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# With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: exploring and developing professional brand identity designers reflexive practice

**With the Participatory  
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developing professional  
brand identity designers  
reflexive practice**

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# Abstract

This PhD reflects upon first-hand unidirectional and passive consumer audience experience approaches prevalent in professional UK brand identity design. It explores: How brand identity designers might move towards an improved reflexive practice in the design of consumer audience experiences. This practice-led research focuses on the ideas generation stage of their design process.

An ongoing constructivist audience paradigm shift signals that when thinking about and using their positionality in relation to their consumer audience experiences, designers need reflexive practice to support critical reflection of themselves, their biases and assumptions. This research uncovered a lack of relevant theory regarding reflexive practice specific to the context of brand identity design. This insufficiency throws into doubt designers' relational, participatory and equitable approaches in their working practices and their abilities to address market imperatives, including client requirements connected to the ongoing audience paradigm shift.

Aligned with John Dewey's ethical pragmatism and drawing from Creswell, Tashakkori and Teddlie, my study adopts a mixed methods methodology. Alongside established qualitative and quantitative methods, this includes my practice via design visualisations, as discussed by Drucker, and builds upon Carl DiSalvo's approach of practice used to do inquiry and design as a method of inquiry. My practice enabled me to critically reflect, evaluate and construct reflexive practice knowledge, including the development of reflexive practice communications, to advance understanding of and improve other designers' reflexive practice, and to communicate my process of reflexive design practice research.

Thirty UK-based professional brand identity designers participated in this research: nineteen participants in Phase One, a questionnaire, and six in Phase Two semi-structured interviews. Phase One and Two findings identified a gap in that designers are not employing a reflexive design practice and lack the resources to do so. Seeking to improve these shortcomings, eighteen initial reflexive design practice principles were explored and tested in Phase Three, a workshop involving five design participants. Results showed that the principles facilitated participants to advance prior thinking and engage in a reflexive design practice.

Further reflections and insights from the same five Phase Three participants uncovered a need to refine and reduce the principles and communicate them in a guide. Eight revised overarching and eighteen sub-principles in a prototype guide were explored in



Phase Four in applied practice by three brand identity designers involved in Phase Three. Results corroborated workshop findings and provided further recommendations.

Contributions of this research are three-fold. First, offering an advanced understanding of professional brand identity designers' reflexive practice and process knowledge. Second, it produced a reflexive design guide with eight overarching and eighteen sub-reflexive design principles and corresponding digital app, thereby offering a preliminary new design practice method. This method offers a way to improve designers' thinking about and operation of their relational positionality, participatory consumer audience experience approaches, and reflexive design practice actions. Third, it provides a contribution to knowledge via its methodology, which integrates design visualisation practice into a mixed methods approach.

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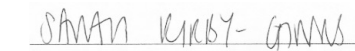
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### Authors Declaration

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.



Sarah Kirby-Ginns  
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# Chapter 1

**Introduction**



## 1.0 Introduction

Chapter One provides an introduction and overview of the research, my background and, specifically, how my professional practice reflections were the basis of the motivation for this study. The Chapter outlines the aims, overarching research and method questions and explains my approach to the methods and methodology used. This includes a discussion regarding the significance of my design visualisation practice within this research. The research gap and how this research will contribute to knowledge are also explained. The final section - the thesis structure, provides insights into forthcoming chapters. Key findings from this Chapter demonstrate the shifts that have occurred since I started the research but that the importance and timeliness of the research area remain.

### 1.1. Overview and field and branch of study: Brand Identity Design and Communication Design

This research materialised from questions connected to the way design might move closer towards audiences. Audience participation, and increasing audience sophistication is receiving renewed attention. Emerging growth in this area signals a need and opportunity for the design field and designers to re-evaluate relational approaches and ideas of design as a relational practice (DiSalvo, 2022).

This PhD by practice (Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, 2022; Frayling, 1993; Archer, 1995) is positioned within the field of design as defined by Buchanan (2001) and specifically located within a sub-specialised branch of design known as Brand Identity Design.

My research is situated from the point of view of the brand identity designer within Branding consultancies. In Brand consultancies, the focus is on designing visual and material outputs to create brand identities as opposed to an emphasis on advertising and identity campaigns using various media (Moor, 2014). For ease of reading, brand identity designers are referred to as 'designer' throughout this thesis.

