics of neither the participants nor myself living in the same town anymore. However, this means that the comparison is limited regarding how a traditional industry-style interview setup would have gone compared to PonderLogic. That being myself as Interviewer/Director with a camera, lights, sound, and assistants travelling to an arranged place and time. “Traditional” felt a necessary distinction to make now as documentaries like the Netflix quarantine phenomenon “The Tiger King” (Chaiklin, Goode 2021) had a follow-up, watched by millions, called “The Tiger King and I” that was captured and streamed in this conference format. This would not have been accepted as a “broadcast standard” before the world shared its first quarantine of the digital age.



Fig 4.9 The Tiger King and I Netflix

It could also be argued that just one interview with each participant is not enough meat on the bones to chew down on the arranged interview format vs PonderLogic. Each of the arranged interviews, however, was 40 minutes. Arguably, there are equal outputs to code and certainly enough data within the context of this research. Craft-enhanced research also has a bearing here. I have been teaching students how to conduct interviews since 2005. As a professional, I have filmed, edited, and broadcasted hundreds of hours of live interview content in transmissions. The data here, coupled with my 25 years of experience in the Creative Industries, I would argue, are reasonable grounds to make an initial judgment with an awareness of the necessity for further experimentation if this aspect of the research was to be taken further to a paper publication, which is not the intention.

PonderLogic breaks the natural interview conventions of time and space. Similar to a video diary but different in the positioning of the reflexive research as part of the data generation group. In the early stages, as clips were reviewed, my logbook notes my excitement at how far beyond the questions being asked they were venturing when sharing their experiences. There was great research value in them thinking out loud, uninterrupted. Having some fun with words in the logbook, the phrase *Ponderlogician* was coined. An expert in, or student of pondering. And a mission statement to develop PonderLogic, a fun tool for students and educators to learn from each other weekly and feed into delivery (Logbook pg112). It helped me as an academic to understand the challenges that students were going through as well as their learning needs and career aspirations as I was teaching them. This fed into delivery, planning and my philosophy as an educator. For a time, before I left Bournemouth, my email signature read "Students first". There have been times that I wished I had PonderLogic available as a tool. For example, the term "stress" often comes up with students. If I had PonderLogic now, I could ask them to define that and discuss the difference between actual stress and feeling "responsibility, " which often reveals itself when unpacked in tutorials. How students were dealing with the pandemic at home was another time it would have been great to have the PonderLogic tool. These insights could inform students' mental health strategies and publishable research outputs. With the imagined time, the successful completion of this doctorate will free up, and developing PonderLogic as a Didgeographic tool is the next ambition.

4.6 The 13th Clip

Before delving into the complete data analysis, this sidebar is crucial to highlight the depth of insights and transformations possible in a single PonderLogic clip. I also express some internal processes triggered by being a new researcher, educator, programme leader, and sympathiser as a first-generation student, along with the coding process. One clip that stands out, even during the first review, as an important example of how rich this data method can be is Echo's thirteenth clip.

PLWN013

My 13th research prompt, PLWN013, is a clip that is 2:14 in duration. It was just after the Easter break, and I had been to Ireland for a few days. I speak about how people left school very young without finishing and worked in factories, fishing, or building sites. Then, I got on to a theme that had been asking for attention lately. During this write-up and conversations with first-generation peers completing doctorates, a common theme is bubbling that warrants further exploration later in the discussion. In my clip, I describe it as "the silence of it" (WeZ, PLWN013). That I was doing a doctorate, a lecturer, a programme leader, or accomplished things was never discussed when visiting home. There were many conversations about marriage, the weather, and how it was to live with the English, but the rest was silent. During the second minute of the clip, I pondered whether these first-generation students had also experienced it:

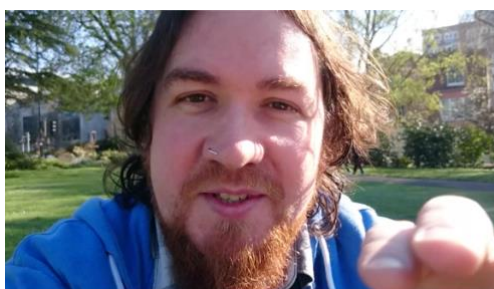


Fig 4.10 PLWN013

"I'm just wondering for you guys when you're, em with regards your parents, how is your relationship as far as talking about university and them understanding what you're doing goes?

Now that I've got you thinking about all this stuff, this trip home... did you see things a little bit differently?

Do you feel like, I don't know... I think about support, and because my parents never did this, they don't really know how to support it or get involved or kind of like... you very much feel like you're on your own. Emm I'm just wondering, do you guys have any of that going on?" (WeZ, PLWN013).

Taking a step back, I find it hard not to feel for myself in the clip. But it's okay! It is something I got used to two decades ago on my first course at Coláiste Dhúlaigh. We have a reversed Route 66 Effect here because real-life awareness impacted my experience before interacting with the clip. It was the first time I took stock of how lonely this journey can sometimes be. I would not have recognised a need for support from home when I was in Dhúlaigh, nor would I have known how to use it. Contact was from a pay phone on the rainy streets of Dublin once a week in the nineties. It was only through interacting with other students and families on the courses as a student and as a lecturer noticing it in the student body that the value of sympathetic home support was revealed to me. My tone is melancholy in the clip. Maybe this whole experience has led me to accept that. They would not know how to support it, having never been through it. Today, I would not have a problem creating and naming a coding strand for "similar to my experiences", "supports gut feelings on personal transformation", etc. But at the beginning, my own story, although omnipresent, was somewhat muted in earlier analysis through personal process policing and potentially being "rhetorical" (early EdD feedback).

Through a research design lens, PLWN013 is interesting. At no point during the taught phase did someone say, "When designing your research questions, share your most inner truths in a relaxed and open way as if talking to a close friend". Yet that is what we see in the clip. The "training" was usually quite sterile with dry academic positioning and the primary "avoid closed questions that invite *yes, no* responses". I would argue that this approach, using uncommon language to explore the common, might garner a performative response from a participant. This also became apparent in the final PonderLogic clips when Mezirow's definitions were directly shared with the participants. We explore this later in the analysis section. A person might want

to appear intelligent and to “get it” when faced with jargon-laden questions. This could lead to a performed response based on what the misunderstood terminology *might* mean, therefore tainting the data. The intention to share in this relaxed and open way was not driven by this depth of method critique at the time. It is on reflection now and in terms of how the style may have influenced the open and relaxed nature of the responses. It was a conscious effort to speak to participants on their level, because we are. The specifics of your research question do not have to be locked in right at the start of the project. Braun & Clarke touch on this when sharing that for reflexive TA, research questions can evolve, narrow, expand or sharpen as your analysis takes form (2022). I would take this further to moving past questions to shared experience and being guided by your research purpose over specific question design.

Another research design angle on this clip is to encourage engagement through format expression. At the point of upload, participants could share directly with me, privately, or in a common open space that only other participants would see. A next-level optimism for PonderLogic was for participants to upload to the open forum and respond to each other by sharing insights. Observing these interactions between participants might lead to further insight and transformation testing. This did not happen during the experiment, but I also needed to be more open about it as an option. PPP held me too far into an inobtrusive space not akin to my personality. The next time PonderLogic runs, we can adapt a more open conversation around these features without fear of data taint through my involvement. Didgeography champions the reflexive researcher as a crucial part of data generation. I arrived at this position, of course, only having been through this whole process. This and inspiration from new and emerging platforms could lift Didgeographic exploration. For example, BeReal is a social media app with 33.3 million active users and 6 million accessed the app daily in March 2023 (Curry 2023). Users of the app receive a notification day-to-day and have one minute to take a photo wherever they are. This is shared on the platform to capture “genuine” moments in life in opposition to the staged portrayals of “the good life” on Instagram. The habit of responding within a prompted time frame daily might be borrowed to capture transformative insights closer to their occurrence. This would need to be reasonably managed as well as, and not instead of the longer contributions.

Regarding the research engine driving the doctorate, the ponder strand in the clip came from figuring out if transformation is evidenced where the differences lie. Is it in what is not said? What is not acknowledged by people at home when you visit? These odd, in-between lands of minimising achievements in our old lives and feeling alien in our new? Mezirow described this as being dissociated from an organic relationship with society to move along the gradient of perspective transformation (1978b). To sit and rephrase this all, in an open research question, language did not feel natural. Like much of this experience, the tone in the clips developed naturally and through craft gut feeling. “If you can’t explain it simply, don’t explain it at all”, my participant Chalk offered once (Chalk, PLCD022A). Or, as I like to paraphrase now, *if you can’t explain it simply, simply don’t explain it*.

PLEE013

The participant responses ranged in duration from Atlas’s clip at 2:46 to Lavo’s at 6:32. Then there was Echo. Echo’s response here is a whopping 40:04! I should have been delighted. This was a big fish! But, the first pass would require watching, pausing, pondering, rewinding, pondering, making notes in the logbook and proceeding. Also, for the next stage, at that time, it would take me thirty minutes to transcribe ten minutes of footage, so it was going to take considerable concentration and effort. During my first pass, “This clip is important” and “Wow!” were scribbled excitedly in the logbook. Here’s why:



Fig 4.11 PLEE013

“Hello, this is Echo J Edge. It is the 14th of April 2016, and it is 2a.m.” (PLEE013).

The Ponder Layers of Clip 13

There are several layers to what Echo ponders out loud in the thirteenth clip and each of those ponder strands have several layers of research value.

Initially, he responds to the “latest prompt” and expresses how he misses home, his parents, brother, and cat, but it is not the same priority as it once was for him. From the two-minute mark onwards, he compares his motivations to go home or not to others around him. He expresses the variety in attitude from students who go home every single weekend, get their laundry done and get fed, “especially First years”, compared to those deemed “more independent”. This figuring out loud and positioning was vital as it began to feel like PonderLogic was potentially encouraging him to recognise social patterns or share them where he may not have previously. Echo never brought the topics within this clip up in the classroom or at social events, so they immediately stood out as something different being shared from him within the research clips.

“It’s very hard for me to be home for more than a week or two at the most because it gets too much because my dad in particular, unlike my mother, my dad does not understand what university is” (Echo, PLEE013). He says his mother is more open-minded but that his dad is old-fashioned, and this leads him to compare observations about support, mindsets and parochial pressures of an ex-girlfriend and an almost live commentary of a social media exchange on Facebook in the same vein.

Pondering Parochial Pressures in clip 13

Echo’s thirteenth clip has an emergent triangulation between three points of comparison. His position with regards to his own family. His position regarding an ex-girlfriend’s family dynamics and a Facebook exchange with a Roofer by trade. Echo moved around a lot when he was young. His dad was in the RAF, and they moved from the RAF base to the RAF base. (I learned this through PonderLogic). This led to him “having to make new friends on the fly for the time you were there or, or not if it was only for a brief period of time” (Echo, PLEE013). In some other clips, Echo is fascinated by people who have had only one home their entire lives and have never moved. This clip shows him figuring

out the cultural differences between past experiences and his current position and options.

The Cotswolds Girl Ponder Monologue

“One of my ex-girlfriends, for example, her family, all of them, her entire extended family, we're talking 20 plus individuals all lived in the same tiny village, the same tiny village of less than 300 people. And to me, that's crazy. I don't understand it. I mean, obviously, I understand it, but none of them want to just go, leave and just do their own thing. Because they all base what they do around their family, it's a totally different dynamic to anything I've ever been used to.” (Echo, PLEE013).

The family was based on the Cotswolds, and Echo's tone and body language as he expresses their village life suggests that we might be of *his* mindset, and we agree that it was odd. “I'm talking about where they lived in the same house for their entire life, and their parents lived in that house for their entire life, and their auntie lives across the road, and their grandma lives, you know, grandma lives two roads away.” (Echo, PLEE013). Echo's perspective is being tested, having moved around so much. Coding the data was always done with an awareness of potentially not being a perfect fit, but that would be explored in depth for suitability at the analysis stage. For example, positioning like this was coded to the perspective cycle for stages like “PT01 Disorientating Dilemma” or “PT02 '78 Self-examination”.

He then explains that nobody in her family had gone to university nor had the drive to do so and that they all worked in construction, labouring, or carpentry, but mostly stonewalling in the Cotswolds. When they were together, his girlfriend did come to University, but as Echo describes it, “she couldn't do it”. And that “it wasn't that she couldn't keep up with the work or anything; she couldn't handle being independent because she was so used to having that supportive family dynamic for so long. Like, there around her and then coming to university, she dropped out after the first term, which is not great. (Echo, PLEE013). The word “support” is interesting here because he later reveals that she dropped out due to lack of support from her family for her new life and

journey at University. So “support” in the context used here could mean “familiarity” or the lived “norm” of the village as an indirect sense of support through parochial living. Mezirow (1991) added “with feelings of guilt or shame” to phase two in 1992. So it made sense to code here when Echo considers his influence on the girl trying University:

“I don't know, maybe - because I kind of... I convinced her that she should come to university and experience being apart from that, that, and I still to this day don't know if that was the right thing to do. I mean, in my mind, I was sort of, you know, don't, don't - Don't allow yourself to be trapped by what your family expects you to do.” (Echo, PLEE013).

This moment was coded to “PT02 '91 Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame”. The family expectation that he was referring to, in his words, was that the women would get married and have babies by the age of 20. The men would become plumbers, carpenters or dry-stone wallers. And that's what they do. He expressed how they would argue, and both tried to explain their positions. In her small village, “This is what we do. This is just how we are.” and “Why have you got a problem with that?”. Echo's mindset was, “I don't see why you *don't* have a problem with that. Don't you want to explore your options? ... Are you content to live up to your family's expectations, have a baby at the age of 18, and be a Mum? Because that's what your mom did, and that's what all of her sisters did, and that's what your, your cousins are doing”. (Echo, PLEE013). It is difficult to discern from what is being shared how much of these mindset clashes happened out loud or if they were silent driving factors behind their cultural tensions. The girl was experiencing the domestic dichotomy of trying something new for yourself but being torn between the old and new life. That in-between space. He expresses certain family members going as far as turning on him for “taking her away” as well as discouraging and shaming her directly by saying things like “How can you abandon your family? How can you abandon our values? And how can you leave us here and go away?” (Echo, PLEE013).

As programme leaders, we are brought to yearly meetings to explain retention and progression figures. Students have often expressed “to be near home” as the reason for dropping out. As a programme leader, can we do anything about the strains an eighteen-year-old girl felt between her stonewalling village

heritage and the potential new life offered through engaging with the university? Maybe we can help by openly acknowledging these strains through discussion and support. Are there ethical issues considering a person from a tradition like that? These are just some of the research triggers coming out of this strand on top of analysing Echo's "problematic frames of reference" (Mezirow 1978a). Many codes were created and mapped beyond the ten phases of the transformation cycle (Mezirow 1978a – 1991). "Tension between the working class and university", "time away from home", or "PonderLogic leading to new thinking" are just a few examples. My journey is more akin to the Cotswolds in this strand. I empathise with the small-town thinking. It was a big deal for me to leave home. It felt like a true leaving in the sense that my Mam had been so against it for so long and was so upset and angry that she saw it as a failure on her part that I wanted to go rather than an achievement that I could. I did not leave home to further my education at the time. That came later in Dublin. Unlike the Cotswolds girl, I experienced a silence around education rather than her family actively "discouraging her from staying at university. And so, you know, to the point that she did-, she did quit. And lo and behold, she's had a baby! [he struggles to find words again for moments]" (Echo, PLEE013).

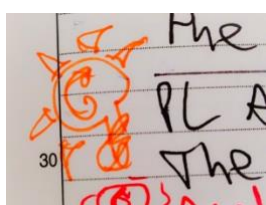


Fig 4.12 Logbook Lightbulb

Throughout my logbook, I would scribble a lightbulb near moments that felt important to explore further in the next research clip or for analysis threads later in the journey. "PonderLogic has made him see patterns" was noted on page 83 beside this bulb (fig 4.12). It may be more reasonable to acknowledge that PonderLogic has enabled him to share perceived patterns, but it may not necessarily have caused them. Echo does not just figure out loud his ex-girlfriend's situation. He also sees similarities with a guy on Facebook with whom he is arguing. He relates all of this to his journey but then becomes self-aware and brings a further layer of critical self-reflection into the 40-minute ponder monologue ("*Ponderlogue*"?). This moment happens just after he expressed that the Cotswold girl did drop out and go on to have a baby:

"I mean, maybe it's not fair of me to judge people based on that, their... based on what they hold to be more important. Obviously, some people

hold family as the most important thing and they'll do anything to, em, they'll do anything to remain positive in the family's eyes, you know what I mean?... I don't know; maybe it's just because I've not had a very contemporary, stereotypical upbringing. To me, that's poison, that's poison. So literally, it's, [gasp] it's almost cultish, in a way. (Echo, PLEE013).

Echo sees his meaning perspectives as separate from those of his ex-girlfriends, attributing that to their different upbringings. That's a massive thing for a 19-year-old to think through, and I have the privilege of watching it happen. "PT03 a critical examination of sex-role assumptions and sense of alienation from taken for granted social roles and expectations" (Mezirow 1978a) was coded against here along with threads like "PonderLogic causing reflection" and "perspective changing". This began to feel like a real issue early in the research. A more subtle and growing dilemma than the stand-and-shout moment of Tally's clip (PPTLXTRA) when he expressed having enjoyed school, but equally derailing and disorienting. *What if I am causing the perspective change that I am supposed to be observing?* At the data-gathering stage of the process, this was not fully unpacked and was in equal opposition to the dynamic sense that PonderLogic was also important. On page 84 of the logbook, during the overall summary notes having reviewed all thirteenth clip responses, it was excitedly scrawled that "PonderLogic (PL) as a tool is needed" and "PL as a tool helps them to see patterns in the world and change". There is also a note that there is "something about the layers to EE013. Ed had been engaging weekly rather than binging. Was this a factor in the depth of reflection he was expressing? This was PonderLogic working as it had with Tally and Zapper's extra clips, as Ed divulged an online interaction just an hour before he recorded.

Ponderlogue: A recorded, prompted, uninterrupted, out-loud self-reflective ponderings monologue.

The Facebook Roofer Ponderlogue

Echo's thirteenth clip is a forty-minute Ponderlogue that carries many dimensions and insights beyond what you might expect in a pre-arranged and structured interview. At its most basic, you do not expect an interviewee to

speaking for forty minutes without an interviewer interjecting with further questions or steering. At its most surprising and intriguing, Echo allows himself to “go off on a bit of a tangent”, which ends up being entirely on point relating to the prompt for the thirteenth response. That being observations of tensions between the *old life perspectives* at home and *new life perspectives* at university. What he says next has method value in capturing moments closer to their occurrence: “Something that happened about an hour ago. I was talking on Facebook to my, a friend of mine who is a freelance photographer. And yeh, this guy! This guy! Who comes out with some, some- stuff that, as currently a freelancer in the media industry, makes me angry. And it wasn't even actively discussing my field... well, let's just look at some of these comments emm” (Echo, PLEE013). His face becomes lit, and the white square of the browser fills his pupils as he clicks, but we do not see the desktop facing out into his bedroom from our position. It would be highly unusual for someone to do this in a professional interview scenario. There is a level of comfort and sharing that is hard to imagine outside of this format. It also highlights some of the freedoms that Didgeography affords.

The participant can engage technology as an extension of recall and immediately bring up an online social media exchange to enhance reflections in the research context. Echo is in no rush as he reads back to the exchanges, recounts “this hour-long Facebook argument” and self-critically “Is there anything more pathetic?”. A first observation here is about social media itself. I turned 46 on May 10th 2024, and I feel relatively young regarding how and who I am. But, regarding technological developments, I feel pretty old recounting my days in Coláiste Dhúlaigh training on VHS tape cameras and physically cutting audio with a blade. This generation of students has grown up with the internet and social media platforms. Ed also demonstrates criticality in calling the online argument “pathetic”, even though he engaged with it. He flips between this critical mode and relays the conversation while exploring the socio-cultural layers before tying it back to the research prompt and personal experiences.

Ed's friend is a freelance photographer, and this all started when a “guy” commented about “people with cameras at metal gigs... metal is spelt with two tees” (Echo, PLEE013). Pointing out the misspelling seems odd at first but has a payoff later in the saga as Echo expresses, “That's one, that's one thing!

People who come to university and people don't... the grammar is instantly a thing that you can see" (Echo, PLEE013). Beyond the creative industries subject of the programme, Echo makes several observations about the online exchange that make a university student stand out against those who have not studied:

"...with no prior information, just looking at that conversation, you can tell which person went to university... It's not a matter of who's smart and who's not as smart. It's not a matter of who's got a job and who's got a better job... It's a matter of who's actually thinking consciously about what they're saying and how they're presenting their side... It's a matter of who's actually thinking critically. Thinking about things differently". (Echo, PLEE013).

This prompted an interesting ponder strand to explore throughout. *What other areas, beyond the creative subject matter, evidence transformation in a person who has engaged with the university? What are the areas of tension?*

The Roofer provocateur begins by expressing frustrations on Ed's friend's Facebook page about being at concerts in small venues and photographers getting angry for people bumping into them. Fans who have paid for their tickets are there to "mosh around". People with expensive kit should be in the bigger venues protected by barriers. Ed's friend responds, "You can't put a barrier there just for photographers, and photographers need to move around". Echo is visibly scanning the screen as he scrolls to share with us, "And you know, oh yes, 'photographers are the reason you're aware of how your favourite band looks live' and stuff like that." (Echo, PLEE013). The exchange goes back and forwards about how poor it would be to take pictures from the back of the smaller venue, with Edie chipping in that it would be tough to get paid and keep their job with that kind of quality photo and then comes the catalyst for both sharing this incident and the important reflective positioning it leads to. The roofer eventually retorts with this: "Then maybe get a real job instead of freelance photography". (Echo, PLEE013). This, of course, fanned the flames; Ed's friend posted a lengthy statement about how photography is essential for music promotion, to which the guy responds, "It's not a job, it... [pause for the spelling mistake] ... "it" a hobby. Some people just get paid for it because they

are good at it.” (Echo, PLEE013). The tone of media somehow not being a “real job” is a common thing we deal with. Exchanges like this also stir old “Mickey Mouse Degree” agitations that steered my early essays on the EdD taught phase.

The Roofer responds heatedly, “I’ve got a job... I’ve been a roofer for ages... tell me how ASDA needed that university degree so you could use the self-checkout every day”. Here is where it gets deep in terms of the perspective awareness demonstrated in Echo’s Ponderlogue:

“...this draws a perfect parallel, like in my eyes, between my friend, the freelance photographer who is a local and went to school with this guy. But now, they both grew up here; they have both lived in Southampton their entire lives. She decided to come to university, she didn’t leave home, she stayed at home, but she went to university, and she pursued a career she wanted to. And this guy, this guy, self, admittedly in his own words, became a roofer because that’s what his dad did, and that’s what his uncle did, and it’s a good, solid, steady job.”

Once he has shared, Echo takes on the role of researcher and notices patterns between Facebook Roofer Guy and the Cotswolds Ex. *As Echo analyses these exchanges through the research lenses, where am I? Analysing the analysis?* These meta layers, although squint-inducing, are the fun of engaging with the PonderLogic research tool. There are always surprises and insights. Layers within layers, and then we get to step back and add a top-level layer for reviewing coding and writing this up. Then there is you, the reader—the dream, within the dream, within the dream, *Inception*-style (Nolan 2010). Echo then explores the grey areas regarding the attitudes between people who have been to university and those who have not. Like his friend, the freelancer:

“she’s a first-generation student. Her parents have never been to university, and this other guy who’s making these comments he’s never pursued it. And you can just tell, like his attitudes, his attitude, the way he formulates his, his argument is really, mirrors the same attitude and tactics almost that I used to see in the ex-girlfriend I was talking about earlier.” (Echo, PLEE013).

Echo has spoken in this clip about his dad not getting university and about his ex's family going further than just not getting it, to actively discouraging it. Now, he is expressing some of the negative social exchanges encountered because of not just choosing to go to university but also for deciding on a creative pathway. For my purposes, these drops began many ripples in the research pond: *Do creative students live in a perpetual state of perspective transformation stage one, a "disorientating dilemma" (Mezirow, 1978a -1994) due to the negative connotations around media education? Is it evidence for, and does it confirm, the value of phase four, "Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared, and others have negotiated a similar change" (Mezirow, 1991 -1994)? Is there something inherent in students who choose creative pathways that would not follow the norm and break heritage patterns? If so, does that make us more susceptible to transformative experiences?*

Echo "deduces" that Roofer Guy and Cotswolds Ex are probably from a similar family dynamic. He admitted he's a roofer because his family, his dad and his uncle are roofers. It was how he was brought up and Ed expresses feeling sorry for him. She was from a family of labourers, builders, and drystone wallers. Thinking back in the clip, he remembers at one point, she did say to him, just before they split " , "Why don't you get a real job?". This was his first year of university, and he had just started his freelance business and started working independently on projects in media. "And to people from that kind of heavy, heavily physical, labour-based jobs, anything that you... anything that doesn't make you sweat or give you blisters isn't a real job, you know." (Echo, PLEE013). This constant negative messaging might impact students' meaning perspectives and mental health over their time with us. As educators and programme leaders, it begs the question: *How can the negative domestic and societal tensions for first-generation students be considered in creative education design and delivery?*

Wow! What is “normal”? a Ponderlogue revelation

“At one point someone, someone called him out on his terrible, terrible grammar and spelling and he goes ‘it’s not my fault. I am dyslexic’... dyslexic spelt wrong by the way” (Echo, PL0013).

This moment of the clip was both surprising and humbling. Reflecting on Roofer Guy’s coming out as dyslexic, Echo leans on the harsh side of this as being something that you “work on” once you are aware. He acknowledges that it may not be easy, but then you make an effort to double-check and use a spell checker. To take action. “you know, literally he’s saying, it’s not my fault. I have dyslexia, I can’t help it.” (Echo, PLEE013). As he expresses this, it comes across as potentially unfair. Still, he addresses this himself and admits he does not know a whole lot about it and that maybe he is being unfair to people with dyslexia. Watching the clip, wondering where this perspective may be born from, Echo shares *this* for the first time:

“When I was very young, when I was 11 years old, I was told I have a learning disability. I was told I have, I was told I have Asperger’s. Now, that’s not something I talk about. I don’t talk about that because, to this day, I don’t know if that’s correct or not. And I don’t want to know because I never want to be one of those people who says it’s not my fault because I am this way. Because you are who you... you... you... [gasps] I just... from that day on, I just try my hardest to fit in. To learn. To just be normal.” (Echo, PLEE013).

This was my second year working with Echo at Solent as a lecturer in Creative Industries. I was also his tutor, and we had been through many meetings regarding career options and a few personal ups and downs for him over the years. Echo, potentially having Aspergers, never came up in the classroom, personal tutor meetings or any social or industry events we attended. This led to a “wow!” being captured in the logbook on the first review.

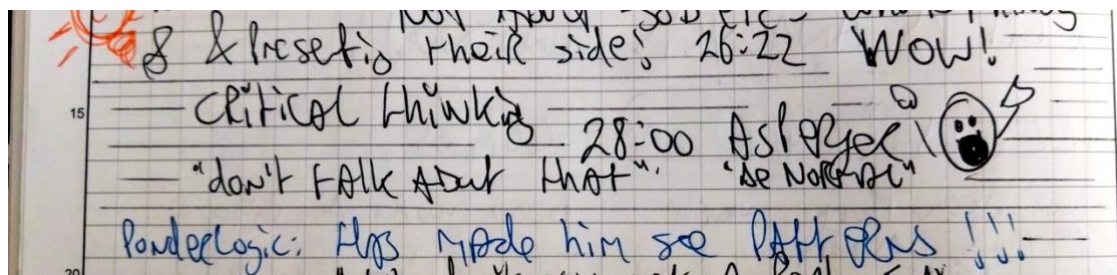


Fig 4.14 Logbook Wow! moment

There were many reasons for this physical, stand up, excitement. As a single clip, it validates the suitability of the data to support this thesis. This one clip incorporates elements found across all of the others in part. It felt like there was truly something different in this stream of conscious method of expression versus arranged and structured interviews. It was confirmation that the intended safe space for participants to share openly and honestly had been achieved. He admits that he does not talk about it, yet he was talking about it here in PonderLogic. Once he shared this in the recording, he had the option not to upload it, but he did, and I am grateful to him.

Clip 13 deals with what Mezirow (1978) and Freire (1970) referred to as meaning perspectives. We can see Echo figuring out the word through his personal position, but his position does not seem as fixed as Cotswolds Ex and Roofer Guy. This may be because he moved around a lot when he was younger, but it also may have been enhanced through the creative industries education he was experiencing. Although they moved around a lot, his dad's perspective was fixed "and his idea of university is, it's just the same as college. It's the same as school. And it's not... you can't explain it. Because he just doesn't understand, you know, you can explain it to the blue in the face, and it's still... he will stick to his opinion of it." (Echo, PLEE013). Mezirow's phases of perspective transformation include phrases like a critical assessment of assumptions, self-examination, or reintegration on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow 1978a -1994). Criticisms of Roofer Guy blaming his neurodiversity and not double checking grammar and spelling mistakes seem to come from a position of conscious effort not to be defined by an Asperger's diagnosis Echo received at a young age. This diagnosis clearly caused a significant shift in his meaning perspective. It leads him to ponder societal expectations further:

“...because what is normal? There is no such thing as normal. If you were normal, that would be weird because no one's really normal. But, some people are so obsessed with this idea of normality and what is normal and what is abnormal and what is a normal job and what is an abnormal job, what is a weird job. It's, um, again, it's just people not thinking”. (Echo, PLE013).

The value of thinking, not thinking. Pondering, not pondering. There is something about this ponder space that may have added developmental and therapeutic values for those who engage with it.

Closing of the 13th clip: PonderLogic as therapy

Many additional codes, 37 references, were created and coded outside the Perspective Transformation Cycle within NVivo (see Fig 4.14 below).

