Abstract addressing the following question

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

The paper aims to illustrate how a live project related to mental health issues can also benefit fine art students in a number of ways beyond the academic outcomes.

For a period of five years a set of Second Year BTEC Graphic Design students were set successively an annual project to design a poster for the One in Four Film Festival held at UCLan. The students researched various mental health conditions identified in the selected films and observed how these conditions affected the lifestyle of the protagonists depicted in the films.

The students discussed the narratives and various situations, sometimes comparing them to their own life, hopes and aspirations. Whilst creating the visual work for the brief this experience helped them formulate broader, in depth views about society, the danger of stereotypes but most specifically the necessity of equality and diversity. The project posed additional requirements such as the sensitive handling of the subject matter, identifying key moments in the film, generating an emotional connection with the audience. Cultural values and beliefs were challenged and students were provided with opportunities to develop their own sense of identity and self-concept. One group had the opportunity of exhibiting their work at Tate Liverpool in conjunction with the ‘Glam’ exhibition focusing on gender and identity.

The value of these projects increased confidence in the students and their ability to gain the emotional maturity necessary for the specific subject of Graphic Design. The experience enabled myself as a lecturer to gain a greater understanding of the students individually, learn more about the values held by the groups and help identify the creative career pathways students wished to pursue. The creative digital skills were then orientated to their chosen career and specific employment needs.

Key Words

Health
Self-concept
Digital skills
Careers