In light of an ongoing constructivist consumer audience paradigm shift identified in Branding (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002), this investigation explores the employment and cultivation of professional designers' reflexive practice (Thompson and Thompson, 2008; Cunliffe, 2004, 2009; Bolton 2014; Fook and Gardner, 2007) towards consumer audience experiences. When starting the research as a designer with over eighteen years of experience, I was informed by a hunch. I questioned why, as part of the design process and in practice, other UK-based professional designers and I, as co-producers,<sup>1</sup> were not explicitly questioned, challenged or scrutinised to think about our hegemonic position, assumptive actions and passive unidirectional alignment with our consumer audience experience designing in practice. At around the same time, I also recognised the emerging growth of audience participation, yet

<sup>1</sup> As Escobar has emphasized, 'Effective, meaningful design is a social activity, in which the designer is one actor among many' (Escobar, 2018:41).

limited design practice approaches were available to aid me in effectively responding to this. I engaged with existing consumer audience experience approaches available in professional practice, including mapping and user journeys, but I felt these were compromised. They neglected to prompt me to be explicit or critically reflect upon my thinking about and use of my relational positioning in my practice. Muratovski states that 'designers rarely operate in a strategic manner. Rather than conducting research, designers usually focus on form, style, processes of making without taking into account the broader contexts in which their designs will be used' (2016:XXIX). This unethical authoritarian and non-relational grounding in my design practice indicated that inequality in this context was taking place which was troubling and suggested an opportunity for exploration. I had an overarching question that was not fully resolved at the outset of this investigation, which asks, How might brand identity designers move towards an improved reflexive practice in the design of consumer audience experiences? This is a key question as professional brand identity designers often cannot participate directly with or have immediate involvement or contact with their targeted consumer audiences.

The particular focus of my research, reflexive design practice requires designers to critically reflect upon their thinking and actions concerning their positionality aligned to their participation, diversity, biases, and assumptions. This is to promote responsive and inclusive thinking and action in design processes and practices towards the experiences of others, who in this research is the consumer audience. Following the iterative nature of my study and as my research process progressed, Dewey's ethical pragmatism, (discussed on pages 103-105) enabled deeper links to be made. This was between my worldview and reflexive practice. Dewey emphasises ethics and democracy as being found in the 'activity of deliberation' (Dixon, 2022a). Key to his outlook is the importance of ongoing societal deliberation, the collective testing of what works and what doesn't (Dixon, 2022a) and reflection on experiences and actions to enable improvements to judgements. Dewey's ethical pragmatism is central to reflexive practice which requires a practitioner to engage in an activity of deliberation. Reflexive practice can therefore offer a practical application of Dewey's ethical pragmatism. In this research the participation, diversity, biases, and assumptions by designers' and me as a researcher were given careful consideration. This was so as not to unduly influence practices, support ethical decision making and enable adjustments to potential imbalances in these contexts to be made to facilitate a reflexive design practice.

In the Literature Review, designers' practice is reviewed, and in Methods Chapters, methods processes are selected and conducted taking participation, diversity, biases, and assumptions into account. This includes how I engage with my practice and invite other designers to engage with the methods in this thesis, which requires them to deliberate upon their actions and processes as well as consumer audience experiences. Simultaneously this research seeks to uncover theory about designers' activity in this context to inform the outputs and contributions of this research to aid other designers' reflexive design practice.

Reflexive practice offers a way to respond to the ongoing paradigm shift identified in Branding (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002) and avoid the reinforcement of inequality and disadvantage, which is needed by any practitioner when engaging with others (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). In addition, it could enable designers' within their design processes to better support clients' needs in addressing audiences' requirements within their design processes. The research exposes designers as cultural intermediaries who perform the work of cultural production (Maguire and Smith, 2014) and work on the material culture of a brand (Moor, 2014). This is because the non-material culture of designers', for example their ideas, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives, and reflexive practices which is inherent in brand identity design is made, surrounds and belongs to the consumer audience and is material culture. However, the focus of this study is not upon exploring designers positionality specifically within or from a cultural production perspective.

My analysis of brand identity design literature (Slade-Brooking, 2016) identified that brainstorming, independent research and concept development are all critical points when brand identity designers begin to apply their initial ideas within the brand identity design process cycle stages (Figure 1 stages 5-7). The term 'ideas generation' became the focus of this research and is subsequently discussed and used in research investigations going forward.