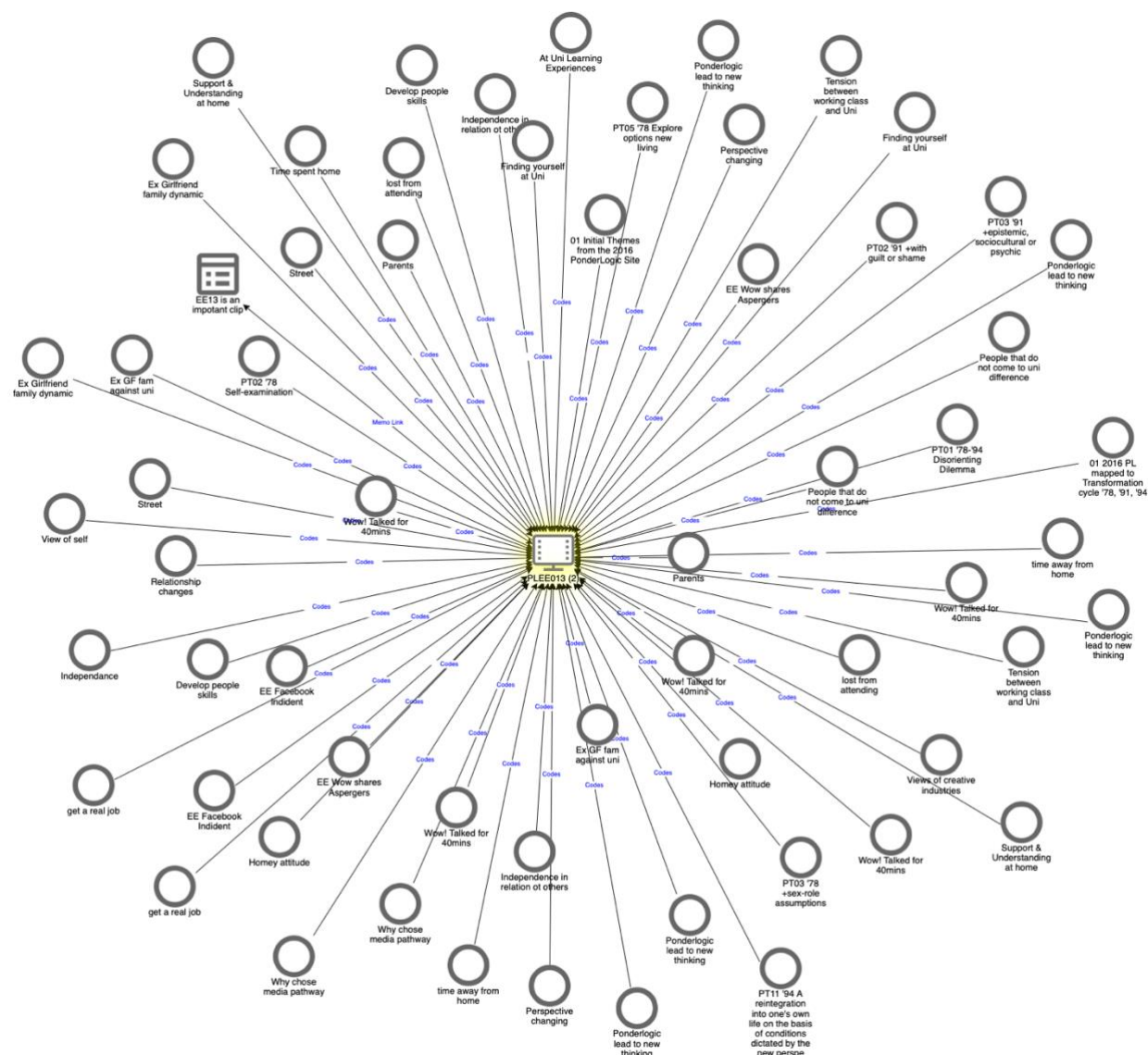


Fig 4.13 NVivo Coding Diagram from PLEE013

How more street-wise students suddenly mingled with more protected students in halls of residence. Class issues may be impacting attitudes towards “real jobs”, etc. What “support” might mean from parents who may not *get* university for students trying to be independent anyway. Something worth touching upon before heading into the full data analysis section is the therapeutic nature of this thirteenth clip and the whole experience. Echo shares that he saw a counsellor for a few months the previous year. He states that they didn't do anything in particular but just talked. “We just talked about stuff, kind of like I'm talking about now”. (Echo PLEE013). He makes a comparison to PonderLogic. Interestingly, early in the clip, he says that they talked for forty-five minutes out

of his day, and then he goes on to speak in this clip for just over forty minutes. He shares that:

“saying it out loud you take this jumbled up mess that's in your head and you put it in a straight line and you can see, you know it's, it's helpful. Coming to university and talking as part of this Ponderlogic study – Thingamajig - it's actually just made me think a lot more about - it's made me think. Made me ponder, it's made me ponder about a lot of things. Because I guess um talk- just talking about it, even just to a camera is, is really therapeutic, and helps you come to your own understanding.”
(Echo, PLEE013).

This was a surprise and not something I fully appreciated at the time. It felt important, but having never experienced therapy, it was hard to relate. The researcher in me, of course, noted its importance as a research thread to pull later. Last summer, having gone through a period of depression after my father passed, I was lucky enough to have a great therapist recommended by a work colleague. It was a truly transformative experience and began a journey I will never end now, knowing the value of regular check-ins with your mental health. It gives me a whole new perspective on what Echo shared in this clip and what it meant to share it. Upon deep reflection now, I feel a new depth of personal awareness, even sharing this experience with you, as Echo shared with me. There must have been therapeutic benefits for me as a working-class, first-generation student and educator in what these participants expressed. There is an unacknowledged loneliness to achievement and leaving a life behind that was powerful enough to draw Cotswolds Ex back home and for Roofer Guy to never even try. A loneliness that has reached an all-time peak as this thesis reaches 60,000 words on a warm, May 29th bank holiday Monday. Most friends and family with “normal jobs” are at music festivals, on weekends away with kids, or blissfully doing nothing as I type this line, hiding from the sunshine. This might be sad if it were not for the passion and transformative energy that brought me to this moment, from following Sir Ken Robinson to the Learning Without Frontiers conference in London in 2012. It has been a journey of loss and gains. Relocations and breakups. A sentiment fully shared with Echo when he finally expresses in the closing of the thirteenth clip:

“If I hadn't have come to university, there is a big chance I'd still be with that ex-girlfriend... [long pause] and that's a horrifying thought to me now... If I had not come to university, I would still probably be in that area, and I don't know what I'd be doing... I would probably, probably would have gone into drystone walling. But um, but I did, I did come to university” (Echo, PLEE013).

And... so did I.

05 Data Analysis

How the Data was Analysed.

This section looks at the journey from data analysis beginnings towards rigour. This research assumes that the students are honest in the clips. Hunt (1990 cited by Stewart 1998) proposes that truth is what is right to believe, provisionally and critically, based upon our best means of understanding the reality of the subject at hand. Without this core premise, PonderLogic would not work and is, arguably, a limitation. A limitation of all qualitative research, even Mezirow's study in the 70s, is the assumption that participants are truthful in their responses. If this research had been conducted from afar, living in London and still working in industry, the data would feel very different compared to the shared daily experience of working with the students on their programmes. The perceived "honesty" in the Ponderlogues is supported by having observed the participants interact socially at events, professionally in the field and as students in the classroom. Interpretation becomes more defensible internally, and theory should grow from these tested roots.

My own clips and position were not featured as part of the original pilot analysis and transfer discussion the way they are now. This is evidence of both early Personal Process Policing (PPP) in the fledgling apprentice and a more developed research confidence now having been through the journey, perhaps. Or maybe it is an over-attempt to avoid what Robson cautions as the difficulty of achieving objectivity with a group if you are native to it (Robson 1996). There may be times when I might demonstrate an empathetic interest towards specific experiences conveyed, having also been a first-generation undergraduate. Still, these things can only influence query, not response. The reflexive researcher is aware of their position in relation to generating the data (Braun & Clarke 2022). Sometimes, a research clip might have five or more queries posed, and a participant recording might address just one, then stream consciousness aloud for ten minutes. They usually apologise for rambling, but mining these Ponderlogues sometimes led to gold. The multiple layers of the data analysis and techniques employed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) alleviate bias concerns and promote a professional, exploratory approach. In other words, *All data is treated equally* in deep analysis. In recognising where familiarity biases may lie, I believe it adds a layer of rigour that may not

otherwise exist as I also tested the relevance of a code against my own experience and the broader research context. Bias awareness also pushes you to probe and test close concepts further than most to ensure that you can stand beside them in scrutiny. With every analysis you make, you can always take another step back and analyse that analysis ad infinitum. This also led to a mid-journey revelation that other researchers could look at the Ponderlogues and garner completely different information and hypotheses from the same data. This exciting thought leads to daydreams of revisiting Mezirow's 70's data with current methods and technologies. Time is also a gift in this study as space to ponder the findings and multiple reviews of the Ponderlogues have given the work value and rigour. I have worked on this data for years. There were many depths to the full study codes, and much shared to track and organise them against. Logistically, although an essential introductory step into coding, it became apparent early in the main study that Microsoft Word would not be a sufficient tool to track and manage the data.

5.1 First Steps: Coding with Microsoft Word and QuickTime Player

During the pilot, a pattern-matching system was devised to investigate the initial clips. Pattern matching begins with existing theory and tests its adequacy in explaining the findings (Yin 2018). Coupled with guidance from Saldana (2013), Bouma and Ling (2004) on data "coding", I had devised what now seems like quite a crude system. "Coding" was a term familiar to developer colleagues building online content and apps. For our purposes in this research, coding means a system for identifying, naming, and grouping themes. You will notice in the table (see Fig 5.1) that at this early stage, only Mezirow's 1978 version of the ten phases of perspective transformation was used. This lacked the critical examination thinkers in the field, such as Taylor (1997), Kucukaydin and Cranton (2012), champion as necessary for the field to progress. Examiner feedback from the transfer viva stage indicated that more critical engagement with Mezirow would enhance my work. Examining how the phases changed between 1978a and 1994 and critical application in this full study begins to address this gap in the field.

Mezirow's Ten Phases of Perspective Transformation (1978a)		Participants:				Total:
		TL	ZR	LO	EE	
Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma		05a,	06,		2
Phase 2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame			06	01,	2
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions		05a	06	01,	3
Phase 4	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change					
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions	04,	05a	06,	01,	4
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action		05a	06,	01,	3
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans	04	05a	06,	01,	4
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles	04	05a	06,	01,	4
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships	04	05a,	06,	01,	4
Phase 10	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective					

Fig 5.1 Early Pilot Coding Strategy

Figure 5.1 shows four of the twenty-two pilot participant clips mapped to the ten phases. The numbers in the chart correspond to the last two numbers of the participant clip; the individual's identifier is in the top row. TL is Tally Larby, ZR is Zapper Reynolds and so on. The process was to use Microsoft Word alongside QuickTime to review and transcribe the clips. Within the word transcripts, a coding language was developed. Even at this early stage, themes and patterns beyond searching for empirical evidence of the transformation cycle began to take on codes:

Within the transcripts [P + number = phase of Mezirow's (1978) 10 Stages.

[P1] = Phase 1, **[P2]** = Phase 2 and so on.

Emerging themes took on the following codes:

[FMIM] - Finding Motivation In Media

[LMPM] – Lack of Motivation Pre-Media

[PEP] – Problematic External Perspective

[PP] – Proud Parents

[PPS] – Performed Poorly at School

[PT] – Perspective Transformation

[STB] – Small Town Background

[WCB] – Working Class Background

[WP] – Widening Participation

This is how it looks within the transcripts. Notice the **[bold codes]**:

TC:	Dialogue:	Notes:
00:00:00	Hello! It's 8am on April the 12 th emm I have been awake for a very long time. I spent most of yesterday [P5, P7, P8] filming for a friend of mine and most of the evening and this morning rearranging a piece of classical music for solo piano on, into... something that 'e 'eff rearranging it to use two flutes, harp and a string section. So 'em... yesss. But emm	
00:01:08	In terms of, as a first-generation university student, its emm, I think like my parents are quite happy (questioning tone) about it. Like, I think my mum, shes' quite em I guess, comes across as [PP] proud, which is really nice, it's very nice t', nice t'like hear that my Mums happy about like, what I'm doing with my life that'mm actually... [P9] working making contacts and sort of doing my own thing in the world. Which is, its nice to see... it's nice to see someone viewing it like that	
00:01:49	As opposed to my Dad, who's view is more sort of emm... Not to say that they aren't supportive at all, my parents have been incredibly supportive, including my Dad. I just think his viewpoint is more, [PEP, P2] "well what's the point, what are ya gonna do with your degree, why don't you go out and get a proper job " and its sort of like... that's the point, I-I guess in one way, like... I'm already doing that kind of work, just, in a way y'know an' em... but uhh, yeah! For-that's like in their perspective...	
00:03:29	Becoming um, [PT] changing my outlook on things in a way, which it has done. [P9] Certainly become a lot more professional in my work ethic and standard of work I think, over the past three years and um... emmm...	

Fig 5.2 PLPEE00001 Transcript with code 1

As crude as this (see Fig 5.2) now seems, it provided a way to understand the thinking processes behind coding. This was new to me. To not just think a research nugget is exciting but also label it in terms of why it is interesting and arrange it in response to your research question. Coding, when done a certain way, also leaves an audit trail so that any query about this presentation can be investigated for accuracy and rigour. The handwritten notes achieve this to an extent, but depth is needed. For example, an interesting line in the notebook cannot be touched to reveal related lines from other participants and connect beads of relevance in this research web. Within myself, I can see it all. Like photographs, any written lightbulb or insight opens Indra's net of connections to this research story within me. Not so easy to share. *The map is not the territory*. But tools of expression are better than no map at all and can at least begin the direction conversation.

The PonderLogic Logbook.

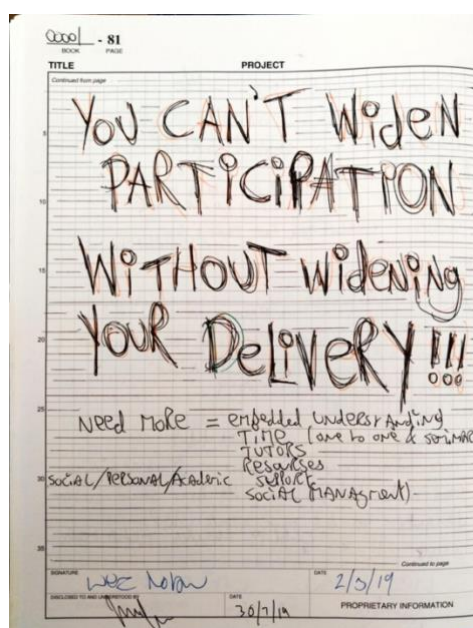


Fig 5.3 Logbook pg81 Insight

As the experiment ran during term time, word was used (see Appendix 5.1) to make notes on the clips and prepare potential questions for the following research clip. The next stage was to sit with all 200 clips and review them again with notes in a single place. In 2015, I bought a large, green, hardback scientific notebook with part of my small research grant at Solent. It has "PonderLogic Log 2015 - 2016" engraved on the front. It has become a trusted companion throughout this journey. Some days during this write-up, there are often two screens open, the first

with the document in Word, the second with NVivo and the Logbook open on the desk. That is how I work. The intention with the log was to now really look through the perspective transformation lens when reviewing *all* the participant clips and note any ideas or revelations revealed. The actual value of the logbook only becomes apparent when writing up now as there are personal insights, stresses, and wins captured on the pages that act as time capsules to aid this written expression of a complex journey. *Why not use Word again?*

Something to touch and flick through felt important. Pen-to-paper writing always felt better if I was writing poetry, lyrics, or brainstorming previously, so it may also have been a way of inviting the creative side of myself to collaborate with the fledgling researcher side. On reflection, it may have also been an attempt to do *something* not on the screen in a profession swarmed with them.

The Logbook process was to go through each of the participant responses one by one, bullet pointing the key insights, different coloured pens to paper, and then to capture overall “thoughts from clips” before moving on to the next batch in the series. These overall thoughts have become a treasure trove for this and future publications. It is a montage of lightbulb moments, frustrations, challenges, ambitions and more. It maps the DNA of the educator, researcher, and programme leader I have become since starting this journey working as a transmission controller in London. My handwriting is terrible, a hangover from resisting the brutal Christian Brothers fountain pen joined writing lessons torture, and my optimism naive at times. Still, the logbook serves as an important marker of research apprenticeship milestones. The gut process strategy was thoroughly reviewing and summarising all the PonderLogic clips within the notebook before trying out new digital software. The end of that Logbook review stage is captured on pg.102:

“Sad that there’s only six at the end. I can imagine hundreds of responses. Will I be challenged on the 6??? I am the 7th? Framing is important... the data feels good. The intention great. But is it enough for a doctorate?” and “how do I code? So many angles? One clip at a time? One research interest across all???... phase 2... coding now = daunting!!!”

And on pg.112:

“On to NVivo... Argghhhh – coding! Do I have to transcribe everything? Or just my codes? Interesting bits? How long will a clip take?” Do I do a full-person one by one? Or all question by question?”

5.2 Next Steps: From Microsoft Word & Logbook to NVivo & RTA



Coming from two decades of experience in moving image postproduction software to NVivo, it was decelerating. It might perform better on PC, but the dreaded spinning beachball made regular hauntings on Mac. This was surprising given how well the machines perform with 4K footage in Adobe Premiere Pro, After Effects or Davinci Resolve. Today, May 31st, 2023, a one-time individual purchase of NVivo Non-academic costs £1671. A one-time purchase of the academic version is £835 (Lumivero 2023). This cost is way out of my reach, but Bournemouth University and Liverpool John Moores offer it free to staff and students. Another life advantage afforded me through education that I would not otherwise have. It also highlights the financial burden of academic research on top of the emotional and intellectual costs. The NVivo software allows you to bring in most types of files, moving images, audio, photos, documents, etc. and to “code” or label specific segments of the materials.

This now meant that clicking the code for Perspective Transformation (PT) Phase 1: Disorienting Dilemma” within the PDF of Mezirow’s 1978 paper would appear along with all the quotes from the student participants that felt pertinent. Further clicking any of those quotes would bring you to the clip with playback options for the section. This was a massive leap from switching between Microsoft Word and QuickTime Player at the pilot stage. By comparison, data could be observed at macro and micro levels at a touch, even if it did feel slow. The software also opened new options. Text searches across the clips could be carried out. Word frequency searches were engaged with, and diagrams were created. Braun and Clarke (2022) show examples of thematic analysis being carried out with post-it notes and highlighters. I would need a mansion and would have lost them all, moving 6 times across four towns for career progression. It is hard to imagine this research without the NVivo software now. For not just the obvious reasons, it would be hard to post-it note moving image clips. But, you could work with paper transcripts of the clips, as a documentary director might, before heading to the editing stage. Then, use notes and highlighters that way. But even then, the journey layers would be complex to track over time, and my craft forbids working with no backup. *If it does not exist in three places, it does not exist at all.* Encrypted backups of my NVivo project

currently exist in four places. Two digital and two physical, at separate locations... in case of fire! The nearest imagined version of that with Post-it notes and paper might be to take photos, but that would be a digital housekeeping nightmare at this scale. As you will discover as we go on, if each coded reference were to be a physical note, it would result in the hundreds.

Coding within NVivo

The first stages of coding felt like moments of interest. Interesting in relation to the ten perspective phases (Mezirow 1978-1994). Interesting with regard to the student's journey. Interesting in relation to the method vs produced interviews... Interesting for me, being Irish, learning about the UK school systems... things to take back to the classroom... their moods... time of day... pauses to ponder... sign-offs... introductions... binge vs weekly... and so on. These then, in the later stages, became broader themes. It is like zooming out from street level, through city, country, continent, and space to reveal the pale blue planet on goggle earth finally. For example, all these codes now under "Path to Media HE" in Phase 4 were floating individually in Phase 3. They now had a city, and later a country level and upwards and outwards...:

✓ ○ Path to Media HE	80
○ Bad Parents	2
> ○ Chance inspiration	11
> ○ College first	4
○ college made pick	2
○ Creative interest	13
○ Foundation	1
○ Lack of technology	0
○ Negative impressions of uni beforehand	4
> ○ negative schooling	3
○ Not knowing what tot do after school	6
> ○ Positive schooling	0
○ Pre-uni worx exp	5
○ Prepared or underprepared (Background)	5
> ○ Previous employment	5
○ UCAS application	5
○ wanted to be somthing else pre-uni	2
○ Why chose media course	12

Fig 5.4 Top Level Code and Sub Layers

"Path to Media HE" (fig 5.4) is now a "top-level code" in NVivo terminology. A theme to us. It is aggregated, so even when closed, we can see that the number of references currently sits at 80. The reference numbers mean that something a participant shared warranted the creation of a code. Then they either shared something that mapped to that point again themselves, or another

participant shared something that felt relevant, so it was also mapped. Below the top-level codes are the “sub-codes” in NVivo terminology. Some of them, “Chance inspiration” and “creative interest” (Fig 5.4), are further grouped.

The workday looks like this: underneath the video clip within the software is your transcription broken into sections and timecoded. How much text and when the sections break are up to you as you transcribe. You can right-click the highlighted transcribed text and choose the codes you have already created from the dropdown list that appears or create a new one. You can also drag and drop highlighted quotes over to the coding folders. This would become the preferred method as the coding progressed into the hundreds, and the dropdown became un-scrollable. Dragging and dropping too quickly summons the beachball. Doing this often requires the software to be closed to refresh. This can be nerve-racking if you have been working a lot and the system freezes. Once you acclimate to these slowdowns, the software comes alive when the data is prepared and coding completed. For any of this to work, however, it comes down to the time and care you take to transcribe your data as the first step.

Transcribe yourself.

One of the reasons qualitative research tends to use smaller samples than, for example, questionnaire data becomes apparent when doing the work. The reading and rereading of data is incredibly time-consuming, even if done well. It is tempting to skip over this phase or be selective. Braun and Clarke (Braun and Clarke 2006) strongly advise against it, and I would include transcribing the data as an essential part of phase one: data familiarisation (2006). Here’s fledgling me talking to emerging me in the Logbook pg112:

Q 2019 WeZ: Do I have to transcribe everything? Or just my codes? Interesting bits?

A 2023 WeZ: Yes. Always transcribe everything. It brings you even closer to the data and you notice different things as every pass of the data has a slightly different focus.

Transcribing makes you really focus on the language used, tones and phrasing. In terms of the codes, you only had the ten phases when you asked that question. Hard to imagine when you posed that question but your actual codes amounted to hundreds in the first pass. Also, what was “interesting” after the Logbook review grew and expanded to even incorporate and analyse your own clips and journey. “My codes” and “interesting bits” now

reads as challenge scale apprehension leading to tunnelled vision in an attempt to manage workload around lecturing and programme leadership. Something you thankfully got over and gave the project the attention and time it needed, however spread out.

Q 2019 WeZ: How long will a clip take?"

A: 2023 WeZ: On a good day, 10 minutes of footage would take 30 minutes. This was not consistent, though, and some were quicker than others. Echo's 13th clip was a workout.

Q 2019 WeZ: Do I do a full person one by one? Or all question by question?

A 2023 WeZ: Once you got into it, each participant was treated as a batch of clips to complete before moving to the next. You realised that participants had not simply answered the questions posed in your clips one by one in a linear fashion. They sometimes addressed one or two questions then headed out into a Ponderlogue. Ponderlogue is a new term you came up with writing these method chapters. It refers to "a recorded, prompted, uninterrupted out loud reflective ponderings monologue". You enjoy these creative interjections and giggled out loud typing in Gladstones Library on June 1st 2023.

Part of the documentary filmmaking practice we teach is transcribing the footage, getting to know the material, seeing connections, and building narratives. This practice is valid here also. If someone else transcribed it, you miss the pauses, emotions, eye positioning, and tensions... none of that makes the transcription page. Even if we use "[long pause]" or "[nervous]" as a system within the dialogue text, it is limited. Also, adding descriptive words that have not come out of participants' mouths pushes the sync out. It is your research; you have the ultimate lens to examine data. The research hunch swirls around in your subconscious, and a moment in transcription can trigger conscious insight. Transcription was the third time I went through all the data for me. The first was as it came in during the experiment, reviewed in Word and responded to in the following clip. The second pass was the Logbook review of all 200 clips, and even with all of that, this third time through all of the data transcribing, new things were spotted, and patterns matched.

For comparison, I used the auto transcription within NVivo and found it to be expensive and not accurate enough for the price. One thing you can do for yourself in the transcription stage is separate out sentences or sections of research interest for ease of access when coding later. When transcribing, if you click "enter," a new code section is created at that timestamp. With

automation, dialogue can run for much larger or smaller chunks than the manual transcript. For example, if a participant talked for 2 minutes into a clip about something that might be coded to “Disorienting Dilemma” (Mezirow 1978a-1994), I would hit enter and have that as a stand-alone quote or section if it ran on for a few lines, at 00:02:00. Anything that might be of interest could be separated out that way as you worked. In contrast, automation does not know what interests you. These little efforts in prep will do *future you* a massive favour when coding later. A lot of time was also spent post-transcription correcting automation mistakes. Some examples that made the Logbook on pg127 are: “Irish” for “RAF”. Echo’s dad was “Irish”, so they moved around a lot! Another line of text that raised an eyebrow was when they explained how “Jews found it hard to live in halls of residence”. On quick and nervous review, it had been “first years”. Another participant had trouble “blowing lips”, which was found to be “uploading clips”. Going through the clips like this for mistakes took roughly the same time as transcribing, so it was ultimately not worth it. Nor was it worth the loss of tone and emotional queues that stay with you and emerge later when exploring or expressing the work yourself. Forgive the passion here, but it begs the question: If you are not excited to transcribe and know your data at that level, then *Why are you doing research that you are so disconnected from in the first place?* Particularly with research related to our field as educators researching education. We are central to it. A position Reflexive Thematic Analysis acknowledges loudly.

5.3 Why Reflexive Thematic Analysis?

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006). It has six clear stages or levels of analysis to follow. The first honest *why* for Thematic Analysis (TA) is that I was instinctively and unknowingly already doing it through gut design thinking. After downloading and transcribing the clips within NVivo, some training with Ben Meehan from NVivo was attended. Ben first made me aware of Braun and Clarke’s work, and the six phases of TA jumped out. It was a journey that had already begun, reviewing the clips as they came in, then the logbook, and now the move to NVivo. It made sense to continue down the path they had mapped out, and it laid out some track ahead, which was welcome in this part-time endeavour. There was something about the pattern-matching system trialled in

the pilot that, although it may have been enough to write up a version of this work, it lacked the depth to express the complex levels of transformative experiences. The TA stages ranged from data familiarisation in phase one to writing the report in phase six and offered a potential process to uncover these depths. Further reading into the method also strengthened its suitability against the positioning of this work. PonderLogic has an interpretive philosophy, an inductive approach to theory development and an interpretive ethnographic strategy... *With a dollop of digital!*

Braun and Clarke (2022) describe TA as a method that leaves options open to the researcher, whereas, strictly speaking, methodologies can guide theory, orientation to language, and even data type. This acknowledgement of creativity and innovation is refreshing and chimes with my *Pick 'n' Mix-ology* mindset. They do not think there is one ideal theoretical framework or method for conducting qualitative research. That the framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know is more important and that the researcher acknowledges decisions made and recognises them as *decisions* (Braun and Clarke 2006), this led them to championing the reflexive aspect and championing RTA from 2022 onwards. I believe the research shed should remain open, and the correct tool for the stage should be implemented. You could sometimes argue that PonderLogic is a video diary or action research combined with moments of narrative enquiry and participant observation mixed with discourse or content analysis and more yet-to-be-named enquiries. It probably borrows from them all and more unknowingly. Sticking to a chisel when the corners needed sandpaper would do a disservice to the materials. Good craft should be open to learning from other trades. The time and effort these participants spent expressing this data warrants respectful and laborious handling. There is often pressure to fit a mould in this research world but to be innovative at the same time paradoxically. If the cogs of academia are churning just to tap the same moulds out onto an ageing table, then where is the room for invention? There is a freedom and accessibility of language to *Reflexive Transactional Analysis*. They are *telling us simply* (Chalk, PLCD022A). Reflexivity involves the practice of critical reflection on your role as a researcher, your research practice and process and how it impacts data generation (Braun and Clarke 2022). There was a good early fit between my

research's theoretical and conceptual underpinnings with Transactional Analysis (TA) and even more so now with Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). At the risk of being human... *it feels right, too!*

Hold Up! An RTA Penalty!?

It is worth mentioning a potential RTA red flag in all of this for Braun and Clarke when claiming that my analysis method is Reflexive TA. The journey began with Mezirow's ten phases of perspective transformation, which were already in existence and used as codes. But, my response is that the ten phases were a critical anchor point for further exploration and almost a second and parallel study. The data was also interrogated afresh to generate new insights following the RTA stages. Mezirow's ten phases are at the core of transformative learning theory. As an early career researcher, I felt it necessary to start at the beginning and build an understanding from there. The PonderLogic data from 2015/16 and the 2022/23 interviews were coded against the ten phases systematically. But they acted as a surface breach for the depth of open exploration that followed. Within the Systematic stage in NVivo, the top-level code for data folder "01 2016 PL (PonderLogic) mapped to Transformation cycle '78, 91, '94" has 117 files and 714 references. Generating my original initial themes stage in NVivo, the data folder "01 Initial Themes from the 2016 Ponderlogic Site" has 131 files and 1,871 references beyond those directly linking to the ten phases. There may, of course, be some crossover within these numbers, but it is nonetheless an expression of how much further the efforts went on just these two areas, of which there are many more. I hope Braun and Clarke accept my decision to arrive with a partial codebook in the spirit of adaptability for this method expressed in their writing. They gave me a map, but my territory is different. Veering down this critical path, there is a growing temptation to veer off into a tributary literature review dealing with the various forms of thematic analysis, related methods and methodologies and their criticisms, but that is not the focus here. Reflexive TA is not an overarching methodology that needs to be rigorously defended. It has theoretical freedom (Braun and Clarke 2006) , and here is simply a method adapted to interrogate and organise the data as a development out of, and step further to, the initial pattern matching system trialled in the pilot. A levelling up enabler of depth and multinarrative expression. One of the many methods within this Pick n'Mix-logical Didgeography. For the

first time, I can show most of the layers going on inside of me on a screen. An auditable trail of analysis madness made possible by RTA.

RTA researcher positioning: A conscious wander

Another reason Reflexive TA is a good fit for this work is that by design, it is not purist and is open to borrowing from both experiential and critical qualitative paradigms (Braun and Clarke 2022) when addressing phases (the extent Mezirow's 10 phases are experienced) and RQ2 (the validity of Mezirow's 10 phases). "Reflexive", in relation to my craft-enhanced research, might also acknowledge the process of hunches emerging without a conscious thought from craft. They are also quite bold in handling bias, and I am not as skittish about that as I had previously been. Demonstrating coding reliability and the avoidance of 'bias' is illogical, incoherent, and ultimately meaningless in a qualitative paradigm and reflexive TA because meaning and knowledge are understood as situated and contextual, and researcher subjectivity is conceptualised as a *resource* for knowledge production, which inevitably sculpts the knowledge produced, rather than a must-be-contained threat to credibility (Braun and Clarke 2020). There is a reason that I am researching transformation in undergraduate creative industries students and not the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow. Particularly when researching education with the purpose of improvement. I care about this work; otherwise, I would not have stuck out the storms. I have a strong *why* at my core. Bias led me to this life in education, and bias towards protecting and championing our subject area is keeping me here. Working with an awareness of this means I still approach the data professionally and am open to signals outside my lived experiences.

That moment of laughable catastrophe in Tally's clip (PLPTLXTRA), where he expressed having enjoyed school, exemplifies the many moments where things outside my personal narrative were most rewarding when unpacked and expressed. RTA recognises my presence in the research. It felt alien and untruthful in the early stages, trying to pretend otherwise. We are humans researching human experience. To deny this or attempt to redact yourself from educational research seems to omit an essential part of the story. I felt I needed to redact myself in the beginning.