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	Detailed examination and evaluation. Prior to this stage extensive consumer research will have been carried out <b>(Prior) audience and consumer research carried out</b>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	Explores findings of the analysis and the clients needs. Determines drive and direction of the new design
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Design platform</b>	Senior creative produce a summary of the analysis and the direction requested by the client. Links findings of analysis to design strategy
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Briefing the designers</b>	Senior creatives brief creative team
<b>Stage 5</b>	<b>Brainstorming</b>	Ideas are brainstormed or discussed collectively so that designers can fine tune perception of brands identity
<b>Stage 6</b>	<b>Independent research</b>	Research undertaken independantly by designers/design team to inform and inspire initial ideas
<b>Stage 7</b>	<b>Concept development</b>	Creation of different ideas, and brand elements demanded by the client. Can be undertaken individually or by design team. No. of ideas depend on time available. Ideas at this stage are still based on initial thoughts. Exploration of ideas is key. Ideas are reviewed against brief /design platform.
<b>Stage 8</b>	<b>Analysis of design development</b>	Ideas from stage 7 are now reviewed and analysis in light of all research and analysis undertaken and referencing the original brief. Concepts are reduced to a few key options and then offered to a client.
<b>Stage 9</b>	<b>Refining the final concepts</b>	Ensures concepts selected by the team communicate the desired message and meets the brief. Ideas are developed further to show a range of creative approaches.
<b>Stage 10</b>	<b>Client presentation</b>	Presenting the final concepts to the client
<b>Stage 11</b>	<b>Finishing/ prototyping the designs</b>	The choosen client concept now undergoes final development and any changes that have been discussed are made. All supporting elements of the brand identity are created to artwork stage.
<b>Stage 12</b>	<b>Testing/market research / consu.reactions</b>	This stage achieves its most important aim, that it speaks effectively to the desired audience. Small tweaks are made if necessary. Various methods are used to test the success of a final brand identity. These might include for example focus groups. <b>Audience and consumer research carried out</b>
<b>Stage 13</b>	<b>Delivery of final artwork</b>	All creative outcomes are now developed and work is signed off by designers and delivered to client.

**Figure 1** My adapted outline of brand identity design process cycle stages (Slade-Brooking, 2016:78-82).

Drawing upon UK branding designer Wally Olins's (2008) literature on brand identity design and his distinctions of brand audiences (2008:17), the focal point in this study is the consumer audience group experience. Fundamental to this thesis is Dewey's ethical pragmatism and Jan van Toorn's reflexive design practice (1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015), which this research extends. The study employs Carl DiSalvo's (2022) design used to do inquiry and as a method of inquiry definitions and draws upon Joanna Drucker's (2020) design visualisation term. Drucker applies Dewey's approach to her meaning and theory of design visualisation. This provides a bridge for my research linked to how I apply my design practice in this study. The secondary sources of Christopher Frayling's 'Research in Art and Design' (1993), Bruce Archer's (1995) positioning of research activity in design and Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey's (2022) practice terms are employed to frame what I mean by design practice research within this thesis. In addition, Nigel Cross's (2001a, 2001b, 2011) research into designers' thinking aligned to their design activities was significant in developing this research. This inquiry is designed to inform UK-based professional designers, the design sector and design researchers, who are involved with, or interested in brand identity design and its practice. The specific area of Brand Identity Design that the research aligns with is outlined in section 1.2.

## 1.2 Brand Identity Design context

Slade-Brooking claims, 'the ultimate objectives in branding have become the domination of the market and elimination of competitors' (2016:68). Many contemporary design practices, which include professional brand identity design, tend to be orientated toward free-market capitalism (DiSalvo, 2022) and a positivistic functionalist audience paradigm<sup>2</sup>. The professional brand identity designer practitioner exists within a complex eco-system<sup>3,4</sup>. Within their professional role, even though some client/s provide audience research and/or information to them, designers act as authority, owning, managing and controlling the activity of designing on behalf of their client/s. The central focus is primarily on the promotion of competitiveness. Most professional designer practitioner-led activities and processes are concerned with consumer audience relations from a unidirectional and passive communication exchange perspective.