I am reminded of Clark and Wilson (Clark and Wilson 1991) , who express specific criticisms of Mezirow regarding his decontextualised approach when extrapolating from particular women within a specific context, which is a learning theory for all adults in any context. That perspective transformation is a generic process of adult development (Mezirow 1978a). I might suggest that Clark and Wilson are also guilty of decontextualization by narrowly taking one focused study out of the context of the whole. When Mezirow published his paper in 1978, he was 55. At the time, he was a professor in adult education and director of the Centre for Adult Education, Teachers College Columbia University (Mezirow 1978a). That experience matters. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in social sciences from the University of Minnesota and a Doctorate in adult education from the University of California at Los Angeles. After directing extension programmes at the University of California, he joined the faculty of Teachers College in 1968 as a Professor of Adult and Continuing education (TCCU 2014), a decade before publishing the 1978 paper. Clark and Wilson offer that Mezirow's claim that it constitutes a generic process is not defensible (Clark and Wilson 1991). To claim something is not defensible in qualitative research seems at odds with the paradigm. Phrases like "is not" are read as finite mathematically. Korzybski might also have something to contribute here (E-prime). As creative beings, defences can be offered on any topic, hence the debating team heritage within universities. Mezirow's experience would have fed into his work and guided narratives in a way I now understand, having been through it myself. He could defend his position masterfully, particularly in 1991 when Clark and Wilson published their paper. In the year Mezirow turned 68, M Carolyn Clark earned an EdD in Adult Education; the 1978 paper was 13 years old, and the complete expression of perspective transformative learning was released in his book Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning, and Arthur L Wilson was 40. Context. The point I am labouring to make is that Jack Mezirow was not a car mechanic one Wednesday and then carried out his research, only making observations from the day the research began. He had spent a life in and around education delivery with a sociologist's lens. If tools like Reflexive Thematic Analysis were available and acceptable in the 70's, his own voice and story might feature more within the work and give it rigour. *Who* is saying it has become as

important to me now. Jack passed away at the age of 91 on the 24th of September 2014. Only since that sad but commendable day has Mezirow's position become truly "not defensible". I would have enjoyed a conversation about this work with him.

5.4 Coding: How RTA was Adapted within NVivo

Purple = Dropped in next version

Green = Added since previous version

	2006	2020 (Reflexive added)	2022
01	Familiarising yourself with the data.	Data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes.	Familiarising yourself with the dataset .
02	Generating Initial codes	Systematic data coding	Coding.
03	Searching for themes	Generating initial themes from coded and collated data	Generating Initial themes.
04	Reviewing themes	Reviewing and Refining themes.	Developing and Reviewing themes.
05	Defining and naming themes.	Defining and naming themes.	Refining , Defining and Naming Themes.
06	Producing the report	Writing the Report.	Writing Up.

Fig 5.5 Braun & Clarke Thematic Analysis over time

In the table above (fig 5.5), I give Braun & Clarke's RTA the same treatment I gave Mezirow's phases over time and mapped their changes. The longitudinal nature of my work means that I have borrowed from the developments across time as RTA grew with me. Six stages of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) were created as folders inside of NVivo (fig 5.6).

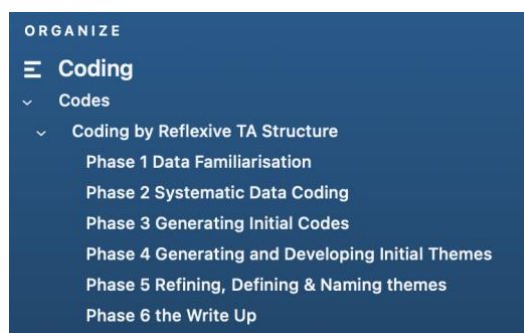


Fig 5.6 Coding Folders for RTA NVivo

RTA Stage 1: Familiarising yourself with the dataset:

It is important to express that although the phases are written in a linear order here, they were non-linear in practice. Phase 2, particularly, was always open and revisited to the end. The three immersion practices (Braun and Clarke 2022) are present in phase one but not in order. The clips were reviewed as uploaded but through a different lens. Criticality did creep in, and flashes of mapping to the research questions would occur. Still, they were used as informational clips during PonderLogic to inform my following research clips. To stick rigidly and only ask things strictly related to the research questions would have felt less exploratory. As experiences were shared and curiosity peaked about whether others had experienced the same, they earned natural inclusion.

The logbook was the first critical pass at the data, noting thoughts. All the data was in. Nothing more could be done. They were days filled with doubts, cheers, revelations, and challenges. There was a conscious effort to keep myself at a distance at this stage to prove criticality somehow. Patterns were noted, and education design questions began to emerge. I was a lecturer at this point and had not yet experienced the managerial side of programme leading. There may have been a thesis version written up after the logbook stage, and it may have stood up to “doctorateness”, but the decision was made to finish as intended and to code through NVivo. This may have added 6 – 12 months around work pressures. The third stage of familiarisation and deeper immersion was the transcription. This is difficult and time-consuming work, but it is worth the dataset engagement it enables. I was tempted not to transcribe my clips early on, attempting to achieve all of this in my spare time, but thankfully, that urge did not win. This was the first time the researcher clips were viewed critically as data, and a meta-shadowing felt and distance was present. The same lens that had critically considered and noted the participant clips was felt working now on my own clips as they were transcribed.

Clicking the Phase 1 folder in NVivo reveals a memo stating:

“The first stages of data familiarisation were:

Watching the clips.

Taking notes on the clips in Word (pre-NVivo)

Using the PonderLogic notebook for handwritten observations.

Transcribing the clips in NVivo.”

RTA Stage 2: Systematic data Coding (non-linear and open throughout):

This is my main adaptation that led to the reshuffle. The “systematic” title was adapted from the 2020 (Braun & Clarke) version. It was a box for systematic or direct “question and response” query strands. This meant they were easily accessible and separate from the other coding jobs and strands, the open and exploratory coding in the following stages. At this point, we realise two projects were happening.

1. One full research investigation examines the entire data set to extrapolate insights that might inform transformative education design. The thesis is born from the research hunch that something in the way creative industries education is delivered can change lives as it has done

my own and investigating that might inform design. That work is represented through phases 3 to 5.

2. The other full research investigation looks systemically and critically at Mezirow's ten phases in relation to the participant experiences and tests the PonderLogic method itself. Transformative Learning Theory and testing Perspective Transformation (Mezirow 1978a-1994) in creative industries education was a theoretical entry point. That work is represented in phase 2. Clicking the folder for phase two reveals these top-level codes and related data, which, in hindsight now, separating it for explanation here, may have been enough on its own for a version of this thesis:

Name	References
> ○ 00 WeZ Research Questions	135
> ○ 01 2016 PL mapped to Transformation cycle '78, '91, '94	714
○ 02 Media Education experience in a word or phrase	11
> ○ 03a (clip 21) does Transformative fit	12
> ○ 03b Does the 2006 definition of Trans Learn fit	20
> ○ 04 Direct Responses to the Trans Cycle	234
> ○ 05 (FINALclip 23) PonderLogic Feedback	58
> ○ 06 2022 PonderLogic Interview Questions asked	262
> ○ 07 2022 Interviews mapped to Transformation cycle	133

Fig 5.7 Systematic Coding Folder

There is still an aspect of exploration in this systematic coding loyal to Braun and Clark's (2006,2020,2022) intent for the phase. Initial codes were produced, and because these codes were predetermined to a point, they allowed me to practice the software and coding workflows for the first time. "00 WeZ Research Questions" (fig 5.7) is a scan through all of my research clips, so the types of ponder prompts posed can be summoned from the entire data set at one click. Direct questions like "03a (clip 23) Does 'Transformative' fit" and "03b the 2006 definition of Transformative Learning Fit your experiences" (fig 5.7) would be helpful to recall quickly from that folder also. The term "transformative" was often commented on within the literature as being problematic and, at times, felt uncomfortable too. Questions like this were posed to the participants to fish for inspiration, as they often knew better than I did. During the last clips in the series, the ten phases of perspective transformation were shared directly with the participants for their understanding and feedback. The top-level codes 01 and 07 (fig 5.7) dealing with the ten phases in relation to both the 2016 PonderLogic dataset and the 2022/23 Interviews were created and worked

through in stage 3 but stored in the systematic box (stage 2). The next phase would require deep engagement with the clips to generate research question-related codes. From the “blatantly relevant” to the “potentially interesting” and “just not sure but mark it anyway”, this work was sure to generate high numbers of codes, and I did not want the ones in the systematic box to get lost in that mix. Digital housekeeping and broadcast data management craft are undoubtedly guiding my instincts. Sage 3 generated so many codes that the exported codebook from NVivo for top-level code “01 Initial Codes from the 2016 PonderLogic Site” runs 29 pages in Word. The first three can be seen in Appendix 7.2. This is a valuable function within NVivo as codebooks can be produced as an audit trail and to view data in different formats like Word or Excel.

RTA Stage 3: Generating Initial Codes

Name	References
> ○ 01 Initial Codes from the 2016 PonderLogic Site	1,871
> ○ 02 Initial Codes from the 2022 Participant in Interview	649
> ○ 03 Initial Codes from the 2022 Interviewer in Interview	462

Fig 5.8 Phase 3 Initial Codes NVivo

This was my fifth time going through all of the data in depth. The personal process decision was to review and code the research prompt clip first, then the corresponding response clips. Having done this a few times, I realised it was unnecessary to do it in this order. The participants would always mention the questions within the clips themselves, but it also became apparent that the codes would be scrutinised later when generating themes. So, the focus changed, and each participant’s dataset was worked through from start to finish. As you do the job, themes will naturally emerge as more data points are mapped to existing codes. From pattern matching in the Pilot study, I learned to label things in a way that was not too tight to be exclusive to one participant and not too broad to include everything. “Assessment time management” is an example with 26 references attached. Clicking on that code, you can see the first quote from Array (PLAA016) discussing procrastination, then Jazz (PLJS016) speaking about starting early. A single node for “assessment procrastination” or “planning in advance” may have gathered codes from others, but you would not see the contrast within that single reference point. Similarly, just labelling it “assessment” would be too broad, so we get: “Assessment help”,

“Assessment issues”, “Assessment time management”, and “Assessment workload”. Time management has 26 references, issues has 21, the others 1 -6 each. This reveals a point for discussion.

But why spend time coding things about assessments? Is it relevant?

Coding can be alluring and draw you in (Braun and Clarke 2022) , but you do not know precisely what will be relevant. Something seems important, so you code, knowing that things can evolve or be rejected later. Also, I did not want to go through this again for this particular data set. Given the wealth of experience shared by the participants, not everything will make it into *this* thesis. Still, it may be useful later for papers, publications, presentations, or even conversations about experience design.

Coding is something you will feel personal pressure to be quick at. Please ignore it. It takes and deserves your time. You will find flow with it and get into a rhythm, and this will develop a sense of pace. There was a noticeable gear change from generating the initial codes in the 200 PonderLogic clips to the interview clips. Time allocated and expectation was based on the Ponderlogue rhythms, but the new interview format was considerably slower once started. It required new codes to be designed, and with me, the interviewer interjecting it had a different pace and feel. It did develop its rhythm, but the interesting lesson was that coding is not *coding*. Each data child will require different care and nurturing. I could have been a bad parent and made it play with the same boxes, but the lesson was that we shouldn't expect the one to thrive on the same care given to another. Don't make the data child fit your habits. Let your craft inform new responses to its needs. Allow time to breathe and ponder.

Before moving on to the generating initial themes stage, there are two other important things to note. One is the inclusion of the top-level code “03 Initial codes from the 2022 Interviewer in an interview” (see Fig 5.8). This was for several reasons. Firstly, I was a part of these Zoom interviews. Reviewing them and analysing them it was hard to leave me out, and having been through the workload of coding all 200 clips in PonderLogic, I had skilled up in terms of treating data and coding. I was now more confident about my relationship and reflexive position to and within the work. An example is the top-level code

created for “I think I talk too much”. Taking a step back and observing the clips critically, I realised what all that talking was about. And the new top-level code for “figuring new insights out loud (where it is going)” was then created. Watching myself and listening, I observed a researcher who had spent and been through the data so many times that the information was whirling around as subconscious clay. That participant’s voice five years later acted like a potter’s hand at times and pulled from the beautiful clay shapes. This also drew me to the conclusion that the interview format was more beneficial for and served me, the researcher and that the PonderLogic method, the Ponderlogues, were more useful for and served them, the participants.

The second thing to note is the intentional separation between the coding jobs of the 2016 and 2022 datasets (Fig 5.8). Like the systematic box, this separation felt important in identifying longitudinal differences in conversation insights. If the 2022 interviews were mapped to the existing codes from PonderLogic, they would be lost in the mix and more challenging to discern. Pondering them side by side felt important. For example, what may have been considered a “disorienting dilemma” whilst a student may be different five years out? Finishing the coding stage is a genuine relief as it takes you between a dynamic range of uncertainties for not having done enough at one end and going too far on the other. It has a similar feeling to completing a film edit. It is done, yet I know if I revisit the film daily for a year, I could tweak, add and remove something else. (Like this thesis, too!). You need to trust the process and move on. This is an important milestone to acknowledge in your doctorate apprenticeship as well. You’ve just *done research!* You spent a year in the field gathering data. You have begun to make sense of the data and can even start to see early-stage thematic outcomes. Even better, you can now point at it for people.

RTA Stage 4: Generating, Developing and Reviewing initial themes.

This was the sixth time engaging with the data in depth with focus because of how the second phase box has been adapted; phases 3 and 4 have been combined in this 4th box. Exploring the extent to which first-generation students experience Mezirow’s ten phases (1978a -1994) has been clustered in phase 2. This 4th stage looks at the codes of interest created that were not directly linked

to Mezirow's ten phases (1978-1994) but were deemed of note regarding first-generation students' experiences on creative industries courses. The codes were then explored for themes in conjunction with the logbook notes. Themes capture multiple facets of an idea or concept, whereas codes capture a single aspect or idea. The process is to look at what you have and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2022).

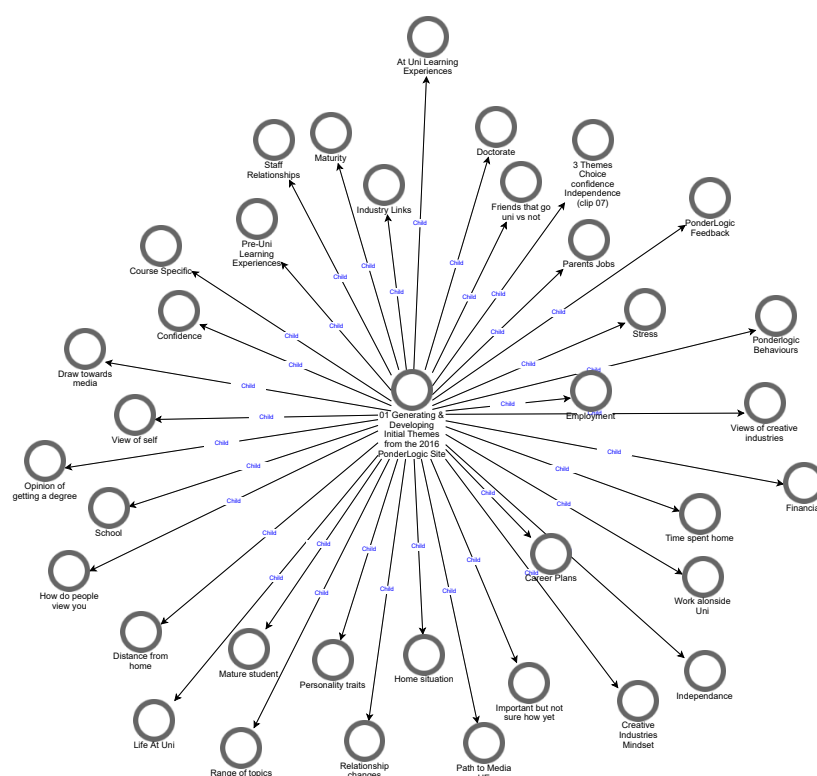


Fig 5.9 NVivo screen shot: Initial themes from 2016 PonderLogic

Fig 5.9 shows the “01 Generating & Developing initial themes from the 2016 PonderLogic site” folder. Three top-level sections were created: the second for “02 Generating & Developing initial themes from the 2022 Participant in Interview” and the third for “03 Generating & Developing initial themes from the 2022 Interviewer in Interview”. This took time, frowning and such effort that it began to beg the question of why a further stage was needed. Compared to the hundreds of floating individual codes in phase 3, this was starting to look very tidy. Clicking on just one top-level code, however, “at Uni Learning Experiences” (fig 5.10 below) reveals the further clustering that needed much more thought and further refining to clarify thematic analysis and expression.

It really was not there yet:

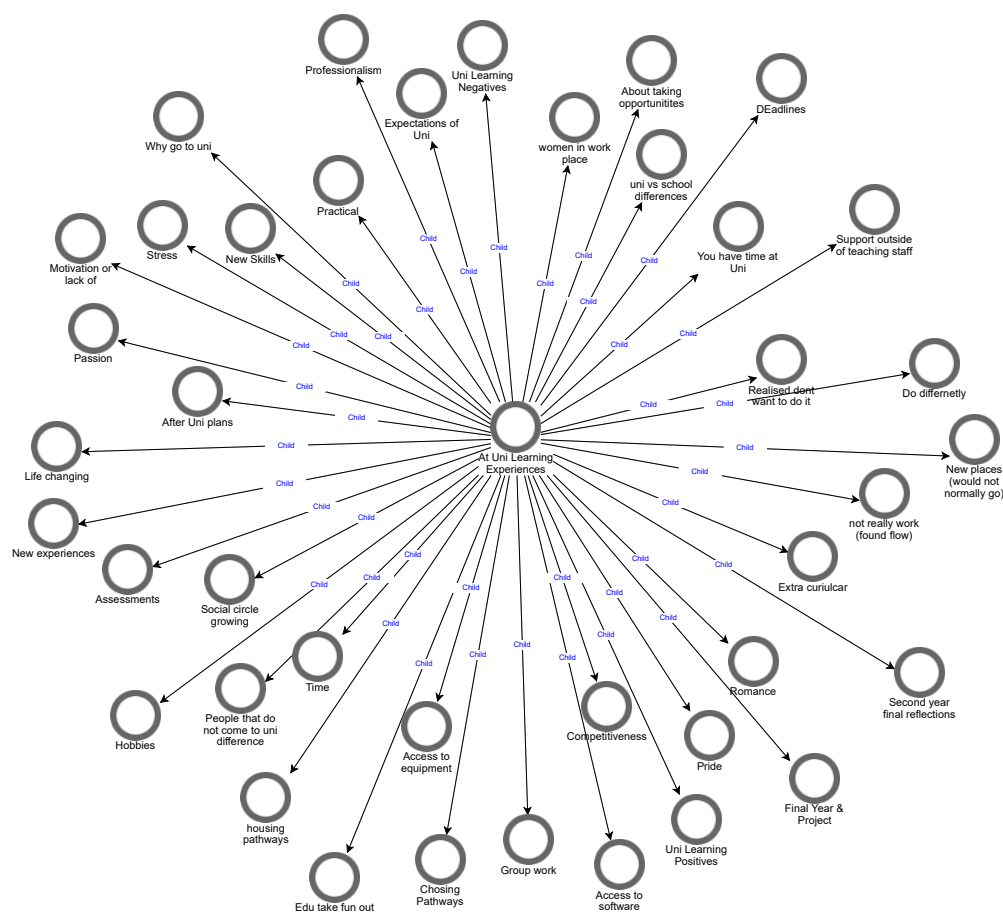


Fig 5.10 NVivo Screenshot: At Uni Learning Theme Expand

“At Uni Learning Experiences” (fig 5.10) began life as a code that went on to develop sub-level codes and eventually was recognised as a central theme. The “References” column within NVivo tells us how many data points have been coded to either a single code or aggregated to a top-level code or theme in Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) language. In this fourth RTA phase, some stand-out top-level themes also had many reference points within them that needed work. Under *01... initial themes from PonderLogic* a few high reference scores to highlight are: “At Uni Learning Experiences” has 239, “Views of Creative Industries” 173, Financial” 133, Staff Relationships 123, Path to Media HE 80, “View of Self” 73 and so on. From *02... 2022 Participant in an interview* some highlights are: “supports for Learning” 120, “looking back you see transformation” 85, “Commitment to Creative Industries”, 72 “Other transformative experiences”, 29, “Life Long Learning” 27 and so on beyond Mezirow’s ten phases mapping. From *03... 2022 interviewer*: “Not typical Q’s because of PonderLogic & being part of their Uni experience” has 73 at the top-

level with 25 underneath referenced to “knowing them because of PonderLogic”. “I think I talk too much” has 40 and “figuring new insights out loud (where it is going)” has 41.

This was my sixth time through the data in earnest, and I experienced what Braun and Clarke describe as “finding, losing and finding your way again” (2022). All the work that felt like an arrival at clarity yesterday felt like a muddle to start working on *again* today. It was an important lesson in the process and time spent with the data, resulting in depth. Some codes might have been double-referenced to Mezirow’s phases and these stand-alone interest points. *Is that a problem? Are the codes and themes problematic?* This raises stress, and the flush of failure rushes in. PPP. Something a participant has said might work in more than one code, stress, assessment and choosing pathways (fig 5.10), for example. And this is ok. This felt like a problem to solve at first, but then the value of data and the many angles of analysis lenses that can be applied at any point was realised. Writing up will become a stage of further analysis, where it may also be helpful to have these references active and searchable as a reminder of intrigue and potential inspiration triggers for future writings. The main thing to do at each of these wobble points is to remind yourself of your *why*.

One of the primary jobs here is to critically analyse Mezirow’s ten phases of perspective transformation as a contribution to a gap in the field. Underlying this is the central idea or hunch that something about creative industries education may be transformative for first-generation students. The core aim is to identify potential transformation milestones and approach education design with transformative goals. Leaving RTA phase four, the sixth dataset pass, there is a sense of the layers of influence developing. Both from within academia and outside of our direct influence as academics, but essential to the story nonetheless. Home life. Supports. Previous journey through education. Financial. Social. Career considerations, and so on. These are things they might have experienced across an entire lifetime in their hometowns anyway. But now they are experiencing a condensed timeline due to having come to learn with us at university. Some islands were bubbling to the surface to step

onto, but this would all require a seventh deep dive for refining, defining and naming those themes.

RTA Stage 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

As this research progressed, so did my career. It began with transitioning from an industry professional in London to lecturing at Solent University. It then progressed from lecturer to senior lecturer with more responsibilities and on to Programme Leadership. Each stage invited new meaning perspectives and insights, which fed back into the classroom and experience design. As a Programme Leader, staffing, timetabling, student numbers, finances and many more aspects of higher-level considerations surfaced and merged with existing exploration lenses. There are many great moments in research, but none more exciting than when the subconscious stew of things suddenly comes into sharp focus through an inspired conversation or prompt.

One such moment was talking with Echo five years after he graduated in PLEE2022b. Echo was reflecting on the patterns he noticed when working in halls of residence, particularly with first-year students. Typically, five to seven students would be grouped in residence with a shared kitchen space, and he noticed the same arguments and issues would come up repeatedly based on students' backgrounds. "You'd have exactly the same, like, arguments in the kitchen about people who'd, people who'd grown up in a really... you could just tell sometimes people have grown up in a really tidy house, everything was tidy and perfect, complaining because how, you know, flatmate has left pots in the, in the sink and stuff, because that's what they're used to" (Echo, PLEE2022b). A penny dropped during that conversation with Echo and the early stages of figuring out a key breakthrough for this research was expressed out loud; "one of the things with Transformative Learning is they talk about Perspective Transformation, but we have different perspectives for different areas, and I think you might have hit on something there in terms of general growth and *academic* growth or *vocational* growth, or jeez, there's even *domestic* growth, you know?" (WeZ, PLEE2022b). This was a simple but hugely important moment as it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking of "perspective" as singular when considering "perspective transformation". By considering the perspectives

through which our students view their experiences, we might then design to incorporate these lenses in our delivery and communications.

During this seventh engagement with the data through RTA phase five, points of discovery interest were now being grouped under top-level codes or themes, such as “domestic”, “academic”, and “employment”. This helped to clearly identify the essence of each theme and what was interesting about them (Braun and Clarke 2006) in relation to the creative industries student journey. While moving the data around and deciding where the insights shared should fit, past, present, and future made sense within the perspective frames to consider. That “everything comes in sequences of three” was again at play. There are three key positions to consider in the broader story of perspective transformation. This was now going beyond and, in addition to testing Mezirow’s ten phases within the data. Mapping out new territories to form an original contribution to this discussion of knowledge offered a concise way of writing up such complex considerations as how people might learn and somehow transform through it. It makes you step back and appreciate the scale of the tasks that scholars like Mezirow are attempting when proposing general theories of learning and understanding. It also stirs gratitude for the marvel of the human mind to ponder such transient concepts, let alone share them through writing for others to take forward and test at future points. My corner of the cathedral was taking shape; I now just had to express it.

RTA Stage 6: Writing the Report

The sixth is a straightforward phase of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). This is the gathering of refined data for the discussion points and linear plan for your mode of expression. For this thesis, it is straightforward in terms of the logical journey through the method and on through the research questions. It would make sense to write about the method first, then the findings against Mezirow’s ten phases (1978a – 1994), and then the additional discoveries to wrap up as a contribution and conclusion. This is a strength of NVivo, as shown below (fig 5.11).

Name	References
✓ ○ 01 Method Q1 PonderLogic vs Arranged Interview	458
> ○ Arranged and Structured interview experience	347
> ○ PonderLogic Method Experience	111
✓ ○ 02 Research Q1 & RQ2 Critically Examine the Phases of Transformation	847
> ○ 01 2016 PL mapped to Transformation cycle '78, '91, '94	714
> ○ 07 2022 Interviews mapped to Transformation cycle	133
✓ ○ 03 Research Q3 to further identify considerations for transformative education design	1,932
> ○ 02 F.O.R.M. 2016 PonderLogic Participants	991
> ○ 03 F.O.R.M. 2022 Interview Participants	743
> ○ 03 F.O.R.M. 2022 Interviewer Insights	166
> ○ Other Transformatvie Experiences	32

Fig 5.11 NVivo Screenshot RTA Sage 6

5.5 Reflecting on Rigour

I did not possess the skills and research workflow knowledge that I have now when beginning this journey. Hundreds of hours have been spent analysing this data from handwritten notes and Word documents weekly, to the many layers of digital Analysis and transcribing within the NVivo software. In the early stages, I would confuse a term such as rigour with all this effort. My working-class mind attached it to rigorous work. To graft like the many, many hours spent coding and re-coding this data. To understand rigour within academic research, however, I found Lincoln and Guba's work in the eighties very insightful (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 1986, 1989). At the time they were writing and defending the rights and validity, I am certainly reaping the benefits in terms of being "allowed" to express this thesis in the manner and voice that I have enjoyed. They were arguing that rigour in qualitative or naturalistic inquiry should not be defined by conventional scientific standards. The realist, objective and context-free world versus the qualitative, context-bound, inductive and emergent one without which this research would not exist. Trustworthiness becomes the equivalent of rigour (1985). *Ahh! That's it! How can I trust my participants? And why should anyone trust the analysis?*

To demonstrate "rigour" they suggest that we must demonstrate *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability* (1985). It is worth spending a minute reflecting on this data analysis under these four key criteria.

Credibility: in other words, the “truth” of my findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Among the key techniques they highlighted in this criterion, Prolonged Engagement, persistent observation and triangulation stood out to me. In their 1986 paper, they expand on the 1985 point touched on concerning multiple realities. The nature of reality asserts that there is no single reality but rather many, socially constructed ones and they cannot be studied in pieces but only holistically (Lincoln and Guba 1986). During the five-year later interviews, the real strength and power of the longitudinal, prolonged engagement with this work struck me. It was profound. It was the moment I “knew” the work and felt an arrival as a researcher. The research now felt credible to me and weighted it. I was not only capturing the student’s experiences through the Ponderlogic process, but I was also in the room with them delivering their programmes. I saw aspects of their lived experiences in other students, and it informed and progressed not only the research but also the type of educator and programme leader I became. Persistently observing first-hand, the lived experiences that were key to their progression and transformation adds to the credibility. The detailed comparison and triangulation of the many interrelated and diverging realities, both captured and observed, add credibility to this data analysis. My participants were not subjects to be manipulated or deceived in any way (Lincoln and Guba 1986) the freedom to respond and upload in their own time and place for their own duration, alone, is another strength in this respect. My participants helped to shape the research process (Lincoln and Guba 1989) and generated the data (Braun and Clarke 2023). Both Lincoln & Guba (1985,1986,1989) and Bruan & Clarke (2006 -2023) acknowledge the co-construction of meaning and the relevance of participant-driven understanding. A position I would comfortably and happily continue education research from as it would feel of little value without.

Transferability: in terms of the applicability of my findings to other contexts or settings. Key techniques to establish this such as context-rich narratives, purposive sampling and thick description are suggested (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The first-generation focus of the initial research call was an important striking-out point but the method and stages of the reflexive thematic analysis revealed that all students in the context of creative industries education offer rich and valuable research narratives. The PonderLogic project clips offer

insights beyond words on a page in terms of the silences, body language, time, place and tone of the reflective monologues captured. The 13th clip in chapter 4 is a great example of this and it is just one of two hundred clips. Lincoln and Guba assert that the burden of proof for transferability lies less with the original investigator and more with the person seeking to apply it elsewhere (1986). However, I can see the broader application of the PonderLogic data generation method and Reflexive Thematic Data Analysis (RTA) within NVivo. For example, students use the word “stress” a lot in their daily language. A broad, PonderLogic study of students, regardless of subject would reveal a lot when generated and processed through the layers and hours of work RTA demands within NVivo. A tool I wished I had during the 2020 global pandemic, and to this day as a programme leader in place of poorer systems of capturing the lived experiences of students such as the annual NSS. I also believe transferability has been proven within this project as the analysis took on two context pathways. One pathway successfully tested the relevance of Mezirow’s Perspective Transformation Phases (1978-1994) expressed in the findings chapter from 6.1 – 6.12. The other pathway analysed the data generated within its own context for new insights that may lead to transformative design. The results are expressed in the findings of chapter 6.13 with my new Frame of Reference Model (FORM) for education design and 13-step Transformation System (TS13) for creative students. Both pathways employed the same tools and processes for very different contexts demonstrating transferability.

Dependability: Meaning consistency and replicability of the research process through techniques such as “audit trail, Stepwise replication and code-recode strategy (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Braun and Clarke’s Reflexive Thematic Analysis method (2023) requires you to code and recode the data six times in total (fig 5.6).

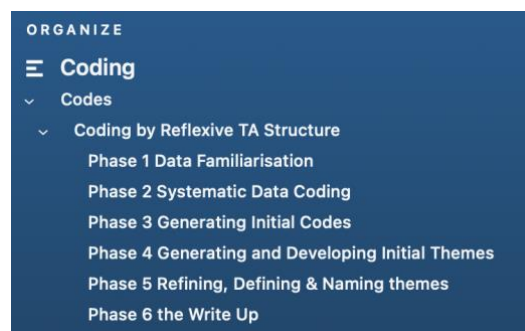


Fig 5.6 Coding Folders for RTA NVivo

This takes you from the broader, initial codes of interest down to refining and defining the narrower relevant themes. Each phase requires hours of painstaking work as evidenced when clicking each phase and data level further (fig 5.7).