This designer approach conflicts with an ongoing constructivist consumer paradigm shift in Branding (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009). This is referred to as 'paradigm shift' for ease of reading throughout this thesis going forward which recognises that many consumer audiences seek greater ownership of brands and a deeper connection with them (Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Wheeler, 2009; Jones, 2012, 2017; Slade-Brooking, 2016; Kathman, 2002). Furthermore, alongside progressive contesting of corporate and market ideologies of brands (Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Jones, 2012, 2017) this paradigm shift has led to further growing pressure and a climate of increasing questioning from audiences. This is regarding non-inclusive, non-participatory and non-relational Brand Identity practices and processes signalling need for practitioners involved in brand identity design to enact relational approaches. There has also been a resurgence in contemporary design research which asks questions of and explores ethical and democratic approaches of those involved

<sup>2</sup> This positivist functionalist stance implies that the brand is owned by the marketer who controls communication to a passive recipient/consumer (Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> This eco-system includes applications/platforms and environments. Work can be communicated and involve various stakeholders such as; clients, employers, suppliers, mass media, other designer's, and a diverse range of audiences.

<sup>4</sup> I accept that it is conceivable to examine one area of the eco-system in isolation as this research understands that there can be different human approaches to morality, i.e. there can be polymorphism and diverse approaches in relation to morality in a range of situations and environments that exist with the same overarching network. The intent of this study is to therefore investigate a particular part (which I view can contribute to the wider whole) of an eco-system.

in the authorship and participation of design practices and processes with other stakeholders (Small, 2020; DiSalvo, 2022; Escobar, 2018; Dixon, 2020a, 2020b; Dixon, McHattie, and Broadley, 2022; Prendeville and Korja, 2022; Prendeville *et al.*, 2022; Prendeville, Syperek and Santamaria, 2022).

Since starting this research, there has been a fundamental shift in how Brands build consumer relationships (Slade-Brooking, 2016). This development further suggests awareness of the need for those involved in Branding, including professional brand identity designers, to respond to this paradigm shift. Yet, there remains a lack of academic literature or design research for these designers regarding relational and participatory consumer audience experience approaches. This issue still signals an urgency for brand identity design and its designers to respond to this evolution. I suggest that such insights indicate the timeliness of this design research and that my motivations for undertaking this study, presented in section 1.3, therefore remain vital. Furthermore, this lack of published literature suggests that designers have limited access to information which may impact how effective they are in addressing market imperatives.

### 1.3. Motivations for the research study and researcher's background

This research has been undertaken part-time whilst teaching as a Senior Lecturer on UK Undergraduate BA Graphic Design courses and engaging in my UK-based design practice. All my professional contexts have informed this thesis, from prior reflections to ongoing ones and dialogues with others<sup>5</sup>. My specific motivation is driven by reflections on my professional practice in UK design which started in the late 1990s. My career has included a range of roles up to a senior level in which I was involved in the designing and leadership of various brand identity design projects. I started this research because, after further discussions with designer friends and colleagues regarding the professional practice concerns (see pages 25-26) I identified, that my anecdotal views and unresolved overarching question (Figure 2) warranted further investigation.

In collaboration with professional brand identity designers, this study does not accept what design is, but what it might be, and is therefore anticipatory design research and practice. It involves designers as participants as a means to gather data and understand their perspectives as a way to assist designers' developmental process. This research does not intend to communicate about brand identity designers negatively but instead seeks to support them in their professional work. The involvement of participant designers aids in challenging my assumptions and helps me as a reflexive researcher. Participants' were of varying ages, nationalities and experience levels and identified as either male or female gender. I accept the limitations of this research in alignment with DiSalvo who states to not recognise this 'would do violence to those differences that matter' (DiSalvo, 2022:134). I acknowledge that this work is first positioned within the parameters of a Western study with UK-based designers and their most recent UK project/s. Second, all except one participant stated that they were of white ethnicity. Third, I interpret this research as a white female born into a North-East of England working-class family in the mid 1970s. I am now a designer and academic living in the South East of the UK within the London commuter belt. I believe there are always

<sup>5</sup> This includes interaction and involvement with the design research community which encompasses other Royal College of Art researchers and researchers engaged with socially engaged and participatory design (DESI Network, and UAL Social Design Institute).

biases, but how we mitigate such biases is important ethically. This is why this investigation challenges designers to be critical of themselves, step out of what they have previously known and might have done in existing practices, and confront their perspectives, assumptions and actions towards their audiences. I explore this through the research aims and questions asked in the next section.

#### 1.4. Research questions and aims

This research seeks to make improvements aligned to my uncovering of first, a lack of reflexive practice theory and practice knowledge in professional communication and brand identity design; second, designers' inadequate critical reflection of their positionality and; third, insufficient reflexive design practice resources available, specifically principles, in applied practice. The primary aim of this inquiry is to increase understanding of and develop how brand identity designers are and might think about and employ reflexive practice. Further aims are to reveal how reflexive design practice principles imparted within a guide might be embraced by, and potentially facilitate a shift of, the designer's relational positioning of themselves in relation to their consumer audience experiences, to offer a relational and improved professional design practice approach.

According to Muratovski, 'designers do not necessarily work with a set of principles and rules that prescribe the scope of their work' (2016:13) and as Victor Margolin points out rather, they invent the subject matter as they go along (1992:113, cited in Muratovski, 2016:13). Richard Buchanan claims 'in whatever discussion there has been in recent years, there is little or no explanation of first, what a principle is, second, what role a principle plays in organising the complexity of design practice, and third, how a principle affects the significance of design for individuals, society, or culture. Yet, principles are both beginning points and end points of inquiry' (2019:101). Buchanan states that 'there is a challenge for designers and a need to address the neglect of principles. This neglect has consequently impacted the failure of larger technological or social platforms, which affect our lives.' (2019:101). He proposes, that designers are not well prepared to address this 'since there is often too little discussion of the nature and influence of principles in making and living our lives' (2019:101).

This research draws upon Bryan Lawson's (2005) definition of principles in design (see glossary page 300). This study also employs Buchanan's (2019) view regarding how principles are developed. The principles in this research are realised through a distinct principle of organised inquiry from which insights into phenomena are made to ascertain justification about the usefulness of knowledge that emerges from that inquiry and drives thought. Embracing Lawson's (2005) view of principles as guiding thought rather than as rules of thought and Buchanan's suggestion that principles should be pluralistic and not used in a definitive sense<sup>6</sup>, I am not suggesting that the reflexive principles realised through this inquiry are the only approach that may be adopted. Nor are they proposed as being able to provide a definitive resolution to the complexity of a designer's positioning of themselves concerning their consumer audience experiences.

From this outlook, the research parallels DiSalvo's (2022) view that design is messy and a subject for exploration. Connected to this, I view design research also as messy. My study does not follow a linear trajectory. When starting the research, I had an overarching question, as shown in Figure 2, that was not fully resolved at the outset of this investigation.

#### Overarching research question

How might brand identity designers move towards an improved reflexive practice in the design of consumer audience experiences?

**Figure 2** The overarching research question.

This overarching research question led to early-stage scoping and a preliminary review of some of the literature. This subsequently prompted the development of a series of more manageable and feasible methods questions, which enabled me to focus on being able to address this overarching research question. Three questions (Figures 3-5) were asked that link to the methods used in the research. The first question (Figure 3) was explored using a questionnaire method alongside the early stages of my literature review.

<sup>6</sup> Buchanan deduces that, 'design flourishes when a pluralism of approaches is appreciated for the different insights that they bring into common problems of making and serving the needs of human beings' (Buchanan, 2019:88).



<b>Questionnaire question</b>	<i>What are professional brand identity designers' (based in the UK) attitudes, influences and views in relation to audiences?</i>
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**Figure 3** Questionnaire question in the research.

Resultant themes discovered from this first question and a 332 page researcher-designed book which employed my practice confirmed an opportunity that there was a need to; first explore in more depth the findings that designers were using their perspectives and personal input to inform their work without adequate critical reflection, which design participants claimed was an issue for them, and; second, undertake a more focused review of reflexive brand identity design practice literature. Questionnaire findings alongside gaps identified from the literature review, as discussed in Chapter 2, revealed a lack of theory and practice knowledge about reflexive brand identity design practice. These findings and gaps provided indicative insights that reflexive design practice resources and specifically principles to aid designers thinking and use of their positionality connected to their consumer audience experience designing were lacking. This subsequently presented an opportunity for this research to explore and contribute to future practice developments in this area. Building on the questionnaire and literature review findings led to the question (Figure 4) to be asked which was investigated using semi-structured interviews.

<b>Semi-structured Interview questions</b>	<p><i>Taking the most recently completed UK project, in what ways do UK-based professional brand identity designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation stage of the design process?</i></p> <p>And, interlinked to the question above:</p> <p><i>What challenges and/or issues do UK-based professional brand identity designers face when thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation of their most recent UK project?</i></p>
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**Figure 4** Semi-structured interview questions in the research.