Name	References
> ○ 00 WeZ Research Questions	135
> ○ 01 2016 PL mapped to Transformation cycle '78, '91, '94	714
○ 02 Media Education experience in a word or phrase	11
> ○ 03a (clip 21) does Transformative fit	12
> ○ 03b Does the 2006 definition of Trans Learn fit	20
> ○ 04 Direct Responses to the Trans Cycle	234
> ○ 05 (FINALclip 23) PonderLogic Feedback	58
> ○ 06 2022 PonderLogic Interview Questions asked	262
> ○ 07 2022 Interviews mapped to Transformation cycle	133

Fig 5.7 Systematic Coding Folder

However, before all of this, coding was carried out as the PonderLogic participant clips were received and analysed to inform my next research clips. This was achieved through a basic Word document table and simple pattern-matching method (Bouma 2004; Saldana 2013; Yin 2018). A further stage of coding the clips in the PonderLogic notebook (See Appendix 1.4) was undertaken before moving to NVivo. I also feel that transcribing each of the two hundred clips myself within NVivo was another important analysis and coding stage that gave many insights, some unspoken. In my concluding chapter, I refer to all of this in 7.2 Limitations as potentially overshooting the project, that each of these stages may have been a write-up point. Ultimately, there exists a very clear audit trail of every stage of my data analysis from the handwritten logbook to the Word documents, and on to the NVivo software. This also means that another researcher could follow and replicate the stages of logic for their research purposes making this data analysis dependable and reliable (Lincoln and Guba 1986).

Confirmability: Relating to objectivity meaning that the findings are shaped by participants and data, not researcher bias. Suggested modes of establishing the criteria include again the Audit trail, triangulation and reflexive journaling. I have expressed in the Dependability segment above the physical and digital

elements that are available to audit. Triangulation has been expressed above in terms of Credibility through longitudinal observation and data points. There is a complex angle to express within the data analysis of course, and that is my own journey's potential impact on bias which I discuss in chapter 4.3. With all the auditable data points and the honesty of reflection within my handwritten notebook, I believe I have evidenced a professional research mindset when analysing the data and sharing the findings. Where I felt potential conflict, I have been honest and my tone and voice throughout this thesis could be taken as reflexive journalling. My data is traceable to their sources through moving image clips visually, but also the metadata they carry. The logic used to assemble the interpretations, inferences, and conclusions is explicit (Lincoln and Guba 1986) within the NVivo stages for anyone to scrutinise strengthening the confirmability of this work.

06 Findings and Next Steps

I've gotta get this degree because I want to work in that field, and there's no way I'm going back to catering because it's the most abysmal thing I've ever done.” (Lavo, PLLOB002)

The Research Findings in two parts

Part 1: The findings are presented here in two parts. The first part is the result of systematically coding the generated data against the phases of perspective transformation. As the new participant clips were generated during PonderLogic 2016, observations were first taken within Word, the PonderLogic notebook, and then advanced to NVivo. This is built on the pattern-matching coding system (Bouma 2004; Saldana 2013; Yin 2018) devised in the pilot stage. The experiences shared by participants were mapped to Mezirow’s perspective transformation phases (1978a -1994), which were also critically evaluated in depth. My field observations as a lecturer embedded with the students during PonderLogic 2016 and progression to positions of leadership within academia also contribute to reflexively addressing the research questions:

RQ1: What is the validity of Mezirow’s phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

RQ2: To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

RQ3: To what extent can Mezirow’s Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

During coding and analysis, the research data was mapped to all iterations of the phases to ascertain any value gain or loss from the changes in language made over time (see Table 1 below). For example, if a participant shared something that could be coded to phase 02 if it did not evidence “turning to

religion”, it could not be coded to 1994. If it did not evidence “feelings of guilt or shame”, it could not be coded to 1991. It would only be coded to 1978 “Self-examination”. Each phase was coded in this manner. The phases will be presented and discussed individually as coded against the 2016 PonderLogic data and 2022/23 longitudinal interviews. Also, for PonderLogic clips PLWN022A/B/C, the ten phases were shared with the participants directly for the first time and their direct interpretation of the phases and language was invited. This was another important milestone in the research apprenticeship as I wrestled with personal process policing (PPP) to realise what could and should be shared and personal assumptions of potential data taint. The experience taught me that there is great value in including participants as researchers in your work. Make them reflexive beside you. It also highlighted how the phases could be interpreted differently or not at all, which is important as a key driver for this work is language accessibility.

To give an insight into the thought processes when coding, more time is spent expressing the first perspective phase, “a disorienting dilemma”, in-depth. The “disorienting dilemma” phase also generated the most references within NVivo and demonstrates how certain areas of the student experiences can be interpreted, grouped, and coded to a particular perspective phase. A more summarised and nuanced approach is adapted for the remaining perspective phases, without losing depth, towards the thesis conclusions.

Part 2: The second part of the findings chapter shares and discusses fresh outcomes from rigorously applying Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2020, 2022) to the data. My field observations as a lecturer and programme leader also contribute significantly here. The driver, or “engine”, for this section of the work is a passion for deriving utility as a contribution, for something to take back to the classroom and programmes. We need something tangible to share and test in our daily delivery and long-term transformative design thinking. This stage of the work was born out of research question four:

RQ4: What additional insights can be gained from the data to further develop Mezirow’s Transformation cycle (1978a-1994) into practical tools and concepts for designing and delivering education in the creative industries?

Findings pt1 In-depth Analysis of Mezirow's Phases

Mezirow's Phases of Perspective Transformation over Time

Purple = **Dropped in next version**

Green = **Added since previous version**

	<u>1978a</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1994</u>
01	A Disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma
02	Self-examination	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support.
03	A critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions.	A critical assessment of assumptions.
04	Relating one's discontent to a current to a current public issue.	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change.	Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change.
05	Exploring options for new ways of living.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions.
06	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles.	Planning a course of action.	Planning a course of action.
07	Planning a course of action.	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans.	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
08	acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans.	Provisional trying of new roles.	Provisionally trying out new roles.
09			Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.
10 (09)	Provisional efforts to try new roles.	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles.	(10) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
11 (10)	A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.	(11) A reintegration into one's own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Table 2A Mezirow's Phases of Perspective Transformation over Time.

6.1 In-depth Analysis of Phase 1: A Disorienting Dilemma

“Oh crap, I’m an adult.” (Lavo, PLLOB007).

From 1978 to 1991 and '94, no changes were made to the language of phase one, “a disorienting dilemma”. In his original 1978a paper, Mezirow described the disorienting dilemma expressed by the re-entry women as the “death of a husband, a divorce, the loss of a job, a change of city of residence, retirement, an empty nest, a remarriage, the near-fatal accident of an only child, or jealousy of a friend who had launched a new career successfully” (Mezirow 1978a). He also states that “for a perspective transformation to occur, a *painful* reappraisal of our current perspective must be *thrust upon us*” (Mezirow 1987a). Language like “painful” and “thrust upon us” instilled an expectation of coding blatantly dramatic adverse life events against this first perspective phase. In practice, however, disorientation levels varied and were continuous. They were not just a starting prompt to enter education in the first place, as Mezirow uses it.

Phase one garnered the most references within NVivo at 138 for the 2016 PonderLogic clips and 23 for the 2022 interviews. Some of what Mezirow described works but is problematically open to researcher determination and relative scale to the individual’s life and duality. In his third clip, for example, Lavo shares how he could not get back into secondary school to do his A levels: “Simply because I did not get anything higher than a C. So, because I went to a grammar school that wasn’t good enough so, they couldn’t let me back in. So [nervous laughs] that was within three days, I found my local college” (Lavo, PLLOB003). Lavo rubs his face a lot and rolls his eyes, remembering the pressures he felt back then. He goes on to describe how the practical coursework nature of the BTEC Music and Music Technology programme led him to achieve a distinction and journey onwards to Solent University, where he continued to thrive in the practical areas. We can empathise with the initial moment of rejection by his secondary school as disorienting, as this was a life dilemma for him. But, seeing where Lavo is successful five years out from graduation as a Sound Engineer in industry and observing his journey whilst on his degree, it is hard to argue that it was a negative instigation. This may be why Mezirow initially held on to the phase as a reason for people to choose an

educational pathway, but these life events do not stop at the doors of academia once inside.

Relocating

Others may share Lavo's rejection by a meritocratic school system in any cohort, but there are also more common and widely shared disorientations. Most students change their city of residence to attend University. "I think, for me, it was a case of waking up literally the first day of university and thinking: Ok, I need to do stuff today... by myself. There's nobody there to do it with me... It's me who's got to do it". (Chalk, PLCD007). Chalk had come from Northern Ireland to Southampton. Once that final shop in Asda with the proud but emotional parents had happened, and he woke alone, he remembers that morning being particularly poignant. Although challenging, he does have a smile on his face when remembering back to it. An acknowledgement of personal achievement and progression on reflection, perhaps. In contrast, Beta, from Hungary, reflects on a moment when she was shopping with a work colleague, having not been in the UK long. The lady wanted to go buy something by herself, and Beta realised, "I was basically alone... And that was the moment when it just clicked that I am by myself... And I can do whatever the hell I want!" (PLBH007). Seeing Beta's expression recounting the feeling of that moment, it made sense to code it to the phase of "disorienting dilemma" as an essential life event, but with a growing awareness that the terminology of the phase was not entirely representative. This was not a negative moment. As Beta went on to unpack the feeling, it felt to her as if "you are under water and you just become over the surface. It's like you are able to breathe. Well, that is how I felt.... It was weird (Beta, PLBH007). As a 44-year-old mature student from Africa with children, Mother expressed how hard it felt socially: "I do feel differently because at uni I'm a bit like lonely because I don't have any friends" (PLMM003). The cultural disorientation between the UK and Africa also had an impact:

"People don't look out for one another... If someone doesn't come to Uni for maybe three, four days I tend to get worried... *what has happened to them, are they ok?* which is something we do in Africa. You look out for one another... Which is quite different from this place. Nobody cares

whether you come or not coming, who cares, so I really struggled with that when I came here” (Mother, PLMM014).

Labelling the UK or Southampton as “this place” is interesting as it presents an absolute separation from self that you would not expect from somebody feeling at home. For Jazz, the relocation was experienced as a positive, fresh beginning: “I am more independent here. Homelife wasn’t great, so I get to make my own Homelife here. Even if I wasn’t enjoying my Uni course, it’d still be worth it.”, (Jazz, PLJS002). During the early research stages, conflicting narratives like this would have spun me out (like Tally’s clip in chapter 6) and made me think something was wrong with my research approach. Having progressed somewhat in my researcher mindset and confidence, I now read it as the phase needing work. Something I would not have felt I had the right to challenge earlier on. *Who was I to question somebody as established as Mezirow?* Now, the fun of the research is figuring out precisely those play spaces and having the data itself challenge what can be classed as a “disorienting dilemma” and at what stage of the learner journey.

Assessment Stress

There was an “oh” moment when the PonderLogic clips shifted my perspective and empathy. Mezirow’s heavy language had the dilemma detective hat on for birth, death and marriage-sized events. However, the extent to which the students expressed pressure just engaging with the degree workloads was initially surprising but then apparent. It allowed a new level of compassion for their situation that has already influenced design and communications on the job for me. Recounting the pressure felt to do well in their final year projects, Array and Atlas recall:

“...at the beginning of the year, I was having like a nervous breakdown or something because I was aiming for a first... the world is gonna end, and that was a major setback for my project. I remember having massive panic attacks” (Array, PLAA016).

“I can genuinely say I have never been that stressed in my life... Just like... panic attacks like [laughs nervously]. Never really truly believed that that stuff was possible really” (Atlas, PLAH016).

By “that stuff”, Atlas meant that he had never experienced mental health issues before this and was almost dismissive of it as a “thing”. Both Atlas and Echo also go on to express the impact of assessment bunching on their mental health, and Array engaged in counselling to get through her final year. The term “overwhelming” comes up a lot across the participants when discussing the workload and assessment deadlines; “...after the Easter break. One, two, three, four, five, deadlines in the space of four weeks. I think that's daunting. That is overwhelming”, (Echo, PLEE010).

Student Debt

“I’m gonna leave Uni with easily about £50,000 worth of debt, and that’s all been decided by people that had free University and were given grants to go and do it. It doesn’t make any sense; it’s unfair. And it’s just trying to push the poorer people out of education” (Jazz, PLJS015).

What are we assessing in terms of a person's performance under this kind of stress and political distraction? *Is this a mind operating at full capacity? Are we only ever assessing and grading semi-functioning humans? If so, what is the value of that?* Money surfaces many times across the study as a current and future dilemma. Jazz was 20 years young when she made that statement and would leave university at 22 and £50,000 worth of debt. Atlas and Lavo recount moments of financial immaturity where they overspent on nonessential items with their student loans and had to turn to family, embarrassed, for help. Those moments did lead to a later realisation that it was on them now and towards ownership. Still, it is interesting how underprepared they were after fourteen years of schooling for something as basic as budgeting and spending. Managing overdrafts, part-time jobs, and changes in personal circumstances impacting loan amounts can all be considered disorientating in relation to completing university work. Jazz's parents had to help her out with rent in the first year. Even though her family situation was not great, her father had a high-paying job, which meant she got the lowest possible loans and needed help to survive. Beta’s story also highlighted financial disorientation at a level comparable to trauma. She explained how, after two years, student finance decided to withdraw her grant and loans because she was not working enough hours alongside her course to qualify. This is an odd quirk for international

students, which again begs the question of how well we can expect them to perform alongside full-time working hours. On top of cutting her support, she also had letters of demand to pay back the previous two years of money. This was all a sudden shock one day after being told everything was fine for two years. She conveys fear, depression and struggle, but in a fantastic show of resilience, she persisted, figured it all out and graduated. “This is life”, (Beta, PLBH015). She was slightly older at 28 during this time, which may be why she persevered, but she also had a strong “why” to be there as a mature student and a passion never to return to hospitality.

The duality of pressure and gain.

This requires further unpacking and might be a character trait of the kind of individual that does well in the creative industries, but there seems to be a comfort in a dilemma that I recognise across the students, in colleagues out in the industry and within myself: “At the minute I'm stressed out more than I ever have been in my entire life. I have found points where it is overwhelming, but yeah, I still wouldn't stop doing this.”, (Lavo, LOB010). Often, the participants expressed their challenges, stresses, and doubts but still said they enjoyed the course—a duality I made several attempts to unpack over repeated queries during PonderLogic. Chalk came close to explaining it once when he shared an inspiration while working on a live musical in college that led to him coming to university: “You go through all that stress, and you go through all that show, and then you look back, and you think. Yeh, [smiles] you know, I did that. (Chalk, PLCD010).

Not all pathways are negative dilemmas.

Chalk felt that he had done a terrible job at that live event in college and “just wanted to go home and cry” himself to sleep. His drama teacher said he had done a fantastic job and should be proud on the night (PLCD012). This positive encouragement motivated Chalk to join the Solent programme. Anette shared a similar experience when at college, watching a technician opening a speaker and fixing some cables, and she became intrigued about the inner workings. He took the time to show her, and her curiosity grew to her career as an industry engineer.

Desperate to get out of hospitality, Beta shared her motivation: “People would be like “Uhhh, you are just an immigrant in England. You don’t have a chance,” and then I met this person who said, yeah. You can do better. And I took it” (Beta, PLBH007). These moments and others do not quite fit Mezirow’s disorienting dilemma prompts, in the negative sense, as a reason to engage with education, but they are important to acknowledge as part of the transformative journey. To ignore them would be a disservice, and it strengthens the case to revisit the language of this first phase to broaden it for positive interventions.

Creative industries themselves as the “dilemma”.

Student debt, the value of a degree in modern society, and being on creative industries courses can carry a low background disorienting hum for our students. Whilst Lavo was looking for jobs, which he describes as “one of the most disheartening experiences he has ever had” (PLLOB010), he reached out to a forum for advice on graduating. There was a flood of “Oh, uni is pointless” responses that worried him and fuelled the self-doubt he was already feeling (PLLOB008). Mother expressed several moments of doubt being on a media degree (PLMM008) and struggled because the subject was so niche. “Nobody gets what media study is all about, so... that sort of complicates the whole thing, and it’s quite tough if you don’t have anyone to help you outside of the lecturers” (Mother, PLMM019). Not everybody can help you with the hardware and software attached to these programmes, so it contracts your avenues of support. If you are first generation, this is an added layer of isolation and disorientation on top of just being at university at all: “... there is a difference when you’re a first-generation student, ‘cause you’re doing something for the first time and you’ve not got people to refer back to, to ask them about it”, (Jazz, PLJS013). When talking about “media”, Echo’s Dad, being “very much old fashioned”, often challenged him with comments like “Oh right, is there a lot of money in that?”, (PLEE002). In early essays on the EdD taught phase, the term “Mickey Mouse degree” was a motivator for defending our subject area. As I write this in July 2023, the term is back in the news as Tory Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announces an ill-conceived crackdown on “low-value” degrees. Some Broadcast news platforms mention our subject areas whilst failing to address

the irony of the news broadcast itself being part of and needing us. There is a general lack of awareness of what goes into our industry. It has been felt in conversation as a professional and educator in many taxi journeys and social events, with the added irony of everyone using our outputs minute to minute. Our students feel that negative commentary and their parents carry it to open-day events. The need to do a better job of championing the positives and complexities of our creative subject areas and delivery continues to be the engine for this work. My ultimate *why*.

2016 Direct Responses to Phase 1: A Disorienting Dilemma

“Uni is a disorienting dilemma, to be honest” (Atlas, PLAH022)

Pondering aloud, all respondents nodded to having understood and undergone a “disorienting dilemma” when asked directly (PLWN22A). The surprising insights came from what they considered a disorienting dilemma versus what the literature had me mentally prepared to capture. Atlas expressed that just being at university is a disorienting dilemma and that “Every assignment brings up a new dilemma. Some of them more disorienting than others.” (Atlas, PLAH022). I recall being both surprised and in agreement with Atlas when thinking about my past experiences as a BA student and, more so, as a doctorate candidate. Array begins her response by trying to figure out “what the hell” a disorienting dilemma means and supposes it to be “a problem that is very chaotic or, just like you have a problem that you need to solve right now”. She recalls a moment, having done nothing for a year, then pondering, “What am I doing with my life? I need to make a decision to do something” (PLAA022), leading to her beginning the music technology course at Solent. For Echo, it prompted recollections of being top of his class before university and not being quite as good as everyone else at certain things when he got to university as disorienting. “You get here, and you're all in your big shoes and your big hat, and you're like, *Yeah!*... And then it's like “Oh... ohhh... OH!”, it's kind of disorienting. You've kinda got to find your feet”, (PLEE022). Mother recounted a similar “struggle”: “I was one of those student who came in who just wanted to be at the top, and I quickly found out that it wasn't about me coming out first in class.... or doing better than anyone else. It was me being better than, doing

better than what I did before. That's what I quickly realised, and it was... pffttt. It was really hard. It was really hard" (PLMM022). Her expression in the clip is pained and adds a very believable weight to what she went through.

These insights helped to broaden the research lens beyond what the literature had initially prepared me for. These direct responses raised some interesting questions: *Should we arrange these phases in order and fixed if disorientation is always present? It does not work for non-linear, emergent, and recurrent transformation factors. Also, should these academic dilemmas be considered micro-dilemmas, inviting categories of impact vs life dilemmas?* It showed how diverse personal issues can be, even with a small sample like this. As Programme Leader at Bournemouth, I had 360 students on the media production course, 120 per level. If just these six participants are experiencing such diverse disorientations, how can we factor the dilemmas of 360 students into our orientation design?

Conclusion to Phase 1: A Disorienting Dilemma

Looking at how I have presented the findings for phase 1, a disorienting dilemma, I can see the new perspective from career progression to management. A top-level view of the data for shared experiences to inform support and resourcing is evident. There were, of course, individual dilemmas. Lavo shared having been bullied in school (PLLOB014) and receiving a diagnosis for dyslexia and dyspraxia, about which he characteristically quips, "So I walk into walls and can't read, right?" (PLLOB015). Lavo also shared the awareness of suddenly becoming an adult (PLLOB007). This process may happen more subtly over time in small-town life but is compressed in space and time through the demands of university life. "The sudden realisation that I'm not a teenager anymore... So I've got real-life responsibilities. And bills to pay, and I've got, I literally have to find a job" (Atlas, PLAH018).

Mother, who was 44 when studying, shared the pressures of being a parent and balancing university and part-time work (PLMM005). Later in the series, she expressed that she had had one of her most terrible years. Alongside her studies, a grandchild was admitted to the hospital, and then she lost a niece on a Tuesday and then her Uncle the following day. This was already heart-

breaking to watch in the clip, but it really affected me when she said: “I don’t think there is anybody who noticed that there is something wrong or there was something wrong going on with me” (PLMM016). She may have meant the other students, as she expressed in the cultural differences between Africa and the UK earlier, but watching the clip, I felt like she was talking to me directly. *How did I not know? Why didn’t she feel she could tell me? What could I have done?* PonderLogic impacted me over the years, and my passion for student wellbeing and support may have grown from moments like this “terrible year”. It raises all kinds of questions for us. Should we be more involved? Where is the line regarding responsibilities for a subject specialist academic in the dilemmas of the student’s lives? I keep going back to: *How can we expect and assess the best in students if they are not actually at their best? What are we evaluating and awarding under these conditions? “This is our qualification of humans under stress and rushed binge conditions”.*

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow’s phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

Phase one, a disorienting dilemma, holds a certain amount of validity. Still, the phase needs expansion to acknowledge that these life events continue to impact students at university and that not all prompts to begin education pathways are negative. A term from storytelling has been vying to take this position within me for some time now. The “Inciting Incident” tends to be an event that challenges the status quo and invites a journey of change. I propose that the phrase “inciting incident” replaces “disorienting dilemma” as phase one as it can represent both positive and negative beginnings but also remains open to micro and macro events along the journey. Mezirow stated that whether or not a woman comes into a program in response to a disorienting dilemma makes a crucial difference (Mezirow 1978a). He even goes as far as separating out those that had, as “not conventional learners”. Whether negative or positive, I agree that those who have a reason to be there get the most out of it. Beta’s drive to never return to hospitality is an excellent example of this and may have been a driver for her resilience under pressure. Those who have a *why* to live, can bear with almost any *how* (Frankl, 1954)

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

To a large extent, the participants undergo life events that can be categorised and mapped to phase one, a disorienting dilemma. *But these events are part of the peaks and troughs of everyday life for all humans, right?* What makes it different *here* is the attempt to achieve an academic qualification on top of life's trials. That being within the halls of education offers a different kind of reflection and growth space with options and supports they may not have otherwise experienced outside of university. It is a concentrated life experience, and what makes it transformative compared to other transformative life events is choice. There is an element of choice when engaging with education. You get to choose a subject of interest, and unlike disorientations such as grief, for example, you can walk away at any time. Suppose the whole experience can be viewed as disorienting, as Atlas suggested. In that case, the aspect that makes education transformation is the choice to begin and choices to stay when it is challenging. Jazz describes how, instead of being "stuck at home", getting through the challenges of the course work and life administration that goes with it each year gave her confidence in other areas and "taught me how to live by myself and like, by giving me that first step into like the next stage of my life", (PLJS2023a).

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Even in Solent University's smaller cohorts, some students' struggles can be overlooked, but we should consider ways to address them. How can we expect students to perform to their full potential if they are not functioning at total cognitive capacity? Unaddressed stress can lead to anxiety, so being aware of relocation impact, for example, could help inform first-week induction sessions and discussions, at least letting students know they are not the only ones experiencing it and to reach out.

Carrying out this research made me question my position and sometimes dismissive attitude towards modern students' assessment challenges. In 2000,

at Coláiste Dhúlaigh, we were given a brief and a date and told to get on with it. Students get so much more online guidance and support “these days” by comparison, and it is a common staff room gripe that it now feels like assessment by numbers or “too easy”. It was humbling to acknowledge how much stress these students are under and that it is different and more difficult for them. My perspective shifted. We can use this awareness to spend effort designing the number of assessments per module, deadline bunching and our daily language around them. When they feel this stressed, and we say, “It’s easier now”, the students will only feel worse as in our eyes, the eyes of their assessors, they can feel incapable and withdraw from us. In our teams, we might identify potential disorienting dilemmas students may encounter at each level and design extracurricular events, wellbeing supports and programme learning outcomes to help. In their third and final year, for example, most students for the first time will not know where they will be next September. For the first time since starting school at 4 years of age! They will go through a period of not knowing where they will be living, where they will be working or what value any of this difficult journey will have added to their lives. Knowing this, we should have modules in their final year, if not earlier as well, scaffolding their journeys out into a professional career in the creative industries.

My thesis position now is that *conscious epistemological effort can result in ontological transformation*. Choice requires recognition within the ceremony of transformative experiences and also within the top-level phases of perspective transformation.

6.2 Analysis of Phase 02: Self Examination

Over time phase 02 becomes more complex and arguably restrictive in language. In 1991 “with feelings of guilt or shame” was added and in 1994 “sometimes turning to religion for support” extended the word count. Coding for such personal conditions as “guilt” or “shame” was difficult and it was felt that it put me in a position of judgment. 1994 “... turning to religion” has just one reference coded to it. Chalk talks about the support he enjoyed through his church (PLCD0019). He describes the community aspect as having chats over coffee and even being invited for Sunday roast. This was coded against the 1994 wording, but Chalk did not turn to religion because of self-examination. He

was himself religious and continued to practice. Including “sometimes” in the wording already acknowledges that many people will not. There are other supports people turn to other than religion, so why choose such a provocative divider? I would strongly argue that the religious context should be dropped from the phase.

The 1991 wording has 14 references, but my decisions on what to code to it are problematic. For example, Array wishing she had taken advantage of a better social life and not being so career-focused is arguably regret, not shame or guilt (PLAA009). She also speaks about learning through making mistakes (PLAA011) and self-sabotage (PLAA019). Atlas recounts being the class clown in college and a little bit of that spilling into university, but eventually begins to take things more seriously (PLAH005). Arguably, “regret” might be a better label for this recollection or even just recognition of maturing rather than “feelings of guilt or shame”, as he was smiling recounting it. Echo, Jazz, and Lavo had similar stories of not taking the first year more seriously or engaging more with extracurricular opportunities. Looking at the data now, I could not “stand up in court” with this as evidence of guilt or shame. My ponderings whilst coding was that these things *might* lead to feelings of guilt or shame for some people, but these assumptions are not enough to defend as evidence against this iteration of the phase. The storyteller in me at work, perhaps. I would strongly argue that the “guilt” and “shame” specificity should be dropped from the phase.

Direct responses to phase 02: Self-examination.

“Every year, I look back at the kind of person I was the year before and just go, “God, what was I thinking? God, what was like... what? What was I doing? Why did I say... what was I doing? Why did I think that was a good idea?” (Echo, PLEE022a)

This phase benefited greatly from being asked directly because of guilt and shame's specificity and personal nature. I feel the participants would have done their best to respond to any other phrases in their place, however, or even none at all and simply “self-examination”. Array admitted being prone to feelings of guilt and shame but that it might be part of her Christian upbringing and shared

that her mother mainly makes her feel guilty all the time. She prompts a potential phase that got my attention when she says, “I hope one of the stages is letting... letting go of that guilt at some point” (Array, PLAA022a). Atlas interprets shame as those moments when he has spent long hours trying to grasp a new concept or assessment and feeling shameful: “I probably should know this stuff” (Atlas, PLAA022a). Jazz (PLJS022a) and Chalk (PLCD22a) also related it directly to coursework and understanding guilt as the feeling associated with submitting some assessment work. They could have done better, but even whilst figuring it out loud, Jazz uses the language of “disappointment” rather than guilt, so it is debatable as to validity. Mother describes conscious effort with self-examination, having struggled transitioning from being top of the class in previous experiences to media. So there was a lot of self-examination to find out where I was getting it wrong” (PLMM022a). She attributes managing to pull through to the change this reflection helped to instigate. That is an important factor to hold on to. Reflection and self-examination in itself is not useful without effort in a new direction afterwards. It would make sense for the phase directly after self-reflection to be a call to new mindsets and actions.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow’s phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

The 1991 edition of “Feelings of Guilt and Shame” is not valid concerning this work. The 1994 edition of “Turning to Religion” is also deemed invalid. Phase 02 Self-examination (Mezirow 1978a) as a stage of perspective transformation is undoubtedly valid in the context of this work, but it might benefit from expansion. A case can be made to separate it into reflective self-examination or reflexive self-examination, considering the external influences on any situation explored. I must confess to an early concern captured many times within the PonderLogic notebook: *What if I am causing the transformation I am attempting to evidence?* This was later validated as the participants expressed gratitude for having been part of PonderLogic and how it was almost like counselling for some. Here, PonderLogic itself validates the transformative value of self-reflection.

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

The 1978 iteration of phase 02 Self-examination has 83 references coded to it. “A way of growing is to stop throwing logs under your own feet!” (Array, PLAA019). Self-sabotage, procrastination, maturity, and confidence were regular themes among all participants. What the participants share evidences a recognition of the change in their current frames of reference towards the previous. Atlas’s teachers were frustrated with him; they said he had potential but acted like an idiot. He liked to make people laugh and did not see that as misbehaving until now when he was at university looking back (PLAH005). Beta, in her final year during PonderLogic, said if she were to change anything about the previous years, it would be to “take more chances, be more riskier and... not be afraid of what people think” (PLBH007). Reflections on subject choice, independence, and home versus university life are also prominent. PonderLogic is all about inviting self-reflection, so these participants underwent a lot of phase 02. However, they were primarily on technical courses, particularly on the BSc programmes, so this type of reflection was not consciously structured into them. During their final year project exhibition, the students and guests appreciated their three-year technical and professional progression, but the assessment design did not capture this. In contrast, I found reflective writing and presentations more common in the BA courses. I would then make the case for BSc courses offering more transformative experiences to design these touch points from year 1.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow’s Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Phase 02 Self-examination can contribute quite a lot to creative industries education design. Many programmes already do this, where assessment, for example, requires submitting an artefact and written reflection. In this example, however, the reflection might only deal with production learning outcomes regarding practical and story skills. This has value, but considering self-examination properly in creative industries programmes would require personal development modules on each level. Touchpoints for progression on a

personalised reflective and reflexive scale. *Which degree programme module might Didgeography fit if Ponderlogic was an available tool?* When I led the rewrite of the BA Media Production at LJMU for the 2022 launch, I was very aware of this question and, along with the students, staff and industry peers, we designed in a semester 2 module of “Industries Portfolio1, 2 & 3” that students engage with at Levels 4,5 & 6. These modules serve as reflection points of comparison for progression and growth each year compared to the last and out into employment.

6.3 Analysis of Phase 03: A Critical Assessment of Assumptions

Over time, this phase became more simplified in terms of language. The 1978 iteration is the sprawling “Critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations” (Mezirow 1978a). Within NVivo, 17 references are coded to it, but again, this is complex to code observationally. For example, Atlas ponders aloud, “Another thing that’s wrong with our society. We feel we need to drink to be confident and go talk to girls... but you shouldn’t need alcohol to do that” (Atlas, PLAH007). It was coded to the “sex role assumptions” and “social roles” nature of the phase, but on a philosophical level, Atlas is not unpacking his assumptions critically. He does state you shouldn’t need alcohol to do that. Still, the complicated prompt of the phase would require evidence of Atlas delving into why he firstly assumes this is a necessary social expectation and then again challenges why he thinks it is “wrong”. It fits the phase as written on a surface level but lacks defensible depth. Perhaps this is why the phase shed tricky terminology over time. Most of the coded references for the 1978 “sex roles” version of the phase are Array’s experiences of sexism in the workplace both at university and later in the 2022 interview. Being one of the few women in the technical side of an industry historically male-dominated, she recalls inappropriate jokes or comments about what she was wearing. Stereotypical comments around multitasking and men’s reactions to a female answering an engineering call. Of being ignored in the room of men sometimes. Jazz also experienced this at music festivals when male engineers would ignore her requests to turn sounds down within legal levels or, worse, be aggressive to her and then behave completely differently when her male boss arrived. They both expressed having positive experiences and being treated more equally within the degree programmes. Yet, it raises an

interesting problem of how we turn reflection on moments like this into positive transformative outcomes. *Is transformation always positive?*

Direct responses to phase 03: A Critical assessment...

The 1991 edition is shared with participants: “A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions.” (Mezirow, 1991). As educators, it is our job to make complicated concepts easy. “If you can’t explain it simply, simply don’t explain it” to paraphrase PonderLogic participant Chalk (PLCD022A). I became very aware of how complex some of the academic language within the phases was as I read them aloud in the clips for the students. This was one of those phases. I had a sense that participants might struggle with the terms “epistemic”, “sociocultural”, and “psychic”. It reads as if it was written directly for professors of sociology. At the time, I was struggling with the concept of epistemology in the doctorate and the term “psychic” conjured imagery of TV astrologers. Echo expressed it perfectly when he said, “As for psychic... um, I'm not quite sure whether or not to take that literally” (Echo, PLEE022A). To be useful, I believe the language needs to be simple and inclusive.

“I’m googling epistemic” (Array, PLAA022A). “I literally have no idea what emi-epistemic means. I looked it up on Google. [reads Google definition on screen] It didn't really give me any valuable answers, to be honest... Socio-cultural, I don't understand.” (Atlas, PLAH022a). “As concerning the phase 3, I don't think I experienced that.”, (Mother, PLMM022A). “Well, not quite sure on number three, it's. Epistemic, that's a really good word though; I'm gonna use that at some point, maybe. Epistemic. Um, Yeah” (Echo, PLEE022A). After some musing and re-reading of definitions on his screen, Echo does have an insightful stab at addressing the complex nature of the 1991 phrasing; “I don't know my socio socio-cultural, and I guess Epistemic idea assumptions are always sort of changed without me changing them on purpose. It's never so much been a critical assessment, as a... as a gradual development, a gradual development”. He raises an interesting point and design hunch regarding nurturing conditions for transformation. It would require specific interventions to prompt, capture, and respond to assumption reassessment, leading to direction change... to add tangible value. Particularly if you want a cohort to experience

transformation throughout a three-year programme and not leave it to individual, gradual chance.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

This research supports the validity of the 1994 simplification to “critical assessment of assumptions” (1994), particularly if we factor in assumptions about themselves and their capabilities and performance. The earlier iterations are complex, but life events and reflections that might fall into these epistemic, sex-role, and sociocultural areas would still be captured under the simplified broader terminology.

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

Students do not undergo a critical assessment of their “epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic” assumptions (Mezirow 1991) as a direct or conscious effort. Interestingly, it is the iteration with the most observable references coded at 50. The students in the moving image clips can be witnessed critically assessing and comparing assumptions. They would not necessarily have been aware that they were doing it themselves at the time or that it would fit this labelling. *Is it still transformative then?* We are left to presume that on a subconscious level, these ponders may result in a gradual frame of reference change. For Array, Mother and Beta, the cultural differences between Poland, Turkey and Africa are easily observable and garner a lot of references. We also have to remember that this research is only a means of capturing their lived experiences. Their ability to recall and capture change as they live through it may not match in terms of transformation awareness, but they are undergoing it. For the other participants, even changing towns could have the same effect. For Echo, there was a regular challenge to his perspective, having moved around a lot compared to people who had only ever had one home and the small-town values explored during the deep dive of the 13th Clip in chapter 4. Years after graduating, Echo also shares an encounter where a girl in the Halls of residence was disgusted that he was eating a pot noodle and had offered her

one. This simple pot noodle moment caused Echo to ponder class differences, financial status and culture clashes (PLEE022b). Student life is full of these macro-perspective challenges. They are also regularly critical of the assessment process, workload, and achievements. However, they are unaware they are having epistemic discussions that we can confidently code to the phase as phrased.

The “sex-role... alienation... taken-for-granted social roles” tone of the 1978 iteration may be related to the time and study Mezirow carried out on women on re-entry programmes in 1970s America. That is not to dismiss the ongoing issues and gains to be acknowledged in these areas but through analysis of previous phases, specificity contracts experience responsiveness.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow’s Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Initiatives like “decolonising the curriculum” are an example of the potential design value of incorporating a critical assessment of assumptions into our delivery, but it feels more behind the scenes and gradual than direct intervention. We might encourage students to tackle topics like Brexit, racism, sexism in our industry and so on through podcasting, non-fiction moving image and audio assessments to assess general assumptions critically. Brushing up against other meaning perspectives might change or expand their own. *Does a meaning perspective always have to transform? Can it not grow?* We might encourage critical assessment of personal assumptions through reflective essays, presentations, and Vivas. This can be anything from assumptions around what it might take to create a short fictional film to programme expectations or be more personal like Mother and Echo expecting to be at the top of the class and dealing with finding that not to be the case. A bigger question is whether this third phase is repetitive compared to phase 02, self-examination. The same self-analysis for both phases may arrive under a single reflection phase.

6.4 Analysis of Phase 04: Recognition that one's discontent...

Phase 04, "Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change", seems problematic at conception. It presumes that one is discontent in the first place but also uses "discontent" in a singular mode, and it is unclear if discontentment is being suggested as a requirement for transformation. It is also problematic because it suggests, and may even be born from, a communal moment where participants openly share transformative awareness while it is happening. The 1978 edition is very specific. Phase 04 is even more restricted to relating one's discontent to a current to a current public issue. In relation to this research, there would be no value in returning to the 1978 wording. It would hinder the value of the phase even further.

Direct responses to phase 04: Recognition that one's discontent...

The students simplified my high conceptualising and critical take of the phase right down to a basic learning context. "No one really understands it straight away. You have to do the research... and find your own personal way of understanding the subject and the content. Yeah, I definitely experienced that. (Atlas, PLAH2022). And "Stage 4 is feeling that you know, it's ok not to know how to do something already because everyone has to learn" (Jazz, PLJS022). Interestingly, they both read discontent and attached that to new knowledge struggles. Chalk admits that he did not understand the phase, and Mother timidly expresses that transformation was not shared due to a "lack of friends". (PLMM022B). This highlights how important the social aspect of our programmes can be for wellbeing but also for transformational insights and journeys. Echo recalls a girl who "vehemently" stuck to being at University to get a degree and get a job, not to engage socially and saw that as her "downfall" and led to her dropping out; "She didn't feel comfortable talking to people or identifying common goals or common areas of interest among people", (Echo, PLEE2022B). Group work is a common feature of creative industries programmes, so sharing common goals and interests is important to acknowledge for successfully transforming perspective frames. Echo unpacks this further in his observations of people who attempt to hold firmly to the

personal ideals and beliefs they bring to the experience and miss opportunities to engage with the process of transformative (PLEE022B).

RQ1 & RQ2

There are zero references within NVivo coded to phase 04. Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared, and others have negotiated a similar change. To code to it in a defensible manner, observations would need to tick three weighty boxes: a moment would not only need the individual to evidence an awareness of both personal discontent and transformation but also recognise that same discontent and transformation in another, then express an awareness of that leading to a similar change in them both. It asks too much and veers from the individual nature of personal perspective change. When figuring out responses to the direct phrasing of the phase, participants interpreted and shared partial prompts for sections of the phase but nothing that encapsulated the whole. It also raises the question of whether a person needs to be aware of the phases as they undergo them to be transformative. In other words, as researchers, we can observe shared states and stages across a sample from our satellite view that the individual may not be aware of on the ground. Regarding this research, I would strongly argue that the phase should be dropped entirely.

6.5 Analysis of Phase 05 Exploring options for new roles...

Mezirow's Phase 05 began in 1978 as "exploring options for new ways of living" and settled at "Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions" (1991, 1994). The phases change positions in the later designs, raising questions about repetition.

Direct responses to phase 05: Exploring options for new roles...

" The variety of stuff that we do in the Media Technology course, which is all relatable to one another gives us the opportunity as students, in the Media Tech, to explore all the options, all the jobs that we can get.... And that's the fantastic thing about our course" (Chalk, PLCD022B).

They did not struggle with the terminology of this phase. The students highlighted the importance of relationships for "bouncing ideas off of each other"

(PLAH022B) and needing to get along with each other in group work. Echo expressed gaining a more comprehensive view of the world and that the “variety of roles” was massive (PLEE022B). He was unsure what he wanted to do, but he landed on Sound Design by trying things out. He also expressed an awareness of career progression and that he is “not going to get my degree and walk straight into a job as a sound designer working for like, I don't know, Lucas Arts at the Skywalker Ranch” (PLEE022B), that it would require runner and assistant positions first to hone his craft. It highlights the mindset of students regarding career focus. You get a sense that they are on the programmes to gain employment in the creative industries, and what they are experiencing on the programmes facilitates that journey through practical delivery, extracurricular events, and placement opportunities.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

The 1978 phrasing of phase 05, “exploring options for new ways of living”, is so open to interpretation that anything from being at university to trying a new cuisine could be coded to it. In the context of creative industries education design, it is too broad to add value. The 1991-94 phrasing does have validity in relation to creative industries education as it helps to champion student experiences unique to our subject. Students are constantly exploring options for new roles, relationships, and actions within industry-style conditions, and this insight leads to further possibilities and transformative milestones between course modules and programme levels. Chalk expressed how engaging with all the options available made him realise that he has far more career opportunities and backup plans. “That's kind of what I was expecting during my time at university. To be able to identify what I wanted to do at the end. And it's just more and more pushed me to a route I want to take”, (PLCD017).

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

The creative industries rely heavily on technology and are highly collaborative. Successful professionals tend to be skilled in specific production hardware and software, and the degree programmes have an apprenticeship approach to

developing skillsets for graduation. In recent years, it has become common to be proficient in more than one area. Keeping up with technological developments is a constant facility and resource concern, and it carries lofty budget commitments to stay current and competitive for creative industries degree programmes. Students on these programmes explore new roles, relationships, and actions (Mezirow, 1991,1994) to a great extent. There is a lot of group work on these programmes, and students are encouraged to try new roles within each module assessment. This can be in pre-production planning and management, creative and managerial production roles, and post-production creative and distribution roles.

Atlas, Chalk, and Echo mentioned that they did not have friends with similar interests before attending university. Atlas's friends back home tend to work in retail or coffee shops that he "just don't find particularly engaging" (Atlas, PLAH002) compared to the creative people and professionals he engages with as part of his degree programme. This horizon-broadening and social gain might be an essential transformative factor to acknowledge within the top-level phases. Chalk raises an important point about societies at university. He finds it interesting how people make friends through hobbies or societies and volunteering for work on things like recruitment events for the courses (PLCD009).

"I volunteered to go to a music fesss-festival and be a Sound Engineer. Something that I would never, ever, in my life thought I would do", (Mother, PLMM004). At 44, you can see the impact on Mother within the clip as she recounts being out of her comfort zone and how unique the experience was. Jazz recalls getting the opportunity to work at the Glastonbury Festival (PLJS009) and Atlas at the Truck Festival and Butser Fest through the university as transformative milestones in their development and experience. Array, despite expressing knowing "nothing about cameras" (PLAA009), worked for Video Illusions, saying it was "totally out of my comfort zone... which I guess could be why I am enjoying it". Having experienced many broadcast roles, Lavo expresses how he got the bug for live sports sound while working on a rugby match. He says it transformed his family's perspective on him studying creative industries, "especially when they saw me on the TV... I think they realised then,

that sort of really hit in that "Oh, this... this, oh look! He's there... he's working at the Olympic Stadium. Yeah, he's like on telly" (PLLOB008). These industry experiences have a massively positive impact on students' self-confidence, as Lavo expresses, reflecting on a moment of perspective change; "there's people who are willing to work with me and think that I do an alright job, which is great. [laughs clearly happy]" (PLLOB004). As a lecturer working with Lavo and knowing his potential it was a nice moment seeing him recognise this in himself. A moment of transformational awareness.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Because exploring options for new roles, relationships, and actions comes with the collaborative nature of creative industries, it would be easy and a mistake to miss it as a design consideration. By focusing on the student journey across the three-year degree programme, for example, we might add a "passport" style initiative to capture the roles a student engages with between the modules and levels. Particularly in first- and second-year, students would benefit from trialling different roles, such as hardware and software, on their journey to specialisation in their final year project. Building in a reflection point to their third year to capture their take on the whole journey might frame perspectives as they head out into "the real world. The value of work experience cannot be overstated. Ensuring all students engage with at least some industry placement between their second and third year improves their attitude and success. At Bournemouth, placements were mandatory, and I saw value in the pressure of doing one for those who were more timid and would shy away if it was optional, as was the case at Solent and now LJMU. Students at Bournemouth who completed a yearlong placement were grouped and read out separately at the summer exam boards. That sheet achieved noticeably higher grades than the rest of the cohort, generally with high firsts.

6.6 Analysis of Phase 06: Planning a Course of Action

In 1978, Mezirow's Phase 06 was "Building competence and self-confidence in new roles." This later moved to Phase 09 in 1991 and Phase 10 in the 1994 iterations. From 1991 onwards, Phase 06 is "Planning a course of action." Through the lens of this analysis, this action phase feels late. After the self-examination in Phase 02, some planning based on new mindsets would add value and outcomes to that critical phase.

Direct responses to phase 06: Planning a course of action.

The students did not struggle to understand this phase, although Mother did express that she "cannot really say I planned a course of action, but I just had to try things to find out which one was going to work out for me." (PLMM022B). She seems to have grouped 05, 06 and 07 here, and this is a moment that might benefit from an interview scenario where we could unpack this further. It is unclear if Mother is referring to the broader sense of coming to University in the first place, which was Jazz' response (PLJS022B), or if she meant the daily efforts to learn new skill sets and subject matter. Chalk cites a specific Project Management module (PLCD022B) that was "fantastic" and gave him the tools to arrange his academic and professional life. It prompted Echo to reflect on his experiences of repeating his second year. It gave him a whole other year to go over the stuff he wasn't quite good enough at the first time around (PLEE022B). He felt this extra time gave him a more focused plan for completion and career focus. Surprisingly or not, given the current binge culture, planning for assessment deadlines and completion was not expressed by the participants here, further evidence of the need to develop in this area maybe.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

Planning a course of action is a valid, if not essential, aspect of creative industries education. However, it may need expansion and repetition within the phases to acknowledge the myriad changes and development expectations required to graduate successfully from this challenging area.

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

“I've gotta get this degree because I want to work in that field, and there's no way I'm going back to catering because it's the most abysmal thing I've ever done.” (Lavo, PLLOB002)

Planning a course of action has 19 references coded to it within NVivo. Like Beta, not returning to previous work conditions is a crucial motivator for career planning. Most moments coded to this phase either recount the student's journey onto the programme or towards career plans whilst on the programme. As Atlas worked on the UCAS application, his parents looked at potential job roles upon graduation (PLAH005). There is a sense across the sample responses that the purpose of this university experience is to have better career options and that all planning is in that direction. "Oh .. you can do better than waitressing. How about you apply for the University?" I was like, "OK!" (Beta, PLBH005). This is great, but it does raise questions about programme design and might answer why students engage with some modules more than others. *If they do not see the career value of a specific module or assessment, do they switch off then? Can we answer to, and defend the career value of every assessment on our programmes? If not, should they be there?* For these students, choosing a creative education pathway is the first real-life decision that they have made for themselves. It is the first time they assert some ownership on their journey, and the regrets and doubts sometimes expressed may be born out of that optionality. What was interesting, speaking to these students five years later, was that they all used education again later in some way to further their careers and plan a course of action for improvement. The lifelong skill was the ability to plan and adapt, having once been successful at it.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Phase 06, planning a course of action, has undeniable value in creative industries education design, but it might require repetition and division for daily micro efforts and short to long-term macro efforts. For example, a module like

Project Management is great but might be discipline-specific. For instance, fiction filmmaking has a clear and discernible process for preproduction planning through to completion. However, this may not give students more basic time management skills to deal with multiple assessment deadlines and balance part-time work, social lives and the demands of the programmes. We might also help them plan their short-, mid-and long-term career goals through careers and personal development modules and regular assessment comparison points. Were this a more prominent feature of the programme, it may have garnered a more unified response. As a programme leader, I am taking the lack of a linked-up narrative from the students in this area as a gap to address more directly within the programme structure.

6.7 Analysis of Phase 07 Acquisition of knowledge and skills...

The 1978 phase 07 was “planning a course of action,” which moved to phase 06 from 1991 onwards and was examined in the previous section. In 1991, phase 07 was the “Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans” (Mezirow, 1991). Then, in 1994, it was “Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans,” with the minor tweak being from “acquisition of” to “Acquiring.”

Direct responses to phase 07: Acquisition of knowledge and skills...

Jazz took this back to: “Getting A Levels and getting everything, you need to be able to actually do Uni” (PLJS022). Chalk expresses how media technology changed how he sees everything (PLCD022B). Because we are in a technological world surrounded by media, it impacted his knowledge as a “consumer tech guy”. Interestingly, there seems to be a crossover from course-specific training to other aspects of life. Echo carried out a deep dive into the psychology of how the human mind perceives certain sounds and frequencies so that he could better understand sound design, which, in turn, made him engage with content differently as an audience member. Although expressed at different stages of their journey, and both internal and external value about their programmes, all participants understood and connected with phase 07.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

Students of creative industries programmes undergo phase 07, Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, to a great extent. This happens as part of their journey to us on university programmes, during their time with us, and out into their graduate lives. They expressed that they would engage with areas they never would have, like electronics and programming (PLAA004, PLCD004). They described having more confidence in their learning after having done placements (PLAA007). Atlas said the main reason for coming to university was to learn how to turn something he enjoys into career plans (PLAH002). Echo shares that it also exceeds the programme progression expectations: "I like to think that, hopefully, over these last four years, I've become a better person academically and socially" (PLEE001). Across the sample, the "hands-on" and "practical nature" of the programmes are regularly recalled as the stand-out feature, and the direct career link for those skills, coupled with what they expected coming in, leads to the most value.

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

Creative industries education is all about acquiring knowledge and skills, so it scores highly in terms of the validity of the phase. There is an issue, however, with the potential overlap and repetition between Phase 07 and Phase 05: Exploring options for new roles, relationships and actions. At first, we might separate hardware and software knowledge and skills to Phase 07 and the people-centric areas of group work to Phase 05, but that would be an oversimplification of our field and lead to confusion. Because of the collaborative nature of creative industries production, roles relationships and actions are intertwined with the skills you bring to the table. A Director of Photography, for example, is a department head. A team manager needs to be proficient technically, creatively, and in professional leadership. A camera operator below the director of photography needs to understand their position in the team, be technically and creatively competent, and demonstrate leadership to the assistant, clapper loader and runners below them. On it goes through the

chain. Often, the role is tied to the skill in creative industries and may need combining or further expansion for valid clarity. There may be a clue to the separation when Echo shared that he “wouldn’t have even known to research an idea or like assess the feasibility of an idea if I hadn’t come to University” (PLEE004). Separating subject or industry-specific knowledge and skills from areas that feed into lifelong learning and abilities might hold the key. Specialist vs Transferrable.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow’s Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

The key design aspect of holding on to from phase 07, Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans (Mezirow, 1994), is the “implementing one’s plans” purpose. If we were to test every module and every assessment on our programmes against this purpose, how many would hold up? This comes back to students having a “why”. They respond and engage better if they can see where it leads to and the “real world” value of the assessment tasks. They can see the *why*, so the *how* moves from a stress to an enabler. *But wouldn’t this lead us back to repetition? Not all assessments can lead to the same place.* This is precisely the point. Some lifelong value added will be specialism-specific regarding hard and soft skills. Some will be transferable in terms of personal attributes, lifelong learning skills and so on. Students in creative industries programmes often express not knowing what they want to do “yet”. Taking phase 07 literally needs first to have plans to implement. We can design modules across the programmes to aid their focus. At LJMU, we have already worked this thinking in our newly written media production programme. An “Industries Portfolio” module strand runs through the first, second, and third years. This was our second year of the new programme and the new L5, Industries Portfolio pt2. Last summer, we had the highest number of L4s applying for placements and summer abroad opportunities than ever before. The students attributed this to the encouragement and confidence they gained from Industry Portfolio 1. The first-year module helps students find their “why” and build towards their own “how” for graduation at L6 in Industries Portfolio 3.

6.8 Analysis of Phase 08: Provisionally trying out new roles.

In 1978 phase 08 was “acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans which became phase 07 from 1991 onwards and is discussed in the previous section. In 1991, phase 08 was Provisional trying of new roles, and in 1994, provisionally trying out new roles. Changing the word “of” in 1991 to “out” in 1994 did not impact the data coded to it. In other words, there is no discernible difference. Concerning creative industries education, Phase 08 raises questions around repetition and crossover between this and phases 05 (options for new roles...), 06 (Planning a course of action) and 07 (Acquiring knowledge and skills...) that may require unpacking and refining.

Direct responses to phase 08 Provisionally trying out new roles.

Phase 08 provisionally trying out new roles “Scream's relevance in terms of my experiences in education, in media, media education, definitely” (Echo, PLEE022C). Jazz said, “At Uni, you're learning everything for the first time. Trying everything out. Seeing what you are good at.” (PLJS022C). They all acknowledged this phase almost as a given. An expectation and almost motivation for choosing a creative industries pathway. Chalk recounted the value of media courses in this regard and shared a tricky dynamic within his Managing Projects module. Previously, in another module, somebody had stepped up to lead a project before Chalk did, and he regretted it. In another module, the tutor “saw some confidence or some leadership skills that he wanted me to implement... so this time it was a case of, well, I am gonna build on it. And I wasn't great to start off with. But then I really grew into it. And I really became more confident in the role as well as working out the best way to lead that group”. (Chalk, PLCD022C). He mentions this experience as something he can take into his career and recognises these leadership skills as valuable in other aspects of life, not just the creative industries.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

Although extremely valid in relation to creative industries undergraduate experiences, there is a crossover between Phase 07, provisionally trying out new roles and some previous phases. Most notably Phase 05, Exploration of

options for new roles, relationships, and actions (Mezirow, 1991, 1994). Leaving “relationships and actions” to one side, a distinction becomes clearer between “exploration of options for *new* roles” (phase 05) and “provisionally trying out *new* roles (phase 07). Although Mezirow stated the phases are not linear (1991, 1994), this does suggest an order. First, explore options for new roles and then try them. Separating “roles” away from “relationships and actions” (Phase 05), we hone in on the importance of choice in following through and fully trying a role (Phase 07). This gives a “why” and invites effort. A lot of the extracurricular experiences mentioned were applied for. There was a selection process for Glastonbury, etc., and students committed once chosen. A question would be, how can we replicate role option choices and trials for every student within our programme delivery? *How can we give 60 students in a year group a personalised experience?*

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

The nature of group work, encouragement towards work placements, and industry-relevant skills training mean that students in creative industries programmes undergo provisional trying of new roles to a considerable extent. Students complete group projects within the programmes and experience various roles in these tasks. These can range from short fiction and factual moving image or audio productions to live events and outside broadcast projects. The participants also cited extracurricular activities that you “didn’t have to do”, like gigs, festivals, work placements and volunteering for university initiatives as key stages to progression. The practical workshop aspect of the courses is again championed here: “It was quite a practical approach, so it wasn’t just a person telling you stuff... it’s important to have lectures like that as well, but the most I learn by doing stuff”, (Array, PLAA012). The courses at Solent had industry guests and links who would also offer internships and work placements to students. This is how I got my first industry gig back in Coláiste Dhúlaigh all those years ago. Lavo enjoyed working on the rugby World Cup so much that he “couldn’t believe” he was paid for it (PLLOB004). Jazz refers to the Glastonbury experience quite a lot across her contributions, as it was a milestone for her socially and professionally. Students tried many roles across

the Glastonbury festival, including rigging and running the sound desk, stage cameras, ENG roving crews, etc. It is quite an intense week, but they gain a lot. Mother had an interesting interpretation as she did not see it as trialling the roles "... 'cause it was just implementation" (PLMM022C). In an earlier analysis, I flagged a desire to unpack her comment further if it were an interview, but here, it seems to be evidence of the real-world nature of their training. That these experiences were actually to be taken seriously, not just a practice try. You were doing them for real, with tangible outcomes. "The way I approach things as a mature student is quite different from the way a young student approach. Because for me, there is no "provisional" it is just implementation really." PLMM2022C). Our curriculum design question is: How can we get younger students to adopt this mindset? To show up for "work" within the programmes.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Ensuring every student undergoes Phase 05, the provisional trying of new roles within creative industries programmes is challenging. They will trial new roles within project assessments but not always the ones they wanted. This can have both a negative and positive impact. Suppose you wanted to be a camera operator but ended up on sound. In that case, you might discover a new passion and career option or be completely turned off and lose interest in that project. Numbers are an issue. A short, moving image documentary portrait of 3-5 minutes would require a team of four students max. Director, Camera, Sound, Editor. For each of those four students to experience those four roles within one module, they would need to create four films. A typical module in UK HE runs for ten weeks. They would need to create a film every two weeks, which might be possible if this were the only module they did every day for ten weeks, but a UK HE student typically has three modules in parallel per semester. Then, there are cohort sizes. We had 30 per level in Solent, 120 per level in Bournemouth, and 60 per level now in LJMU. It very quickly becomes unwieldy. As suggested in phase 05, we could trial a "passport" style system of capturing roles along the student journey to ensure they at least try out one or two new roles per semester. Joining Coláiste Dhúlaigh, I would have bet any

money on becoming a sound engineer. That was all I was interested in. By my second year, inspired by my tutor Frank Berry, I fell in love with Moving Image Production. Staying in one lane on a creative programme is to deny perspective expansion. We observe it all the time and see how much more value the ones who change lanes take from the courses.

Something else to consider here would be championing and acknowledging extracurricular efforts within the qualifications. Students tend to get motivated and manage their efforts toward assessment value. Could we award extra credits for the depth and scale of a creative portfolio at graduation? Could we award additional credits for placements and volunteer roles completed outside of coursework?

6.9 Analysis of Phase 09: Building of Competence and...

Phase 09: Building competence and self-confidence in new roles. The 1978 wording of phase 09 was “provisional efforts to try new roles” (Mezirow 1978a). From 1991 onwards, this became phase 08. Phase 09 in 1991 was building competence and self-confidence in new roles. In 1994, it was building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships. Phases 05 through 09 continue to demonstrate crossover and repetition that may require clarification and separation to remain useful within creative industries education design.

“...there's no in or out... there's just forwards” (PLEE022).

Direct responses to phase 09: building of competence and...

“So that's a thing that I still have trouble with. I am more confident in the roles than relationships. But I guess it just takes time.” (PLAA022C). This is a marker of how complex we are. Some people might be more confident in technical areas and, as Array expressed, shy away from office politics on her placement. Some might be creatively confident but must work on their technical skills and professionalism. Echo recounts some advice he was given by a lecturer in his first year; “don't feel like you have to wait until you've graduated to start seeing yourself as a professional” (PLEE022C), a mantra he tried to emulate by printing business cards and getting freelance employment. He also said he was 100% more competent than when he started the course. Atlas interpreted the

phase as using assessment feedback to build competence in that field and then build self-confidence in the subject matter and “also in the relationships that you've gained through doing that subject and doing that report and learning this subject matter” (PLAH022). It was nice to see assessments get a positive mention! Mother and Echo expressed being knocked back when they were not at the top of the class as they thought they would be. We see this a lot in modern students of creative industries as their pathways are varied. Some come to us without practical media experience, while others have done three years on a BTEC course. Many students, particularly in the second year, share the negative inner monologue Echo had to overcome: “I'm not as good as everyone I'm sat next to” (PLEE022C). Jazz interpreted the phase simply as: “Doing the thing that you're good at lots, and getting lots of experience at it, and becoming really good at it” (PLJS022). We should not overlook this beautifully simple statement. It can help strip away the overthinking students who get bogged down when choosing roles in creative industries courses. Some roles you will like. Some, you will not. Across the journey, a key area will stand out. You will improve in that area as you enjoy it and tend to put more effort into it. You must ensure you get lots of experience in that area and become “really good at it”.

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

Phase 05 is an *exploration* of options for new roles and relationships... and phase 09 is *building competence and self-confidence* in new roles and relationships. Although competence and self-confidence are valid personal developments to champion, over-scaffolding may not be necessary. If we only had phase 08, provisionally trying out new roles, as a prompt, students would naturally have to explore what their options were to achieve it, automatically covering phase 05 and phase 06, planning a course of action. Through trying out the new role, the student might also naturally build competence and self-confidence, but also, part of trying out new roles in creative industries is discovering that the role is not for you. Phase 09 does have validity as written in relation to creative industries education, but taken with the previous four phases; it needs work to iron out crossover and repetition.

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

Questions around confidence trigger responses as diverse as the people asked. They undergo stages of competence and self-confidence building to a great extent, sometimes in surprising areas. Beta equated it to something as global as speaking three languages (PLBH007) and as local as confident in “buying stuff”. The knowledge gained in the media technology course helped to guide the research to purchase the computer she was recording her clip on. For Chalk and Atlas, it meant meeting new people, getting good at talking to them, standing up in front of the class and presenting (PLAH001, PLCD007). Students also experience different cultures as they mingle with international students and students from other courses (PLAA009).

Involvement in societies played a role in confidence development; Sonar Films (Solent’s student-run cinema), Sonar TV and Sonar Radio were a few Array named (PLAA004). These societies were closely linked to the programme skill sets and helped students practice outside of programme hours. Jazz mentions that being a course rep, attending meetings with the teaching staff, volunteering for open days, and speaking to applicants and their parents about what she was doing were important developments (JS004). Chalk talks about exposure to different skills and careers as a type of confidence as he now knows “that there are more options available” and has backup career plans that he would not have known existed (PLCD002). Feedback from tutors in the field and professionals on placements has a positive impact (PLCD010, PLLOB002/04). Mother, more than most, emphasises those music festival placements as something that would never happen outside of this programme (PLMM022C).

A critical thing to hold on to is how the students express the perspective shifts they gain from being part of the university programme, which feeds into the rest of their lives. In an early clip, Atlas shares the difference between home life and university life, that people at university are more supportive than back home because they want you to strive to be better (PLAH001). And L, he says: “I feel like my life has improved in terms of I have more confidence in myself and eh,

I've done more things while I've been here which would lead me to meet new people" (PLAH009).

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

In the modern classroom, students would benefit from understanding confidence rather than just operating under a presumed common interpretation. Later, when coding the data further through reflexive thematic analysis, "confidence" came up as evidence of transformation for the participants but also as hard to define. I have witnessed this as a lecturer, programme leader and personal tutor and try to address it early in the student's journey. Some students see confidence as a personality trait they may never acquire, whereas confidence in camera operation means hours spent with the equipment. A prompt around confidence belongs in the phases. Still, it would benefit from an initiative to understand what confidence means in relation to the complex skills required to become a successful graduate of the creative industries. Hardware, software, and social skills, as well as leadership, administration, research, and criticality, must be demonstrated. By helping our students understand competence and confidence through debate, presentations and theory, we might create a solid foundation for the autodidactic graduate. The teaching team at Solent were very active in setting up societies that complimented the students' learning. The live events society rigged and ran regular local music nights. The Film Society taught students how to order movies from distributors, load and run the DCP, and learn the financial side through ticket sales and budgeting. As programme leaders, we can regularly encourage our teams to help. To set up societies that promote competence and self-confidence. To nurture industry links for placements and feedback from professionals on assessments. The responses mean we have much to do within our programmes, as most recount extracurricular experiences as evidence of confidence building. Within the modules, we can encourage professional effort and build in formative milestones to help shake off bad work habits from a schooling system that mobilises them once per end of term for assessment. This is the critical difference they find during and after placements. How much work they can achieve by putting in effort daily. This is why the yearlong

placement degree award spreadsheet in Bournemouth reads so highly compared to the rest. They grafted when they got back, with their new work ethic. Encouraging daily effort and engagement might lead to “confidence” building. Regular live briefs and public engagement could also promote this. Breaking the grades away from an end-of-term single point can also have a positive effect on weekly engagement. 10% per week x 10 weeks would show massive results, as it did when we trialled it on a L6 skills module in Bournemouth. Attendance was suddenly almost 100% as they were getting “paid” weekly. The pay, being the grade and the *why* of showing up blatant.

6.10 Analysis of Phase 10 A reintegration into one’s life...

Phase 10 in 1978 was “A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective”. In 1991, society was replaced by “one’s life”. And in 1994, the word “own” was added: A reintegration into one’s own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective...

Direct responses to phase 10: A reintegration into one’s life...

Chalk had an interesting response to this that is worth sharing in full. He had been pondering aloud a sense that he always felt mature for his year group, but now, through university, he has settled into that maturity:

“I can go back home and I can sit in an adult conversation without having to pretend, eh, that I belong there. I think that’s probably the best way, eh, in describing it. Because I am an adult, I’m 21, 22 this November and I feel very much like an adult. It helps that a lot of my friends are getting engaged or married or have kids now. Ummm, but that’s beside the point. The knowledge and the stuff that I’ve learnt, I may not use it, but I feel equipped to be an adult in those conversations and really integrate into that society, em, when I go home”, (PLCD022C).

Although unsure if his parents see a change in him, Chalk could see a massive change in who he was starting university to the way he was during the recording. This is key to focusing on transformative *education* over transformative *learning*. Education has a fixed duration and space. Learning is everything everywhere, all at once. These UK degrees, for example, are

typically three years, and students spend time between their old home life and new university life. There are social comparisons and noticeable perspective shifts from leaving home. The transformations that may happen more slowly in the home community are brought into sharp focus and sped up at university. Echo shares that his perspective has changed yearly, but nowhere near as much as in the last four years of study (PLEE022C). His critical take on the phase was brilliant:

“I feel like the wording is a bit... because when it says "a reintegration into one's life" that it, that suggests you've become un-integrated, and I guess or, you know, you've somehow become detached, but you never really are because you don't take a step out and take a step back in. You can only, there's no, there's no in or out... there's just forwards” (PLEE022).

I loved reviewing this revelation from Echo. *You are never not in your own life!* Chalk’ separation of home life from university life may have resulted from interpreting the question and formulating a response. Echo had been pondering the idea that humans like to think they have their life together but “but no one ever really does”. In 1994, Mezirow added “back into one’s own life” to the phase, and I would have to agree with Echo that you never really left it. Going to university, getting a creative industries degree, and getting a doctorate have become new directions. To “reintegrate on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective” seems to acknowledge the hard stop that graduation represents but ignores the social capital and opportunities gradually forming around your new pathway. There is a tone to the phrase Echo has highlighted of the reintegration being achievable as a final phase 10 of transformation. The domestic dichotomy of progress is ongoing, however.

From my BA to my MA and now this Doctorate, new distances have grown between the area of social deprivation I am from and where I am now, Programme Leading in Liverpool. I don’t believe you can ever honestly “go back”, mentally at least. The validity of the phase, as worded, requires unpacking. For levity and contrast depth, Jazz responded in one line: “Stage 10 is when you are good at it, and then you leave Uni, and you graduate, and you

go and do the thing... say Sound Engineering, and that's your career"
(PLJS022). Simple!

RQ1 What is the validity of Mezirow's phases of Perspective Transformation (1978 – 1994) in the context of Creative Industries Undergraduates?

No codes were gathered during the pilot testing of Phase 04 and Phase 10. Phase 10, having 78 references coded to it in this full study, is evidence of my maturing as a researcher and coding to the sentiment of the phase with a view that it needs working to fit. For example, earlier, Echo shared never feeling un-integrated in the first place. His direct response planted a seed that Chalk watered observationally when he expressed his ambitions to take what he had learned from his mistakes and successes in his second year into his third year (PLCD018). This led to the realisation that reintegration into one's life happens whilst on the programmes between the levels. By extension, then, also between the semesters and modules. Each new start is another perspective frame shift. Whilst training with us, University *is* their life. Life is not on pause for them to go back and reintegrate to. "Now, I'm kind of dreading the third year but also can't wait. It's gonna be really good, but I don't know. Final Major Project is daunting" (Jazz, PLJS018).

The pressures of what "reintegration " might look like after graduation are also a factor. Students regularly comment on the stress of finding work and the debt they are burdened with: "It's quite hard to think that when I finish, I'll have a debt of something like £40,000. It's quite hard to swallow. But you just have to do it because there is no other way. Otherwise, you just have to start doing jobs that you don't want to do, and that's no good." (Mother, PLMM015). The "reintegration" phase has validity within creative industries education as they prepare to leave the programmes, but also during it. This feeds into an earlier critique that integration is ongoing. It does not have an endpoint. The phase is not entirely valid as written but requires more open or cyclical wording that acknowledges the many points of micro-reintegration along the programmes.

RQ2 To what extent do First-generation Creative Industries Undergraduates undergo the phases of perspective transformation proposed by Mezirow (1978 – 1994)?

Looking at phase 10, a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective, as a post-graduation stage, PonderLogic 2016 would produce little evidence sticking rigidly to it. There were, of course, perspective shifts before this university experience. "Because I didn't get back into my school, that was the realisation there, like, *oh, things do have an impact on what I do*. Yeah. So I guess. Maturity is definitely a big thing" (Lavo, PLLOB014). This perspective on maturity may have driven Lavo to make the most of his new life at University, so it codes to the phase. In the next section on the validity of phase 10, I talk about how new insights opened out the phase and led to 78 references being coded to it. In relating to the phase as worded, the 2022/3 interviews were invaluable.

Array talks about the class divides being noticeable here in the UK compared to back home in Poland, where "everybody is poor" (PLAA2022b). Because of her industry job, as a direct progression from her degree programme, she feels "very well off" compared to those back home through house ownership and salary. Beta is now more "determined" and believes in herself more, having come through and succeeded in the "most difficult time of her life". "Even when I was let go from the work in the middle of a pandemic, I wasn't, you know, I pick myself up and next day I was already there and doing and trying. And while previously I probably would have not done that", (Beta, PLBH2022). She even credits having to do presentations and group work, which she found hard at university, with being able to deal with plumbers and electricians over the phone and not letting them "step on you". Chalk says his willingness to step up and "control more" during university led him to "be OK with stepping back and trying to take as much as possible from those with more leadership experience" (PLCD2022). Echo said something that really stuck with me. He was expressing how every little thing adds up and that some things he had not seen as valuable at university were now making him the "go-to guy" in work for things like Microsoft Excel, Gantt charts and creative software. Acknowledging the peaks and dips nature of his time at University, Echo arrived at the poignant analogy that "if I hadn't of had like... terrible relationships, I don't think I would have been

in the right place to have a nice relationship with my current Partner”, (PLEE22b). Chalk also said the media technology degree was a point of interest when he went for a secondary school teaching interview, which was why he got the job.

There is a common trait across the sample of using learning to change their circumstances after their degree experiences. Jazz and Atlas returned to complete an MA in acoustics as a career path change. Beta studied several small courses to achieve promotions in work, and Echo is studying business part-time to facilitate internal promotion. I began this doctorate to change my career into education. Overcoming the challenges and achieving a degree instils a lifelong perspective that broadens your options. We can use education to change or improve our circumstances at any time. This was humbling to realise and galvanised my resolve that this is important. These transferable skills are only sometimes obvious when we are delivering to the students, and they already benefit from them around us. If we were to design with these transferrable outcomes in mind, we might add further transformative value.

RQ3 To what extent can Mezirow’s Transformation cycle (1978-1994) contribute to the design and delivery of creative industries education?

Nobody speaks to me about the ongoing divides I continue to feel when I return to my home town now, 20 years after graduating from Coláiste Dhúlaigh. The cities I have lived in, the creative productions and festivals I have been part of, the travel, and the global friendships. The journey from washing laundry sheets in Wexford to potentially “Dr WeZ” in 2024 is a silent achievement rarely spoken about back there. My Uncle Dermot, who is more like a friend with just ten years between us, will ask, “Well, how’re ya getting’ on, man?” at Christmases. It’s up to me what I tell him, and he still works in that same laundry. On those same industrial washing machines. He never left the town except for U2 concerts once every five years or so until I left Dublin. This is something first-generation students experience and a research thread I aim to develop after this doctorate. That lonely in-between space, a kind of domestic dichotomy of achievement, felt like being the first in the family to strike out and level up.

In our delivery, we can use phase 10, reintegration, to support students and help them develop financial mindsets to carry the debt burden. Introduce entrepreneurship and start-ups as second income streams to pay off their debts. By building in career planning modules early, we can make their final semester with us less of a shock by scaffolding their journey through our delivery and integrating university supports in these areas within our modules. We should not expect students to know and engage with these facilities just because they exist. They have been through a school system promoting conformity through metrics. They must be shown how to take ownership of their journey and prepare for the more difficult clashes between old and new perspectives. Identifying transferrable skills as an outcome of direct subject specialisms and indirect extracurriculars may tangibly add transformative value.

6.11 Concluding the Phases and acknowledging the 11th.

In the canon of Transformative Learning Theory, “the ten phases of perspective transformation” are most commonly discussed, but there is an eleventh! *What? There’s an 11th phase? But even Mezirow calls them 10?* In 1994, Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships was added as phase 09. Pushing “Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships” up to phase 10 and “A reintegration into one’s own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective” to phase 11.

Phase 05 already covers “exploration of options for new... relationships”, and phase 09 (1991)/10 (1994) covers “building competence and self-confidence in new... relationships”. The notable repetition now between these three phases was confirmed within NVivo. The references coded to this new phase, “renegotiating relationships”, are the same data points coded to phases 05 and 09/10 previously. Things like peers with similar passions on the programmes. Group work instigation social interactions. Societies, work experience, extracurriculars and so on. The term “renegotiating” is also problematic because it could be read as something that went wrong in the first place. At a stretch, *the domestic dichotomy of achievement* felt by first-generation students returning home might be applied here. But that usually manifests in burying your new perspectives rather than an outward effort to have them reintegrated and accepted within the unchanged status quo. “Negotiating relationships” has

some value if we consider a production group of four students on a first-year portrait documentary brief tasked with designating their roles as Director, Camera, Sound, and Editor. We tend to let this happen organically, but maybe we can design some conversation points around who would best suit each role in these formative projects. Based on the initial hunch reading of the phase, coupled with coding insights, I believe the phase holds little validity and can be dropped. This would avoid further crossover with phases 05 and 09/10, which I also recommend merging. Nothing will be lost as the processes attached to negotiating production roles, for example, will still be necessary when trying out new roles (phase 08). The Perspective Transformation cycle, first proposed by Mezirow in 1978 and then modified from 1991 to 1994, has value in relation to the experiences of undergraduates in modern creative industries. But there are issues.

Based on this analysis, and with an awareness of the crossover and repetition between phases 05 through 09 that need work from the ones that tested well, Mezirow's phases would now look like this (See table 02 below, noting the year of phase iteration).

6.12 Mezirow's Phases of Perspective Transformation Concluding Table

Purple = Dropped in next version

Green = Added since previous version

Orange = Repetition

	<u>1978a</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>2023 conclusion</u>
01	A Disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma	A disorienting Dilemma
02	Self-examination	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, sometimes turning to religion for support.	Self-examination (1978)
03	A critical assessment of sex-role assumptions and sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions.	A critical assessment of assumptions.	A critical assessment of assumptions (1994)
04	Relating one's discontent to a current to a current public issue.	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change.	Recognition that one's discontent and the processes of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change.	DROPPED
05	Exploring options for new ways of living.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions.	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions. (1994)
06	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles.	Planning a course of action.	Planning a course of action.	Planning a course of action. (1991)
07	Planning a course of action.	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans.	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans	Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans (1994)
08	acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing ones plans.	Provisional trying of new roles.	Provisionally trying out new roles.	Provisionally trying out new roles. (1994)
09			Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.	Dropped
10 (09)	Provisional efforts to try new roles.	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles.	(10) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships	Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships (1994)
11 (10)	A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by ones new perspective.	(11) A reintegration into one's own life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.	A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective. (1978)

Table 2B Mezirow's Phases of Perspective

6.13 Findings pt2: F.O.R.M. & The 13 Step System

“What form transforms?” (Keegan 2009)

Early in this thesis and doctorate journey, I realised we can overthink the “original contribution to knowledge” aspect of *doctorateness*. The complete statement should read “an original contribution to the conversation around knowledge in your field”. This really helped as nobody expressed this in the early stages, and you felt stunted pressure to arrive at an $E=MC^2$. A “contribution” actually meant just that. A seat at the table, not to invent a new table to invite people to. The difference between research contribution and *invention* was important to acknowledge. Personal process policing leads to the unlikely expectation of having a eureka moment to share at the end of this journey. Having gotten comfortable with this new understanding, and the stress somewhat relieved, the irony now is that I had one. I did have a eureka moment. I had two.

On the 2nd of June 2023, from a sunny bench at the back of Gladstone’s Library, Hawarden, Lucozade and Kinder Bueno in hand, I stood up with the shock of realisation. *Perspective Frames! F.O.R.M.! That’s it! Frame of Reference Model! It works!* Keegan’s question, what form transforms (2000), stuck with me. It felt like a challenge... a provocation. I first noted the idea of using the word itself as an acronym in the PonderLogic notebook in October 2017.

FRAME
OF
REFERENCE
Model

(quite a smile on my face with
the directness of this answer
to Keegan's question!!!)

FORM !!! Acknowledges Both the individual
And society's role in the transformation

This doctorate will end with the designing of
the "FORM foundation" or "FORM ACCESS YEAR".

I TAKE 20 of below UCAS/No UCAS interview
& portfolio, spend self to sure, No GRADES. No
UNITS. Project based. Spend 1st month gauging
the skill levels and design from there with
them.

SIGNATURE Wesley Nolan DATE 6/10/17

DISCLOSED TO AND UNDERSTOOD BY [signature] DATE 30/7/11

PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Fig 6.1 First ponderings on F.O.R.M.

It would take a rigorous journey through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2013, 2020, 2022) of the data and almost six years of pondering to finally arrive at a fully expressible definition of F.O.R.M. I can wholeheartedly attribute this to the longitudinal nature of my work. This would not have happened without the five-year later, follow-up interviews.

The Journey to F.O.R.M

In Chapter 05, I discuss and demonstrate how the six stages of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2020, 2022) were adapted. Having used stage 02, Systematic Data Coding, to analyse Mezirow's perspective cycle and capture direct systematic lines of questioning, RTA stage 3 onwards are fresh interrogations stemming from research question (RQ) 4:

RQ4: What additional contributions can be determined from the data generated to advance Mezirow's Transformation cycle (1978a-1994) towards practical tools and concepts for creative industries education design and delivery?

Mapping the data to three iterations of Mezirow's perspective cycle over time helped me to understand the researcher's mindset and how to extrapolate areas of interest to code and build themes from. Reverse engineering his phases back out into experience revealed how broad experience can be aligned to key moments for coding and dissemination. Some were created out of commonality between participant responses. Others were observable points from my continuing experience as a transformed student of creative industries, as an educator and programme leader. During phase 03, 315 codes were created. Some codes might have one reference attached; "Met partner at uni", "School knocked confidence", or "distance from home". Within NVivo, a "reference" is a data point attributed to a particular code. At the higher end things like "support and understanding at home" (32), Different Learning styles (40) and Support outside of teaching staff (42). During phase 04, these 315 codes were worked down to 36 generated themes. Fig 6.2 and 6.3 below illustrate the progression.

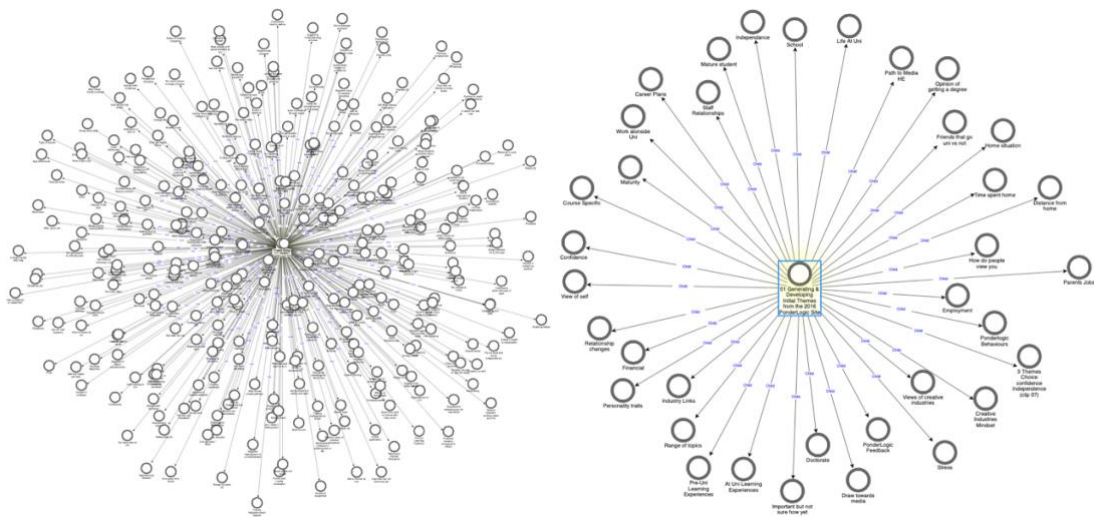


FIG 6.2 PHASE 03 Codes narrowing to PHASE 04 THEMES within my NVivo Project

Each analysis stage was a grind, as the PonderLogic 2016 data, the 2022 interviews, and my 2022 interviewer clips were coded. Personal Process Policing (PPP) was nagging all the while: *Is this all going too far? Should I have just written up from the PonderLogic notebook? Can I use all of this?* There was a sense, however, that doing this thoroughly was necessary and that it would do your future self a favour for potential outputs.

Looking for top-level themes to inform design and delivery, a pattern emerged. “School”, “Path to Media HE”, and “Draw towards Media” *could be grouped under Learning, maybe? An education journey, perhaps?* Themes like “Home situation”, “Parents jobs”, and “friends that go to uni vs not” might fall under domestic. *A domestic position?* “Creative Industries Mindset”, “Industry links”, and “Career Plans” *might be grouped under Vocational options, maybe?* This was mind, every day. Since leaving the industry full-time, I have never had a day where I felt like I was not doing research. Everything in delivering creative industries education links back to, inspires, and is inspired by this research. Washing my hands, June 2nd, in the Gladstones toilet during a writing break, I remember thinking: *it’s a pity I never got F.O.R.M. to work. It has felt like a universe-given gut instinct to solve. It won’t leave me alone. “Perspectives” is important to hold on to in relation to these students and my own transformation. P.O.R.M. is ridiculous! Maybe something else will come up.* I forgot about it and left to sit in the garden. With my eyes closed to the sun, the three top-level themes spun in carrousel: Domestic... Education... Career... *Frames! Perspective frames! Of course!*

So... What form transforms? (Keegan, 2000)

6.14 F.O.R.M.

The **F**rame **o**f **R**eference **M**odel for Education Design.

In relation to Creative Industries Education design and delivery, there are three key transformation frames of reference to consider: the social frame, the Learning Frame, and the Career Frame. Looking through these frames, there are three key perspective development bands: Journey, Position, and Options with supports. “Bands” is an essential identifier as it acknowledges that we have a bandwidth.

The Social Transformation Frame:

Social Journey

Social Position

Social Options with support

The Learning Transformation Frame:

Learning Journey

Learning Position

Learning Options with support

The Career Transformation Frame:

Career Journey

Career Position

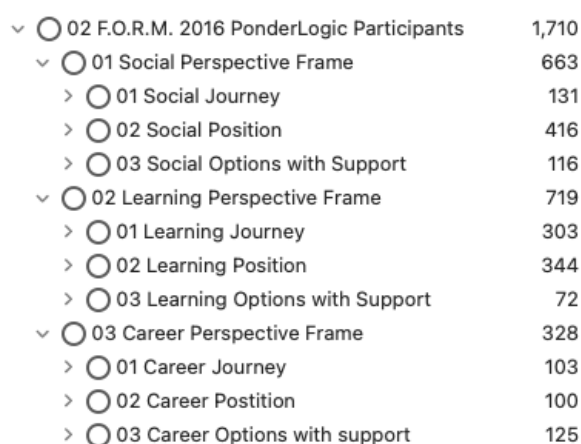
Career Options with support

There it is! The culmination of a decade's work in just 100 words!

Testing F.O.R.M.

The excitement and high I felt running back into the library and scribbling the definition of FORM into the PonderLogic notebook is hard to convey. To have lived with a thought for so many years, through the overwhelming data and literature, to land in clear and simple focus suddenly was journey-affirming. I felt like a research insider with something to contribute for the first time. Alongside the definition, I excitedly scribbled “genuine excitement today. Feels like the $E=MC^2$ moment we are not supposed to have!!!” in the PonderLogic notebook (See Appendix 8.1). At this point, I had almost completed Phase 05 of RTA within NVivo. I had already begun to refine and define the themes from Stage 04 under Domestic, Education and Vocational. However, the instinct to use and test FORM at this stage won over the workload apprehension.

Here is how it looks within NVivo:



02 F.O.R.M. 2016 PonderLogic Participants	1,710
01 Social Perspective Frame	663
01 Social Journey	131
02 Social Position	416
03 Social Options with Support	116
02 Learning Perspective Frame	719
01 Learning Journey	303
02 Learning Position	344
03 Learning Options with Support	72
03 Career Perspective Frame	328
01 Career Journey	103
02 Career Postition	100
03 Career Options with support	125

Fig 6.4 PonderLogic 2016 coded to F.O.R.M. within NVivo.

The first transformation frame of reference in the initial flash of inspiration was “Domestic”, but many child codes and themes emerged with no parent to go against that title. Coded moments of reflection on things like “confidence”, “pride”, or “how others view you/how you view yourself” became orphaned alongside the “Domestic” heading. After almost a month of pondering the problem, on July 7th, “Social” clicked as a more appropriate frame than “Domestic”. All codes found a home within the model when “Domestic” was replaced with “Social”. There was potential to create a 4th frame of reference, but *three is a sequence*, and an output goal is to keep things simple, memorable and accessible. If I had not tested the frame of reference model in this 5th RTA phase, I would not have discovered “Domestic” as too closed.

“Learning” and “Career” were also favoured perspective frame titles for this reason over “Educational” and “Vocational” in the final draft. The Journey, Position and Options with support bands are also designed as a sequence of three and repeated under each transformation frame for memorability.

At the top level, the initial iteration used “... three key *“perspective”* frames of reference to consider...”. On testing and review, it was felt that “perspective” only puts transformation back inside the individual. Personal perspective change is an important aspect of a transformative journey, but internal changes are not the only gains from transformative experiences. “Transformation Frame” felt more open and appropriate for the top level and was favoured for the definition; “...there are three key transformation frames of reference to consider”. It also allows us to openly discuss Social Transformation, Learning Transformation and Career Transformation as considerations for Creative Industries education design and delivery. In other words, it asks us, as providers, what we are doing about these areas and shares the responsibility with our students. “Transformation Frame” also reads as a call to action in the given area, whereas Perspective Frame reads as a call to observe. “Perspective” has a place within the frames to situate the individual amongst the change desired change. Education pathways are chosen, whereas not all transformative life experiences are. We must also acknowledge the factors and supports outside our mindsets to achieve transformative experiences through design.

My 100-word Frame of Reference Model for education design definition is brief and simple but becomes multifaceted and complex when mapped to the student experience. Working the PonderLogic data through the FORM lens already offers rich transformation consideration. Many of Mezirow’s critics respond robotically to the data and findings of his seminal 1978 study. Modern reflexive research positioning may have allowed Mezirow to write and attach the specific study to his personal, broader, and successful career insights. This became important as I worked FORM within NVivo, and it feels like it matters. It would seem odd in educational research not to acknowledge the experience and position of the researcher. My experience as a programme leader, educator, and professional in creative industries helps me identify and suggest

considerations for transformative experience design and delivery. Some flashes of inspiration may be minor in terms of our personal daily language, content design, and supervision focus. Others may be major in terms of programme, level, module, and assessment design. I want to share one of my most significant considerations at the blue-sky thinking end of the insights: *Why are we using numbers for creative assessment grading? The quantitative focus stirs pre-university “teaching for the test” anxieties and stunts creativity.*

Proposal: Hold on to levelness and standards through the QAA guidelines but drop the percentage grades and move to a pass/redo model for creative subjects. This is my most disruptive ambition. It is hard to see a UK institute taking it up right now but if we had a global shared platFORM, maybe the Scandinavians could trial and share insights (if they haven't already!).

These are the early days; the Frame of Reference Module is just an idea and is only a few months old. The ambition is for FORM to be shared openly and for global findings to inspire local solutions. The core engine for this proposed new branch of transformative *education* research is for practical tools and concepts to implement in creative industries design and delivery. Each institute, programme, module or assessment would discover different areas for consideration from different samples at other times. FORM is not fixed and closed. FORM should remain flexible and active through collaboration and situational responses. Local resources, institutional mindsets, and policy would impact potential responses to FORM for enhancing student transformation, but the goal is for a global Didgeographic community. The model is aimed at the institutional level for design and delivery considerations. Still, it would also work at the personal tutor level to focus on reflective or reflexive exercises and pastoral concerns.

When testing the Frame of Reference Model for education design against this research sample, I first wanted to test how well the initially developed themes from RTA phase 04 would code to the newly identified parent themes. FORM grew out of the RTA journey through the data, but going from over 300 initial codes in phase 03 down to 3 top-level themes at phase 05 was something I had never experienced before, and each stage felt dubious at first (PPP), but the transformation frames and bands fit like a glove. FORM is a deceptively simple

concept that reveals complex areas for discussion working through it. It acted as evidence of transformation in some coding and design and delivery prompts in others. My experience working the model against the data is shared in brief, and then I direct you to browse the sample table (see appendix 6.2) before this general discussion of how it worked.

FORM + RTA = Utility

To facilitate practical outputs, I created the following table to workshop FORM:

D&D = Development & Design.

<u>Transformation</u> <u>Frame</u>	<u>Transformation</u> <u>Band</u>	<u>RTA</u> <u>Themes</u>	<u>D&D</u> <u>Awareness</u>	<u>D&D Suggestions</u>
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Fig 6.5 F.O.R.M. Worksheet

Short Examples from The Social Transformation Frame

Coding to this frame develops an awareness of the social factors influencing the student's transformation potential. Newman (2010) suggested that the women in Mezirow's initial study (1978a) were merely "objects being swept along by the flow of social history". I agree to a point, but only in the sense that Mezirow seemed to contract the female experience to a domestic frame and isolated the women in their personal spaces by ignoring the social. This left the study open to criticisms such as Newman's as he goes on to suppose that they [women in Mezirow's study], as we all are "much of the time changed by accident and not by design" (Newman 2010). Newman's attempt to state that we all change in life as a negative paradoxically misses the apparent point. That education is not "by accident" but achieved through design. "Transformative Learning" may occur for all by accident through the twists and turns of everyday life, but my position is that "Transformative Education" is achieved through delivery and conscious engagement. By choosing creative industries education you change your social position and options with supports. Your social journey influences your position, and we might facilitate social transformation by considering these aspects of development.

Working through FORM in the fifth and final reflexive thematic analysis stage revealed a lot. Below, I spin through just one transformation frame, pulling one theme from each. I created a table for illustrative purposes, pulling just three themes from NVivo testing FORM (see Appendix 6.2). This is followed by a more general conclusion of the findings.

The social journey

“Support and Understanding at Home” gathered the most references at 32 and was a mixture of positives and negatives. The experiences of Array, Beta, and Mother highlighted the isolation that international students can feel in our classrooms and the shared isolation common across the group. This stems from being first-generation students and the creative industries as a subject. “They can't really offer any support course-related... it's hard to have media support when they don't really know what to say”. (PLLOB013). All participants expressed a lack of support and understanding at home, being first-generation. Jazz contrasts the silence when she visits her own home with her partner Theo's Mum:

“I do see a difference when I speak to Theo's parents. Because his Mum has been to Uni twice, she has a Masters and she did like, kind of media related stuff as well. So she gets it when we're talking about stuff. She can relate to it a lot more, and she's actually been quite helpful on some assessments and stuff as well. Um, so there is a lot more support there because she gets it.” (PLJS013).

The parent's journey becomes part of the student's story and could have a negative impact. As a Programme Leader, I can acknowledge this as a gap and work “isolation” into induction sessions to flag social options and support for the cohort. I can encourage my team to discuss this in sessions and add it as an agenda item for personal tutorship. Open conversations with the cohort about parents sometimes not “getting” this, particularly for our subject area, can help students feel less isolated. They are not alone in this and can bond around it. Jazz talks about how valuable it was to have that support from Theo's Mum. First-generation students do not have this extra home support. Something I have never considered but can now suggest trialling is setting up extra assignment-specific workshops and inviting students from the higher levels back to contribute experiences. L6 can help L4. This is just one example of the thinking applying FORM to just one code can trigger under Social Journey for design and delivery strategies (see Appendix 6.6 for working out the above proposals).

The Social Position

Some positive themes and evidence of social transformation are areas like Social circle growth, New life choices at Uni, Feeling independent at uni, Meeting People with similar interests, and so on. These are common areas, but others are quite personal. Relationships come up. Jazz met a partner at the University. Echo shared a social situation with a girlfriend that impacted his position negatively (see Chapter 04, The 13th Clip). Mother struggled as a mother and mature student making friends. The new social positions and pressures these students find themselves in because of choosing to come and work with us are important for two reasons. First, they evidence transformation. They would not experience these things, some of which could be considered “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow, 1978a), if they had stayed home. Secondly, they impact performance. Some common themes and codes were financial debt (19), financial maturity (18), student loans (31), budgeting (4), pressure to work, & Uni (24). These can be gathered under a top-level theme of financial position. The stress expressed in this area is genuine. Typically, exceptional circumstances (extensions, etc.) relate to illness and bereavement with evidence supplied. Given the arbitrary nature of the student loan awards and the pressure to work and earn to live in these new cities, can we make the case for this in itself as extenuating circumstances? This can be met with a dismissive attitude in academics: *They knew they were signing up for full-time study!* But in these times of financial crises and extortionate rent, they *have* to work. Lavo and Atlas were honest enough to share wasting money and learning hard lessons. Can we work personal budgeting directly into delivery, and if not, are central supports covering this? *But surely this is outside of our subject specialism? We can't be responsible for all of this? I have 100 students in the room!* Some old-school academics might argue. It is not to feel individually responsible for every student but as personal tutors, an awareness of how big this will all feel to them will help. Not all academics are good personal tutors. FORM can help create a discussion agenda with prepared supports and suggestions. It should be taken very seriously at institutional, programme management and leadership levels. If these students are not eating well, not resting because of long work hours, are stressed, etc, they are not performing well. *If they are not performing well, they are not transforming well.* I am reminded of a BAME student who had not been attending in Bournemouth.

When he finally responded and attended a tearful meeting, I learned that his father had left, and he used his student loan to help his mother and sisters in London. This left him with no money for his studies and fatherly duties in the home. I felt for him and also felt terrible myself. It was an eye-opener for me. We never really know what is going on in the individual lives of the students, but over the years, I have seen trends and common areas requiring design and delivery efforts supported by this research. A more extensive study would reveal even more.

The Social Options with supports

“I Definitely feel a separation of who I was pre-uni and now.” (Jazz, PLJS003). Jazz mentioned barely being able to lead a vegetarian diet when she was at home, but at university, she was able to go full Vegan. Feeling a separation from who she previously was could also be coded to Social Position or Journey, which is ok. A single data point might have evidence or response values under multiple transformation bands. Similarly, when working things out on the table (see appendix 6.2) we can look at other areas and workshop them for options and supports. On the table I pulled forward the lack of support at home from the social journey band as being aware of this we can encourage nurturing local supports. Jazz also mentioned being able to make a better home for herself at university after family life was not great before moving. Newman (2010) might argue that these things *could* have happened over time if Jazz had moved out of home eventually anyway, but the point is that it *has* happened *now* and quickly through choosing to join us. These new life choices came up in the coding as evidence of personal social transformation through independence and confidence building. Working FORM against the student’s data gave me much to think about as a lecturer, programme leader and researcher. The entire table could have been completed three separate times in as much detail with those three hats on (See Appendix 6.2). Ideally, the table testing the Frame of Reference Model would be added here within the document for flow, but running through just three RTA themes under each transformation band generated almost two thousand words across six pages (See appendix 6.2). My experience testing the Frame of Reference model against the data evidenced a robust model for experience design at the institutional level. My second research eureka moment is a transformation system for the individual.

6.15 The 13-Step Transformation System for Creative Students

1. An inciting Incident.
2. Orientation, objective setting and identifying supports.
3. Reflective inward pondering.
4. Reflexive outward pondering.
5. Acknowledging reflective and reflexive strengths, identifying lessons from negatives.
6. Reorientation through short-, mid-, long-terms objective adjustments in response to steps 03 – 05.
7. Build and engage with your network of personal and social supports.
8. Build and engage with your network of craft and career supports.
9. Plan and dedicate time to craft and career-specific skillsets.
10. Plan and dedicate time to transferrable skillsets.
11. Conscious effort to experience roles outside of your comfort zone.
12. Conscious effort to apply social, learning and career gains to new challenges.
13. Gratitude.

Having been through the deep work of analysing Mezirow's (1978 – 1994) phases of perspective transformation (section 6 pt1), it was clear that there were issues with their relevance to undergraduates in creative industries. As I worked the data fresh, through Reflexive Thematic Analysis arriving at FORM, the issues with Mezirow's phases were always a simmering ponder. *The learning journey does not always start with a disorienting dilemma; there are positive inspirations to acknowledge. Self-examination is worthwhile, but earlier iterations considering society and external factors are essential. There are issues with the repetition and crossover between phases 05 through 09 to iron out. The final reintegration stage is not always in society for students as they live through their programmes.* And, of course, the key thesis ambition is to contribute utility to the field. *Outputs need to be helpful, not just interesting.*

Having worked FORM to the data as the 5th RTA stage, it was time to look at the perspective transformation cycle as a problem. As I began to work through all of this, moving away from Mezirow's observational tones and towards instructional, I found that it all took on a surprising new life. A second eureka moment! Looking at the stages from a user's point of view suggested the columns for "Mindset" and "Suggested Actions" (see table 3 below).

6.16 13-Step Transformation System for Creatives Worksheet (TS13)

Table 3 The 13 Step Personal Transformation System

	<u>Step:</u>	<u>Mindset:</u>	<u>Suggested Actions:</u>
01	An Inciting Incident	Acknowledging or finding your “why”. Knowing your “why”, will help you endure any “how” you are challenged with. Own the reason you are here. Use it to frame discipline.	You may already know your “why”, great. If not, try recording in writing, or moving image, or audio you journey with a goal to unpack your “why”. Talk to: Programme Leader, Personal Tutor, Programme Team. Ask peers about their “why”. Write out your “why” and put it places you will see when needed. (Note: Your “why” may change).
02	Orientation, objective setting and identifying supports.	Where <i>exactly</i> am I? What do I expect from this? What do I bring to the table and what are my supports?	Create a current craft skills and attributes audit. Read Programme materials: Handbook, module guides, assessment briefs and so on. Ask many questions of the programme team. Map official and personal deadlines onto calendar. Note the exact learning outcomes for assessments and add to skills audit.
03	Reflective Inward Pondering	Explore the internal factors impacting the current perspective frame and capabilities.	Reflective writing. Counselling. Personal tutor chats. Wellbeing services. Trusted friend/family chats.
04	Reflexive Outward Pondering	Explore the external factors impacting the current perspective frame and capabilities, acknowledging your own impact on them.	Reflexive writing. Counselling. Personal tutor chats. Wellbeing services. Trusted friend/family chats.
05	Acknowledge reflective and reflexive strengths identifying lessons from negatives.	Are my abilities and circumstance in line with my current challenge? If below, what adjustments need to be made to achieve? If above, how do I stay engaged?	Regularly update your skills and attributes audit based on new insights. Add areas for improvement to it and champion next level achievements visually.
06	Reorientation through short-, mid-, long-term objective adjustments in response to steps 03 to 05.	Are my initial stage 02 goals achievable in relation to current situation and impacting factors? Are my time targets and objectives being met? What adjustments can I make to stay on track?	Do this regularly: Update current craft skills and attributes. Re-read Programme materials: Handbook, module guides, assessment briefs and so on. Inform programme team of learning needs. Adjust personal deadlines on calendar.
07	Build and engage with your network of personal and social supports.	Am I surrounding myself with positive encouragement and letting go of negative energies? Time goes quickly here, am I valuing and using it well? Am I sharing positive wins and reaching out	Join or run Student Union societies and socials. Join or run subject specific clubs. Represent your course. Engage with Programme socials. If something is not happening, start it. Engage with the university gym, sports and activities. Engage with wellbeing supports where

		when low? Do I know exactly who I can share or reach out to?	needed. Find out what is happening in the city and get amongst it.
08	Build and engage with your network of craft and career supports.	Am I surrounding myself with proactive peers and addressing disengaged energies? Time goes quickly here, am I spending time outside of sessions with those of similar subject interests? Do I know who to go to for professional, skills and career advice? Do they know me?	Keep an updated contacts notebook. Connect with: Skilled Peers, Programme Leader, Lecturers, Technicians, Library Team, Academic Achievement team, Careers Team, Wellbeing Team, Placements team through online and physical spaces. Engage with industry guests, events and so on and ask for opportunities. Check your student email account daily. Sign up to external industry shows, exhibitions and free student training sites. Ask questions from everybody!
09	Plan and dedicate time to craft and career specific skillsets.	What subject and career learning outcomes do I currently need to prioritise development in? Hardware, software, production planning, production workflows, legal, health and safety and so on?	Map out your weekly calendar around timetabled sessions and stick to it. Treat as a working week 9-5 Mon-Fri with two hours Sunday evening looking at the week ahead.
10	Plan and dedicate time to transferrable skillsets.	What transferrable skills do I currently need to prioritise development in? Research, Communication, Criticality, Leadership, Teamwork, Project Management, Budgeting, Digital Marketing and so on.	Map out your weekly calendar around timetabled sessions and stick to it. Treat as a working week 9-5 Mon-Fri with two hours Sunday evening looking at the week ahead.
11	Conscious effort to experience roles outside of your comfort zone.	Am I stepping up for the same roles each time? Am I hiding? If so, why, and how do I step forwards? Am I taking full advantage of all transformation opportunities through trying different things?	Make a log of roles experienced to date. Is there a pattern? Why? Make an effort to try different roles and take pride in adding new experiences to your next log. Create and join projects outside of your programme assessments to make gains in this area. Remember, each role is not a life commitment and value experience over "enjoyment".
12	Conscious effort to apply social, learning and career gains to new challenges.	Am I using everything I have learned so far to approach new challenges? Or am I passive in the moment denying myself potential circumstance change?	Read and research everything you can related to your incoming challenge and list how to address the following: How does this challenge relate to and progress from the last? How will your next actions viewed as a whole evidence progression?
13	Gratitude.	Am I appreciating my position? Am I appreciating myself? Am I appreciating what is being offered?	Take regular pauses. Breathe. Note and be proud of achievements big and small. Express gratitude towards yourself. Express gratitude towards those who have helped your journey. Be grateful for the learning in any failings.

6.17 How the data revealed F.O.R.M. and TS13

When analysing the 2022/23 interviews, it felt like the interview process was more for the researcher and that the PonderLogic method, where the participant pondered their subconscious aloud (Ponderlogues), was more for them. The following exchange between myself and Echo in 2022 highlights this:

- Echo: The extracurricular stuff was, I think, I would call that, like general growth. I would call that like general just growth as a person, general self-awareness. The stuff on the course, that's the stuff that's really contributed to like career growth and like professional development.
- WeZ: Ohhh that's really interesting, actually, because you just gave me some ideas of how to maybe separate it out. Because, you know, when you, one of the, one of the things with Transformative Learning is they talk about Perspective Transformation, but we have different perspectives for different areas, and I think you might you might have hit on something there in terms of *general growth* and *academic growth* or *vocational growth*, or jeez, there's even *domestic growth*, you know?
- Echo: Yeah, that, that too, if I hadn't have had, I mean, just to be, not to be, not too objectify, umm, if I hadn't of had like terrible relationships, I don't think I would have been in the right place to have a nice relationship with my current Partner. Like, every little thing adds up. Like, if I hadn't have done the course, I wouldn't have the technical knowledge to do some of the things I do now. (PLEE2022b).

In this conversation in September 2022, you can see the seeds of realisation sprout that were then watered through reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2020, 2022) and flowered to FORM in June 2023. *General growth with Academic, Vocational and Domestic growth* from our conversation made it to the first draft Frame of Reference Model. This short exchange also highlights the reflexive nature of the research. Echo and I were figuring things out together by reflecting on the shared PonderLogic 2016 experience. My own experiences as a student and where we both are now. As he spoke, an

important notion that “perspective” was not singular stepped forward. When we write, read, or talk about transformative learning theory, we can fall into the trap of reading “perspective” to be singular. At the time, I was unsure of how this notion, amongst many others, would ultimately be used, but I was aware of it as a significant *coming together*. I would not have arrived at FORM and the 13 Steps without the five-year interviews. They were intended to test the perspective cycle further (Mezirow 1978 – 1994) and to confirm or deny any transformative values of their creative industries education. But it also led to a lot more than that. My experiences as a programme leader in those five years at two different institutes, combined with the RTA findings, helped identify the key development areas for FORM and the 13 Steps. Every code grouped into sub-themes leads to recurring top-level themes, leading to research insights, confusion, doubt, and eureka moments, which are now understood as discussion points in ways that I was blind to when first embarking on the RTA process.

This is why the “reflexive” identifier for reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2013, 2020, 2022) is vital to champion. It acknowledges our role as researchers “generating” data, not simply “gathering” data as separate from us. My continued journey experiencing transformation through this doctoral experience has research value here. My experience as a Programme Leader and educator delivering to students has research value here. Without these aspects, FORM and the 13-step System (TS13) would not have happened. *But isn't there a danger of bias, then?* Of course, but I would argue that it is impossible to conduct academic research of scale without bias. Something draws us to an area which inevitably sculpts the knowledge produced rather than a must-be-contained threat to credibility (Braun and Clarke 2020). There is a reason that I am dedicating a life to transformative creative industries education and not trying to solve the lithium battery problem. To live with these projects for so many years, we should care about them. Research professionalism and trust come first, from within ourselves then recognising the potential impacts of bias on data generation as it happens. As I did when sharing the moment with Tally *actually* enjoying school (PLPTLXTRA) in chapter 06. Bias is an interesting aspect of research to share. Not to hide and

be ashamed of. It's where the real person and passion meet the study. It is a moment of transformative learning within your research to savour.

A valuable next step might also be to define a branch of *transformative education* discussion that identifies it as having a focus on utility and rooted in FORM and TS13.

TranZed (Transformative education) is defined as an experience resulting in personal growth and transformation through tangible Social, Learning and Career capital gains.

07: Conclusion

7.1 Original Contribution Summary

My dogeared fifth edition copy of How to Get a PhD by Estelle M. Phillips (EMP) and Derek S. Pugh (2010) outlines how a doctorate candidate might prove their contribution to knowledge. I will use their discussion to frame this contribution summary. They begin by narrowing down the eight ways in which students may be considered to have shown originality, as observed by Francis (1976). They agreed on six in a modern context:

- ~~1. setting down a major piece of new information in writing for the first time,~~
- ~~2. continuing a previously original piece of work~~
- ~~3. carrying out original work designed by the supervisor~~
- 4. providing a single original technique, observation, or result in an otherwise unoriginal but competent piece of research,**
 - My conceptual triangle for research ideation.
 - Didgeography and the Ponderlogic technique.
 - My Frame of Reference Model for Transformative Education Design.
 - My 13-step Personal Transformation System for Creative Students.
- ~~5. having many original ideas methods and interpretations all performed by others under the direction of a postgraduate~~
- 6. showing originality in testing someone else's idea.**
 - Using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022) within NVivo to critically test Mezirow's Perspective Transformation Cycle (1978-1994) against the experiences of first-generation Creative Industries undergraduates.

TranZed, FORM and the 13-step personal transformation guide for creative industries are arguably new information. Because they arrived at the end of the journey, and were not the basis for the full enquiry, I felt they did not warrant point 1. This might be Personal Process Policing and early career researcher nerves, but time will tell. In their book (Phillips and Pugh 2010), EMP carried out research with students, supervisors and examiners and found nine further definitions of how a doctorate can be original:

1. Carrying out empirical work that hasn't been done before

- Capturing first-generation creative industries undergraduates' experiences whilst at university through Didgeography and PonderLogic.
- The Longitudinal nature of this study with the 5-year later interviews.
- Reflexive longitudinal field observations transitioning from creative industry professional, through to lecturer and then grade 09 Programme Leader within the UK Higher Education system.

~~2. Making a synthesis that hasn't been made before~~

3. Using already known material but with a new interpretation

- Critically examining the different iterations of Mezirow's Perspective Transformation Cycle in 1978, 1991 and 1994.
- Analysing and testing the validity of the different iterations of Mezirow's Perspective Transformation Cycle in 1978, 1991 and 1994 against the lived experiences of first-generation creative industries undergraduates.

~~4. Trying out something in Britain that has previously been done abroad~~

5. Taking a particular technique and applying it in a new area

- Adapting Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke 2022) within the NVivo software exploring the lived experiences of first-generation creative industries undergraduates.

6. Bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue

- The empirical data generated through PonderLogic.
- This paper returns the Transformative Learning theory to Mezirow's perspective transformation origins (1978a) and reappraises them in the context of 21st-century creative industries education delivery.
- The reflexive, first-generation tone brings an "insider out" voice to transformative learning, predominantly written about from the "outsider in" perspective.

~~7. Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies~~

8. Looking at areas that people in the discipline haven't looked up before

- Bringing UK creative industries higher education to the transformative learning discussion.
9. ~~Adding to knowledge in a way that hasn't been done before~~

After working through Phillips and Pugh's (Phillips and Pugh 2010) list of fifteen ways to be original and their encouraging words to feel at ease if you can evidence just one... I might just be okay. The traditional written thesis is a limitation of this work, and it is disappointing that it does not tick number 9. However, it does invite innovation inspiration for the "next step" dissemination stage.

7.2 Limitations:

The first clear limitation is in my own lack of research experience beginning to tackle the ambitious problem of deriving utility from the complexities of transformative learning theory. In a way, this early naivety helped as it is an endeavour I would turn down now if offered it in a part-time context. These findings are modest in that six participants completed the full study. Coupled with my own experiences, we are seven who believe with certainty that our lives have been transformed by creative industries education. I could not have handled many more participants alone, part-time at least. The depth of RTA and analysis of all three iterations of the perspective transformation phase over time is a workload requiring a team for greater participant numbers. I can claim some success from this modest sample in that I first set out to explore *Why is it transformative for me? Is it transformative for others? And if so, in what ways could it be used to benefit?* We are a transformed seven who believe their lives continue to be changed by engaging with creative industries education in social, learning, and career capital gains. I come away with some answers for these, but a larger scale project with funding and a team may be needed for broader recognition.

I am very conscious that the type of student who makes time and volunteers to participate in a research project like this, on top of the pressures of their ongoing programmes, is an engaged student. The voice of the disengaged is a limitation and would require another research project to reach them and investigate how transformation might manifest from these experiences for them.

Similarly, undergraduates in creative industries would have quite limited psychological vocabulary. It would be interesting to see how Mezirow's wording of the ten phases would test for clarity with sociology or psychology students.

Scope has been a limitation trying to convey this entire experience in writing. It has ended up being reductive and compressed to the point of not doing it justice. The nuances, moods, tones, humour, realisations, and transformation flashes within the PonderLogic clips are lost on the page. So much is said in the ponder gaps, in silence, that do not work on a page beyond inference. Much is lost... *the map is not the territory* (Korzybski 1994). I have tried through the use of screen grabs and dialogue scripts to bring the experience to the page, but it falls very short, and word count became an issue. The EdD word count guidance is between 60K and 80K, with the first draft coming in well over 100K. A more creative output where observers experience the moving image data would better serve this work. So much remains unshared.

I may have overshot this. My research apprenticeship needed to happen the way it did for me to arrive the way I now feel that I have, but looking back, I see multiple jump-off points. I see now that the 200 pages of notes in the PonderLogic notebook with the data generated from PonderLogic was enough to write a 60,000-word thesis on the value of Mezirow's perspective transformation phases (1978a). Moving to NVivo from the notebook to further analyse the data differently was another academically publishable point of interest. Similarly, another thesis could critically discuss in-depth the changes Mezirow made to the perspective phases over time (1978a-1994). Applying Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022) to the data gathered through PonderLogic would be another 60- 80,000-word thesis. The Frame of Reference Model for education design (FORM) is an output. The 13-step Personal Transformation guide for creative industries is an output. Having lived through this, I have better judgement about time, scale, output value and research project management expectations for future endeavours. Having acknowledged that however, I believe this now gives weight to the work. When presenting FORM and my 13-step system, I can say that I spent a decade working on them. If I said "4 years part-time", they might not be received well.

7.3 Next Steps:

Academic publications: I intend to publish some papers from this work. Testing Mezirow's perspective transformation cycle in creative industries education to include a critical analysis of the changes made to the cycle over time (Mezirow 1978a-1994). I also plan to publish the Frame of Reference Model for education design (FORM) and the 13-step Transformation System, which have book potential. A paper on how Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2022) was adapted within this research to arrive at those tools may also be welcome in that growing field.

Thesis Dissemination: With funding and time, I would like to develop this work into an immersive online thesis. A user would read some text, click, and experience a moving image clip. Then, they would scroll to photographic content, audio clips, data expressions from NVivo, etc. I would also like to exhibit the work in an immersive gallery experience, and there is potential for a linear, non-fiction, moving image output for screenings and promotion.

Research: My next research ambitions, time and funding willing, are to test the Frame of Reference Model for education design (FORM) in further settings. I would also like to build an online FORM database for peers to share transformative design innovations. FORM also has software potential as a curriculum design tool. I would also like to test the 13-step Personal Transformation guide with students and then develop an app version of the tool to reach a global cohort. FORM and TS-13 are very fresh and need to be fully worked through so some testing with peers and volunteers will help pre-publication.

I would also like to research *the domestic dichotomy of achievement for first-generation students* as it is a recurring theme within this research and when speaking to colleagues from similar backgrounds.

Developing PonderLogic Didgeographic software: Taylor (2000) called Mezirow's original study the largest qualitative study on transformative learning, but he did not have modern communication tools. Developing a PonderLogic research tool would enable the expansion of this work to a global study. It would

also help to research and inform the student experience locally as we deliver. It could be used to explore student cohort themes and respond sooner to local issues like wellbeing. For example, having the PonderLogic tool during the recent pandemic would have been very insightful, and I often wish I had it available. This doctorate experience coupled with my creative industries software expertise, with a good developer would result in a great tool. The next learning curve is to figure out the research grant processes. This would afford me a team, time, and money to achieve some of these next-step ambitions, which, when viewed as a whole, would be a full-time job that I think I would enjoy!

7.4 Recommendations:

“I think the cumulative experience of being at university studying in a proper academic setting has merits beyond the actual content, of course” (Echo, EE22A). Or, as Aldous Huxley put it, “What is important is less the reason for the experience than the experience itself” (Huxley 1954). There are things any undergraduate studying any subject might share with creative industries undergraduates under the Social Transformation Frame, but the Learning and Career gains might be quite different. It would be interesting to see Mezirow’s Perspective Cycle (Mezirow 1978a-1994), my Frame of Reference Model for education design and the 13-step Personal Transformation guide tested in other areas. Are certain subjects more conducive to transformation than others, as I believe creative industries to be?

We still don’t know how young this can go. Mezirow’s position was that there exists a “uniquely adult need for the reconstruction of meaning perspectives” (Mezirow 1978a). Transformative creative industries research with a utilitarian goal (TranZed) into pre-HE experiences would be beneficial. My hunch is that as soon as you can express emotions like “stress” or “anxiety”, as many young A-level and BTEC students do, you are in development and would benefit from transformative guidance in social, learning and career gains. If the teenagers coming through our doors were already engaging with tools like the 13 steps, we could achieve even more with them. They would arrive with a strong *why* and hit the ground running. A big area to develop would be transformative education for teenagers and children.

If I were to do this again:

I would use the NVivo software (or similar) from the beginning. There is something nice about pen to paper but with the depth and instant accessibility NVivo affords in one place, it not only saves time later but allows you to interrogate and present digital data in many different ways and search it instantly. I would also not restrict my communication with the participants to student email or institutional VLE, this was an area that went slightly wrong. A result of an early, misguided paranoia regarding doctorateness and what might be *allowed* (PPP). It is ok to use social media and other outlets to let participants know there is new content to engage with. I would also stand back less. I felt uploading and one prompt was as intrusive as I could be, but participants later shared appreciation for prompts and the desire for more. Time wise, it is hard to say I would not progress to Programme Leadership and senior responsibilities because that expertise has lifted this work towards a utility it would not have otherwise had, but it has been a struggle completing alongside of this. I would also get funding for a research assistant. Someone to manage the data workflows, storage, and engagement with the PonderLogic platform as it runs would be very useful. The main thing I would push for were I to do this all again would be a creative output as a final artefact and not just a written thesis.

My “blue sky thinking” recommendation would be to get the original 1970’s Mezirow data and digitise it. There are very few quotes in Mezirow’s papers from the participants about the types of educational experiences they had within the programmes. What subjects were they studying, and did they have any previous experience or a “why” in those areas? We also do not hear directly from the educators in Mezirow’s study about the thinking behind their delivery and if they intentionally approached it differently. Are there design elements we can build on? It would be fascinating to explore the original data to extract what the women themselves found useful, innovative, or even transformative. Their moments of transformation might be surprising in their simplicity, as my participants sometimes were. This would be a mammoth project, and I wouldn’t know where to begin, but somebody out there might.

One final recommendation is that this next generation of transformative researchers, who might take up TranZed, acknowledge themselves as being at

the heart of data generation, just as Braun and Clarke are champions of RTA. When writing, speak to your transformations and those observed within our cohorts. We are not detached from our experiences in education, nor should we be detached from our expressions of those experiences in research circles. Education is personal; dare to make your writing so.

7.5 Why this is still important: The Last Personal Exhale

This doctorate journey has transformed my social, learning and career frames in ways that this reflexive journey has given me the tools and awareness to only now fully ponder and appreciate. I have grown from having no experience in UK Higher Education and not knowing what a doctorate was to having five-year programme leadership experience and a strong sense of doctorate research identity. I have moved jobs five times since beginning this EdD Creative & Media. Two were London-based creative industry companies, Arqiva and Encompass. The next three were Southampton Solent University, Bournemouth University, and Liverpool John Moores University, where I currently work. I have had six addresses. I have been annulled within months of marrying an Australian partner, who I did my best to support through an existential crisis of identity as we separated. We have lived through a global two-year pandemic, putting strains on creative industries academics moving from hands-on production to online delivery, and we still need to understand the mental impacts of this fully. When most of the country stopped, we were forced to keep going. Despite all of that... I still love this! Working with creative students is my *Element* (Robinson 2009).

The move to Liverpool and continuing this journey resulted in losing another three-year relationship for me, but the most significant loss was when *that* phone call came. On the morning of December 4th, 2021, my sister Leanne had to tell me over the phone that my father had passed. He was 65. I was wearing a covid mask and standing by a vending machine at gate 13 in Bristol airport when she rang, barely able to croak the words out, "He's gone Wesss... yeh!". Some days, I still feel like I'm gasping through that mask. It is *the* single most transformative life event that I have lived through. The one thing that has never left me and that has remained constant through all of this is creative industries education and my commitment to it. It has always been there for me since

Coláiste Dhúlaigh, and I show up to it 110% daily. My Da, Bernard, was a strong man with a strong work ethic, and I know he would have wanted me to keep going. So, I do. And try not to take the tragic path that too many people in my hometown have towards abuse and worse, like my cousin, who sadly passed at my age. He was never the same after his father died at a young age, and I can understand his journey as I felt similar draws around my father's passing but knew the hardest road was the right one. Unlike him though, trapped in a small town that gave up on its youth decades ago, I had options because of my education. At the beginning of the same week that my Da went into hospital, I interviewed for the job in Liverpool. By the end of that week, the Programme Leader role was offered to me, and my father passed that Friday morning. Lockdown conditions made the move from Bournemouth to Liverpool even more complex, but I feel him with me every step. Encouraging my disruptive shouldering towards recognition and policy change for our inspirational, creative students.

The frustrations of finding doctorate time whilst programme leading with a full lecturing load were pouring out of me one day when the brilliant Stephen Heppell, one of my supervisors, shared some wisdom he was once given. *You can waste a year but never waste a decade. You don't have many of them.* In a 2023 interview with BBC Bristol, Dr Nick Axten, 76, said, "Some problems are so great it takes the best part of a lifetime to get your head around them. They need a long hard think" (BBC 2023). He had been working for five decades on a theory that has the potential to change the view of behavioural psychology and said his research had been "exceptionally difficult". *Student earns doctorate from Bristol 52 years after starting PhD* is the article title that caught my eye (BBC 2023). It has been just one decade since I was first inspired to embark on this enquiry, and it certainly does not feel like a decade wasted. The longitudinal nature of this research is what made it achievable. My problem, which I can now better articulate, was how to derive utility from transformative learning theory. My answers, FORM and the 13-step transformation system, have taken a decade to arrive at. This is my "theory of action" (Freire 1970). With these tools, I now know how to begin contributing to the field. My *why* for being here is to understand transformative experiences so that we can make good on our promise of delivering them. To improve the lives of those who come to create a

new one with us. To help open more doors of perception for creative first-generation students wandering misunderstood on the streets of social deprivation like I once did.

I want to leave you with Sir Ken Robinson's closing remarks from the Learning Without Frontiers conference in London in 2012. During that two-day transformative experience, the universe poked me to begin figuring out and doing something about my corner of the Cathedral (Rees 2012). As I sit and write in Sir Ken's home city of Liverpool on a balmy August Saturday in 2024, I smile at an imagined conversation we might have had about all of this if he was still with us. He would have been kind enough to have that chat too, you know, as he once did after his talk at The Congress Centre London in March 2011. As we shook hands there, I mentioned going through the Christian Brothers Schools in 80's and 90's Ireland; "So you know?" he smiled, and he nodded in a way that my memory curiously now reads as... *so do something about it*.

Thank you, Sir Ken... I'm trying:

"For any given student, the education system is not what happens in the committee rooms in Westminster or in the committee rooms of our local authorities. The education system for any given student is the school they go to. That's it. Or in the classrooms they sit in. If you're a teacher, you are the education system. If you're a school Headteacher, you are the education system for those kids. So, you can change the world of education for them immediately if you choose to. And I think if enough of us do that, that adds up to social movement, and that is what a revolution is in the end" (Robinson 2012).

Shared Waters

In Fig 7.1 below, my Da and twin cousins, Martin and Mervin, are enjoying sailing a boat he built with his own hands. He never took shipbuilding classes and was never a carpenter by trade. Yet he dumped that first load of wood into his friend's borrowed shed and began one winter. Writing what essentially amounts to a book here, with the kind of abuse thrown at me for not reading properly in school, should be as impossible as shipbuilding to a non-carpenter. Yet here we both are in the shared waters of accomplishment. Without him I would not be here. "Thank you" was the overwhelming thing I felt and said when I first saw him, cold in that hospital morgue.



Fig 7.1 Me Da, Bernard, Skipper in the boat he built by hand

Expressing the ongoing meta-layer of this journey remains the most daunting aspect of this thesis write-up. Simply because writing forces linear expression, and the underlying transformation feels anything but linear or complete. Nor was it ever the intended focus or was it a comfortable inclusion. Nevertheless, it wraps around the whole and interweaves the most nanoscopic beats so fully that to ignore it would be untruthful. This thesis then is not simply the culmination of a professional development path, but it is also the expression of an ongoing project of the self. To recover, reframe, and repurpose my early educational experiences into a new form of educational disruption. These were the unexpected side-effects of engaging so deeply and analytically with Mezirow's early work. Through the many iterations of pondering on pen to paper through digital passes within NVivo, it became more than a framework for analysis; it became a mirror through which I came to see the taken-for-granted assumptions that had shaped my own identity as both learner and eventual leader. This doctoral process has required not only critical thinking, but critical

being. It helped me to interrogate inherited beliefs, reclaim marginalised experiences, and consciously reshape who I have become. To my staff and students, I am the education system (Robinson 2012).

Emerging from foundations where silence, conformity, and deficit were instilled early, this journey through doctoral study has enabled within me a conscious re-authoring of my identity as a critically reflective, socially engaged educator. Alongside the intellectual demands of the doctorate, the process has brought to the surface a deeper interrogation of power, legitimacy, and a reframing of disadvantage as knowledge. Particularly as someone who has travelled from the educational margins of those Irish, “Christian” Brothers, Schools to leadership roles within major UK institutions. It is this reflexive work that now underpins my educational design, leading not just with policy or pedagogy, but with narrative integrity. An act of becoming, and effort towards inhabiting. An idea shared or a theory adapted can lead to social movement (Robinson 2012) and transformative action. We owe it to the revolutions inside of ourselves to stay fuelled and nourished, for tired and hungry, we lose to stagnation.

This ongoing meta-layer of personal and professional transformation has unfolded through the wider context of uncertainty and challenges now facing UK Higher Education. A sector facing financial strain, political scrutiny, layoffs and questions about its civic and moral purpose. Against that backdrop, the work of shaping inclusive, critically aware educational spaces feels even more urgent. If this doctorate has offered any definitive outcome, it is not a fixed answer or position, but an invitation to remain in inquiry, to teach from a place of empathy, and to lead with humility informed by real transformation design. TS-13 and FORM might help. We can *improve* this for the next generations by working hard on our corners of the cathedral... now! Nodding one last time our friend Korzybski: “the map is not the territory”. This thesis then is a very partial glimpse, not the whole terrain, but a trace of the learning, struggle, and transformation that continues beyond these pages. If *I* can achieve **this**, imagine what **we** can do! I want to hear about your part of the Cathedral. Thank you for hearing mine.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1.1 Sample of WeZ's Coláiste Dhúlaigh entry portfolio:



APPENDIX 1.2 Sample of EdD Feedback confusing coming from industry

Moderator Comments

This is an enjoyable read, which covers a range of positive and optimistic notions of education in general and media education in particular. However, the enthusiastic and partisan rhetoric tends to militate against a detailed engagement with the assertions presented. There is, for example, an early assertion about 'intelligence' which is left to stand as a provocation, rather than something contestable which needs unpacking and examining. Another, but related issue, is that everyone quoted is presented as having equal validity – a consequence of not interrogating the research basis for their statements. Overall then, there is a sense of rhetorical bellicosity, which needs to cool off and become a bit more critical and analytical.

I couldn't see a revised research proposal, so at the moment the fifth criterion isn't met.

APPENDIX 1.3 Samples of email exchanges with James Cross

 **James Cross** 29 January 2015 at 21:11
Re: MediaCore as a research Tool
To: WeZ Nolan

Hi Wez,

Thanks for getting in touch again. It's a shame to hear that things didn't proceed as we'd hoped with the pilot; hopefully there will be another opportunity in the future as the vision for video usage expands beyond the initial pilot.

We don't normally offer accounts for individuals - but in this case, I'm happy to make a special exception. We can provide a free MediaCore site for your research project, with up to 100 users, 100GB storage, and 100GB bandwidth, along with email invitations for users.

The only caveat is that we're limited in the support that we can offer along with promotional/free platforms, and so you'd largely be 'on your own' with getting things set up, and getting the platform up and running. But we have great support documents, and I have the impression that you're rather a resourceful chap :)

How does that sound to you?

Thanks,
James

On Tue, Jan 27, 2015 at 4:22 AM, Wez Nolan <wesley.nolan@solent.ac.uk> wrote:

Hi James,

I have watched painfully from the sidelines here as the Learning Technology teams at Southampton Solent run with a different company for their own pilot. For me, Mediachore was by far the superior product and would run "out of the box" tomorrow with no workarounds needed. I lecture on the media technology courses here and we deal with large file sizes, so again, you guys win hands down and I loved the interface.

So... why am I contacting you again? Before I saw the pilot demo I was interested in using Mediachore as a research tool in my doctorate field study. Now, having seen the demo, I *must* have it! I would love to talk to you guys about the potential of putting your design to this innovative use, how my using it is an opportunity to showcase your product to the broader media education market and discuss setting me up with a pilot study ASAP with the full field project running from September next year to publish and exhibit in 2016.

This will all make more sense once we have spoken.

The potential here is massive, it is an exciting time in digital ethnography and I think we could innovate in the field together.

I really hope to hear from you soon.

All the best,

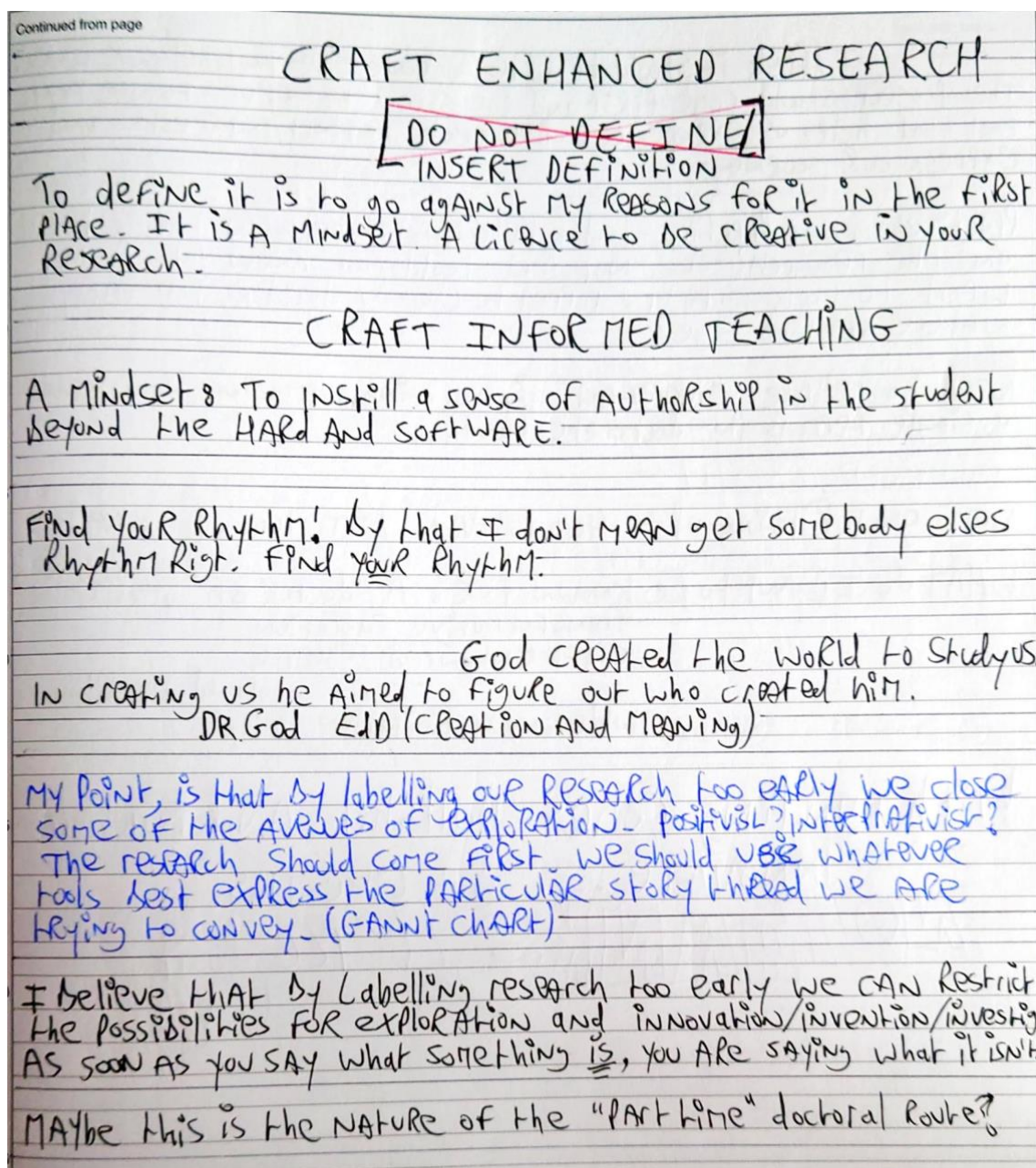
WeZ

Lecturer (Broadcasting & Digital Creative Industries)

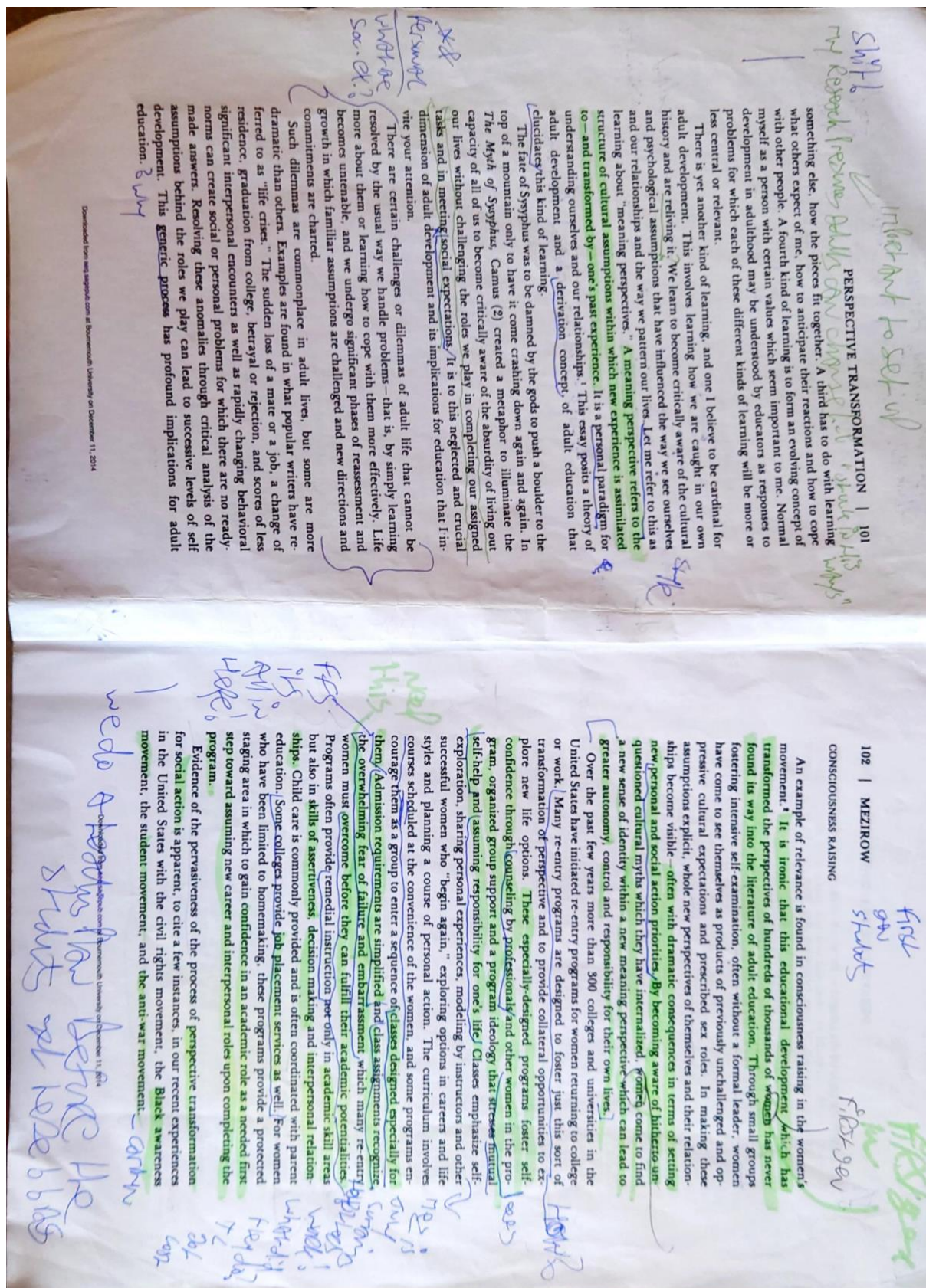


email: wesley.nolan@solent.ac.uk
RM:409
Int ext. 3580
Tel no. [0044 238 201 3580](tel:00442382013580)
Mobile. [0044 785 833 5694](tel:00447858335694)

APPENDIX 1.4 Sample of WeZ's PonderLogic Notebook



APPENDIX 2.1 Sample of WeZ's favourite paper:



APPENDIX 4.1 Sample of Participant File labelling & Site Instructions

WeZ Nolan - The PonderLogic Study 2015/16

A note on Labelling Clips:

Please name/label video clips as follows: PL(PonderLogic)AB(your initials)001 (number of clip you are responding to). For me then, WeZ Nolan, my first clip would be PLWN001 and my second clip would be PLWN002 and so on. Even if the clips are recorded for upload later on, try your best to match your labelling to the clip you are responding to. Your "...001" clip would be easily identifiable in the series as a response to my "...001" clip. If you do create additional clips before I upload the next in the sequence, then simply add letters until responding directly to my next clip. For example, if you created two additional clips between my first and second then you would label them "...001", "...001a" and "...001b" to begin again at "...002" in response to my second clip. This should hopefully group your clips together in chronological order for me.

Uploads often as you like, all thoughts, comments and insights are very welcome.

A note on Uploading:

You have two options for uploading:

PonderLogic CLOSED - Submitted clips will only go to the researcher (WeZ).

PonderLogic OPEN - Other participants can see the clips, comment and respond. Ideally responses would be via video upload but written comments are also welcome. This will be the forum that I will use to post clips prompting responses and research questions. Feel free to ask me questions through this forum also as I too am a first generation student.

PLEASE ALWAYS CHOOSE THE HIGHEST (720) RESOLUTIONS ON UPLOAD.

A note on Recording yourself:

Please begin your clips with the time and date (no name please).

Please do not mention lecturers by name, use "my lecturer" or "the lecturer" or something else more comfortable to you but generalise.

Please do not mention your institute by name, please use "my University" or "the University" or something else more comfortable to you but generalise.

Uploads often as you like. Consider the project open from December 2015 to summer 2016. The more clips you upload the better. Thank you, and enjoy.

APPENDIX 4.2 Sample of Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Full title of project: PonderLogic: A study of first generation university student's experiences of media education.

Name, position and contact details of researcher:

WeZ Nolan. wesley.nolan@bournemouth.ac.uk / 00447858335694

Name, position and contact details of supervisor (if the researcher is a student):

Iain MacRury
Deputy Dean, Research and Professional Practice.
Faculty of Media and Communication.
Email: imacrury@bournemouth.ac.uk
01202962465

Please Initial Here

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to the point of anonymisation of the data, without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question(s) I am free to decline.	
Should the circumstance arise, I understand "withdrawing up to the point of Anonymisation" to mean that my image and voice would not be used in any video output arising from the study, but would be referenced anonymously in the written report and published paper(s).	
I agree to take part in the above research project.	

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the participant information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

APPENDIX 4.3 Sample of Participant Information Sheet

PonderLogic: A study of first generation student's experiences of media education.

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in PonderLogic, a doctoral research project being led by WeZ Nolan as part of his EdD Creative and Media at Bournemouth University. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask questions of the research and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

The Student/Lecturer relationship explained, (For instances where WeZ is your lecturer).

This research is being carried out as part of my EdD Creative and Media course of study at Bournemouth University and is in no way related to my position as your Lecturer at Southampton Solent University. Your decision to take part, or not, will have no bearing on our academic relationship. If you have any concerns or questions please do not hesitate to raise them. In terms of assessment, a second marker will have a specific role in alleviating any such concerns should they arise.

What is the purpose of the project?

PonderLogic is an investigation in to the experiences of first generation students in higher media education. Participants will be invited to record and submit personal regular video diary responses to the PonderLogic website. Each week WeZ will upload a video to which your responses will be welcomed. Participants may also be asked to take part in a filmed focus group and/or filmed interviews throughout the study.

The data collected is intended for use in a submission to the EdD Creative and Media program at Bournemouth University. The final submission will be comprised of a written thesis and accompanying video materials edited from the data collected. It is also the intention of the researcher to present the findings in an exhibition and publish a paper(s) based on the study.

Why have I been chosen?

Participants will be first generation and are currently, or have previously been, engaged with a media course of study in further or higher education. "First generation", for the purpose of this research, means that neither parent has previously attended, making the participant the first in their family to do so.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given, along with this information sheet to keep, a consent form to sign. You may withdraw from the study up to the point of anonymisation of the data. This means that your image and voice would not be used in the video content, but that you consent to your data being referenced anonymously in the written thesis and published paper(s).

What do I have to do?

When you have signed the consent form you will be sent an email invitation to the secure website. You will be asked to share and discuss your experiences of higher media education in three formats:

- The online experiment will run for the academic year 2015-2016. Participants will be required to make a minimum of one personal video diary submissions per week.
- Participants may be asked to attend one focus group, 20 minutes in length, involving other participants. (Travel expenses are available if necessary).
- Participants may be invited to a filmed interview, 10 minutes in length.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I would ask that participants are mindful of their time management and that the research pilot does not infringe upon or hinder their studies in any way. Your study commitments must come first. I would ask that you record the video diaries in times that are safe, appropriate and comfortable to do so.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of first generation students in media education.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential? / What will happen to the results of the research project?

Results of the research will be used, in a written format, for a final thesis submission as part of the EdD Creative and Media at Bournemouth University.

Video data gathered during the research will be edited and used in the design of a practical submission to compliment the written thesis as part of the EdD Creative and Media at Bournemouth University. Participants will be on camera so would be identifiable to familiars, i.e. Family, friends, colleagues etc., however participant's names will not be added on screen in a text format.

Results of the research are likely to be published in a written format in which case you will receive a copy of the published results. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication.

Video data gathered during the research is likely to be used as part of conference presentations, workshops and exhibition. Participants will be on camera so would be identifiable to familiars, i.e. Family, friends, colleagues etc., however participant's names will not be added on screen in a text format.

No one will be allowed access to the original recordings.

(Data will be used for the production of this thesis and relating publications and will be stored in a secure password protected location and deleted after five years).

You will be given copies of this information sheet and consent form for your records.

Contact for further information

WeZ Nolan.

Email: [redacted]@bournemouth.ac.uk

Mobile: 0044*****

In the event of a complaint:

[redacted]

Deputy Dean, Research and Professional Practice.

Faculty of Media and Communication.

Email: [redacted]@bournemouth.ac.uk

01*****

APPENDIX 4.4 PonderLogic Interest (note, all of the Solent emails are dead. I have redacted personal emails)

	Name: (in order of response)	EMAILS REDACTED FROM ORIGINAL	PIS/Site Access sent:				1 st Clip Up?
01	Conor Lewis		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15		
02	Echo Edge*		✓ 06/12/15				07/12/15
03	Tally Light		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15		
04	Daniel Turner*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			
05	Jazzi Shell*		✓ 06/12/15				08/12/15
06	Liam O’Boyle*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			29/12/15
07	Rianna Spencer		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15	30/03/16	
08	Chalk Duster*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			
09	Keenan Gorrie		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15	30/03/16	
10	Mother Madzima*		✓ 06/12/15				09/12/15
11	Beta H		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15	30/03/16	
12	Zapper Reynolds*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			
13	Array Antenna*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			17/12/15
14	Atlas Height*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			
15	Adam Clarke		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15	30/03/16	
16	David Pearce*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			
17	Adam Mitchell		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15	30/03/16	
18	Lavo O’Bread*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			14/12/15
19	Josef Lawrence*		✓ 06/12/15				06/12/15
20	Phillip Haggath*		✓ 06/12/15				08/12/15
21	Alexander Snell*		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15			18/12/15
22	Jack Human –EYE!		✓ 06/12/15	14/12/15	30/12/15		
23	Adam Gonthier						
24	Benjamin Towers						
25	Isaac Fowowe						

*site access accepted

APPENDIX 4.5 Sample of PonderLogic Log pg4

TITLE		PROJECT
Continued from page 3	EXPOSURE TO OPTIONS through trying things they would not have if weren't for uni for this sample, <u>video</u>, <u>acoustic</u> and <u>coding</u>. change of adjectives when talking about school compared to uni was interesting: School = CRAP, bad, uninterested, lack of motivation, downhearted uni = love it, proud, great, motivated, doing well EXPOSURE to the subject/field during college seems to have played an important role for this sample it was Music Technology. MADE ME THINK BACK ON THE PART TIME SOUND ENG. course at Pulse in Dublin. I remember thinking "HANG ON! This isn't like school" and that led to CD. A definite sense of employment straight out of uni if not before and is important and places them ahead of mates back home of studying other subjects. Lo gives the example of Political History. ZP gives example of History and Teaching. To do list for this week: 3,000 word PFC! Prepare work for external moderation. 10,000 word EDD. Take 30 students to GLASTONAVRY! Write an abstract for MES 2015!	

APPENDIX 5.1 Sample of Word notes as clips came in:

Clip 03 Notes:

Sense of not being good enough for certain pathways.

A teacher gave an experience. Encouragement as I moved on...

How often people go home impacts the experience.

Missing the uni life going home?

College "made you" sign up "made apply to "UCAS"

No idea what wanted to do, -

Carreer guidance teachers turning them away !! (educate the CG's)

a

1st year good, 2nd year moved in with 8 people, girlfriend, distracted

Uni equipment enables work exp etc.

Freelance job – paid for new PC.

Bad lecturer – good advice ; "Don't wait until you finish uni to start doing what you want to do!!! "

People in 40's STILL don't know what they want to do!

Many roles !

Choice !! Meeting professionals made realise that really didn't take advantage of opportunities !

Distance has been good for family relationships.

Get on better with Lectures than students !? Important?

"Others like me" – enjoying it

House v Halls – house = home.

Mature student vs out of school.

Lonely.

Foundation year.

Exposure to new areas.

Overwhelmed but enjoying the course.

Stressed - - but enjoying the course ! ☺

Questions for next clip:

In different ways you guys have expressed a sense of not been good at certain things, or not being good enough for certain things and I'm wondering what role your teachers and the institutes played in this?

Institutes agenda...

Facilities

How would you describe any pressure in regards to "knowing what you want to do" ?

Has it always been about work? Getting a job?

Do we the Uni do enough to show them the bigger picture???

Teachers at secondary school vs Uni Lecturers ?

APPENDIX 6.1 Sample of Logbook on "F.O.R.M. day" :

Continued from page

FRAME OF Reference Model

IN RELATION TO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES Education design there are three key perspective FRAMES of Reference to consider. The domestic FRAME, the Learning FRAME, AND the CAREER FRAME. Looking through these FRAMES we see three key development bands. "BANDS" is an important identifier as it acknowledges that we have A BANDwidth.

~~(Mistake corrected)~~ → Journey, Position and options with support

The domestic perspective FRAME:

- Domestic Journey
- Domestic Position
- Domestic options with support

The Learning perspective frame

- Learning Journey
- Learning Position
- Learning options with support

The CAREER perspective frame

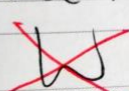
- CAREER Journey
- CAREER Position
- CAREER options with support

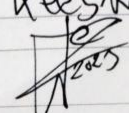
There it is! The culmination of a decade long journey in less than 100 words. (49)

Gladstones Library xue 2nd Friday. Can of Coke and kinder drank on sunny beach. Ran back to "FRAMES" fell into place. FORM. FIRST APPEARS on pg 54 6 Oct 2017.

Answer to Keegan 2000. Thanks for the question

Keegan ☺ Wooo

SIGNATURE  DATE 2/6/23

DISCLOSED TO AND UNDERSTOOD BY  DATE

PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

Continued to page

Handwritten note in margin: genuine excitement! Feels like the E=mc2 moment we are not supposed to have!!! YES ON BACK RUN with this in HAWAIIAN post office to communicate ☺

APPENDIX 6.2 Sample Table testing F.O.R.M.

Testing F.O.R.M. through three themes under each transformation band :

D&D = Development & Design.

<u>Transformation Frame</u>	<u>Transformation Band</u>	<u>RTA Themes</u>	<u>D&D Awareness</u>	<u>D&D Suggestions</u>
Social Transformation Frame:	Social Journey	Support and understanding at home.	Parents experience might result in lack of home encouragement. Academic achievement isolation. Subject Isolation. Assessment supports. International student isolation. Homesickness. Employment pressures.	Add to induction/returns agenda. Add to personal tutor agenda. Invite experienced students to assessment specific workshops. Encourage exploring these topics through creative artefacts assessments (Podcasts, short film and audio fiction or non-fiction etc.)
		Relocating.	Sense of identity attached to background. Self-doubt. Stress of the unknown. Leaving family. Leaving friends. Leaving relationships. Small town to big city living.	Encourage self-expression through responses to creative briefs. Regular events to promote course identity and community. Central wellbeing support during induction through welcome talks and workshops. Encourage exploring these topics through creative artefacts assessments (Podcasts, short film and audio fiction or non-fiction etc.)
	Social Position	Financial Situation.	Parents status. Financial debt. Financial Maturity. Budgeting. Student Loans. Paid work impacting studies. Poor health through poverty. Poor focus due to poor health.	Factor work commitments in exceptional circumstance applications. Central supports for personal budgeting training. Regularly promote central services and facilities to help in these areas, in person, during sessions.
		Mental and Personal Health	Self-confidence Known mental health issues. New mental health issues.	Destigmatise mental health through discussion and guest speakers.

			Substance abuse at university.	Destigmatise neurodiversity through discussion and guest speakers. Encourage engagement with central supports beyond email communications. Ensure students understand exceptional circumstance processes. Help them own their experience as it happens.
		Living Situation.	This can be good and bad. Halls can be stressful. It is a regular stress changing home every year. Costs are high. Being forced to live with toxic strangers can lead to disengagement.	Promote positive change where needed through university supports. Set workshops up during peak times where students are looking for next year's accommodations. Central supports and workshops around boundaries and assertiveness.
	Social Options with Supports	Clubs & Societies	Value of building social network. Value of building subject network. Developing people skills (transferrable).	Promote Subject related societies to continue learning and development identifying gaps to develop. Promote special interest societies and encourage students to start one where there are gaps. Allocate funding to a programme specific society. Promote fitness facilities and clubs.
		New Home situation.	Chance to make it better every year. Isolation. Homesickness.	Create and promote social events across the programme. Encourage exploration of the new city through creative training briefs and assessments.

		New Friendships and experiences	This comes easier to others. Some need encouragement.	Offer regular field trips. Put on regular programme networking events.
<u>Transformation Frame</u>	<u>Transformation Band</u>	<u>RTA Themes</u>	<u>D&D Awareness</u>	<u>D&D Suggestions</u>
Learning Transformation Frame:	Learning Journey	Previous education	Awareness of the various pathways to arriving with us. Varied abilities. Good and bad teaching experiences. Varied experience with hardware, software and output platforms.	Engage with examples of BTEC, A Level assessment. Ask students to share previous work during induction icebreakers. Picking up on positive teaching experiences and alleviating negatives through personal tutorship and seminar sized discussions.
		Have/find passion, interest, or reason	"Nothing to aim for, nothing to work for". Developing interests into careers. Opportunities to try different options.	Focus on having a "why" in first year and develop through a series of career modules leading to graduation. Self-reflection exercises to help those "five year later" realisations happen to take advantage whilst studying. Design assessment points where students have to evidence trying new roles along the programme.
	Learning Position:	New technologies and concepts.	Access to equipment previously unaffordable. Access to academic industry professionals. A lot of new information very quickly. Costly to keep up.	Keep facilities and equipment industry relevant. Staff need to stay relevant through training initiatives and industry engagement. Technical and teaching staff to share office spaces. Nurture institutional budget support to keep equipment and facilities up to date.
		Group Work & Assessment stress	They have never had grades dependent on others performances before.	Change from percentage grading of creative work to a pass/re-do model.

			Communication issues. Imbalance of group effort. This will be the first time working in groups for some.	Promote professional mindset and incorporate team software tools such as Slack etc. Teach project and time management skills early. Devise assessment processes to acknowledge individual effort within group work. E.g. In a documentary crew of four, award grades to each role.
		Practical vs scholarship skills	Creative students learn better hands on. A tendency to ignore Scholarship modules. Harvard referencing is the enemy.	Design blended programmes with Scholarship and practical with the modules, assessments, and sessions. Embed engagement with library facilities and staff an scholarship supports within modules. Adapt a "show me don't tell me delivery style. Find creative ways to explain and retain Harvard referencing. Take effort to express the "why" of research, writing and criticality as lifelong learning objectives.
	Learning Options with Supports:	New Skillsets, roles and mindset development opportunities:	Some students will cling on to familiar roles from previous courses, it is important to encourage diversification. Technical and teaching staff need to stay up to date. This needs institutional budget support.	Ensure what is being offered is up to date and in line with student and industry expectations. Use regular surveys, debates, industry visits and guests to stay fresh. Keep on top of hardware and software developments and purchases. Build links with other programmes for assessment collaboration and extracurricular. Promote extracurricular development opportunities and mobilise to fill gaps.
		Confidence building	Confidence means different things to different people.	Address the meaning of "confidence" early through workshops and debate to take it away from personality traits

			The school system has created failure fear and stunts iterative engagement. Failure during testing and prototyping are necessary steps to completion and competence.	towards time and effort in areas of specialism. Regular presentation and pitching sessions to build public speaking skills. Encourage a “making mistakes is how we learn” mindset. Budget and allocate time for technical and teaching staff training.
		Becoming autodidactic	Teaching students to learn for themselves is a lifelong skill that equates to confidence in creative technologies and workflows. Patience is required both sides of the desk as everyone learns at different paces and responds to different styles. Industry wants this type of graduate.	Design for students becoming autodidactic: workshops and assessments that encourage play and figuring out with hardware and software. Encourage mistakes and capture the learning through reflective assessments (Essay, presentation or Viva). Create spaces within the programmes for students to appreciate where they have come and audit progression and gaps.
<u>Transformation Frame</u>	<u>Transformation Band</u>	<u>RTA Themes</u>	<u>D&D Awareness</u>	<u>D&D Suggestions</u>
Career Transformation Frame:	Career Journey:	Negative views of creative industries	“Mickey Mouse or proper degree” narratives negatively impacting students. “Get a real job” narrative. Freelance side of the industry is long hours and tough conditions. Gender issues within the industry.	Discuss and run exercise regularly with students to promote positive choice mindset. Regularly highlight economic contributions of creative industries UK at open days, inductions and throughout the degree. Promote an awareness of freelance pitfalls within career modules. Encourage a new, diverse aware generation of crew. Arrange regular industry guests and site visits.

		Previous work experience	"normal" jobs have relevance when it comes to job interviews. They help to answer experience and HR style questions. Students typically have three years with us to build this up. Creative Industries CV's are different, there is an expectation for online links.	Create mock interview situations within modules and programmes. Create environments where students role play companies. They take a job through design, advertising, selection and interview processes. Develop online presence, showreels and interactive CV within modules from year one through to graduation.
	Career Position:	Group work within programme.	Promote professional workflows, mindsets and accountability. Create industry level challenges and assessments.	Figure out individual role grades within group work (as "pay"). Shared grades are not representative of industry. Can Staff go on shoots? Technicians? Or students from higher levels with more experience? Allow students to choose groups and network many times before final year projects.
		Inspiring staff.	Staff with Passion for Creative Industries. Staff remaining engaged with industry. Treating students with respect as equals. Promote a trusting, open and supportive approach.	Are we using staff's skills and interest in the right modules? Create scenarios where students collaborate with staff. Festivals, summer production projects etc. Work out ways of having staff on student location shoots.
	Career Options with Supports:	Industry Placements. Course Reps. University Volunteer opportunities.	Managing numbers on this will be difficult but not impossible.	Consider a faculty post to manage opportunities and related advertising and social media promotion. Encourage early first year engagement with work experience opportunities.

				Consider an “extra credit” system recorded on exit award to encourage multiple engagements. Consider mandatory placements between L5 & L6. Nurture industry relationships at links at institutional level with funding for initiatives.
		Career relevant skillsets and role options within the programme.	Students appreciate efforts they can clearly see beneficial to their careers and show up for it. Instils a sense of pathway ownership towards proving interest at job interviews. Develops a “Career plan B” mindset. Understand “confidence” = hours spent training.	Develop a system of students evidencing trialling multiple skillsets and positions. Develop Creative Industries experience, CV and showreel from day 1 through to graduations. Invite industry partners to design briefs. Role play interview scenarios within the programme.