Interview results confirmed; first, there was a lack of evidence that brand identity designers are critically reflecting on the positioning of themselves in their work; second, in professional brand identity design practice, there remains insufficient understanding regarding the employment and operation of systematic reflexive design practice and; third, substantiating the prior findings in this research, reflexive design practice resources, specifically reflexive design principles were non-existent, even at an elementary level in participants in professional brand identity design practice. I argue that brand identity designer practitioners cannot be engaging with or implementing reflexive practice.

Building upon prior research findings, a third and final method question (Figure 5) explores reflexive design practice principles in a synchronous online design workshop.

<b>Synchronous online design workshop questions</b>	<p><i>In what ways might reflexive principles affect UK based brand identity designers thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of the design process on a UK project?</i></p> <p>And, interlinked to the question above:</p> <p><i>How might reflexive principles be used by UK based brand identity designers within the ideas generation stage of the design process?</i></p>
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**Figure 5** Online design workshop questions in the research.

Workshop results are extended by further testing of the principles in applied practice to contribute to the evaluations and conclusions of this research. Evaluations identified that reflexive design practice principles imparted into a design guide can support professional brand identity designers' activity of deliberation in their designing and design decision-making whilst concurrently challenging them. The principles assisted designers in critically reflecting on how they think about and use their positionality within the operations of the ideas generation stage of their process in practice. Consequently, this research suggests that the principles imparted into a guide can assist designers in enacting a process towards their consumer audience experiences

that avoids the reinforcement of inequality and disadvantage, which is needed by any practitioner when engaging with others (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). As such, I propose that this resource can offer professional brand identity designers a new preliminary reflexive design method and relational and reflexive design practice approach in their consumer audience experience designing.

An ambition of this PhD is to facilitate a move beyond what DiSalvo discusses regarding the past work of pioneer Victor Papanek who he claims was 'critical of design and sought to reconstruct it as a practice for the good of people, beyond market imperatives' (2022:3). According to Alison J. Clarke (2021, in DiSalvo, 2022) she criticises Papanek's practice claiming that whilst purporting to be emancipatory it reproduced the hegemony of the West. I propose that reflexive practice can assist in reconstructing design to address market requirements aligned to the discussed paradigm shift and aid designers to move beyond market imperatives. This is because reflexive practice prompts questions that consider the experiences and needs of others. This is whilst simultaneously contesting biases and assumptions and enhancing self-awareness within professional parameters. In doing so, this implies reflexive practice can also challenge the hegemony of the West, colonialism and non-pluralist approaches.

At relevant points in the thesis I highlight each of the questions linked to the methods and research phases to emphasise what was asked in the research. The methods through which my questions were explored are discussed in the next section.

## 1.5. Methodology and methods

This design research adopts a multi-phase mixed methods methodology (Creswell and Clark 2011; Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; DiSalvo, 2022), undertaken through four phases. My investigation includes methods explained in Chapter 3 and their analysis and findings outlined in Chapter 4. These include; a Likert scale questionnaire, analysed using descriptive statistics and standard deviations; six semi-structured interviews and a synchronous online design workshop, which were thematically analysed and; design that employed my practice. My practice, which encompasses my design visualisations as a method, is fundamental to this research and integral alongside the qualitative and quantitative methods employed.

My design visualisation (Drucker, 2020) practice knowledge, and design lens are used to do inquiry and are applied as a method of inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022). This includes visual data collection materials – forms, invites, Miro online workshop whiteboards, and a guide prototype, visual documentation of data – visual diagrams, visual mapping, visual research planning, a communication design book which displays questionnaire data findings, quantitative and qualitative processes and a visual practice process book, visual analysis of data – quantitative and qualitative visual data tables and thematic maps and quantitative data visual spreadsheets. My design visualisation practice was used to make materials as well as evidence, display and review the often messy ideas and understandings as the research evolved and present these more systematically and coherently.

My practice enriched this research and developed because of it, as it supported me in first reflecting, evaluating, and constructing my reflexive practice knowledge and theoretical perspectives; second, collecting, documenting and presenting the findings and theory of other designers' reflexive practice; third, making and developing reflexive practice communications and prototypes for testing by other designers to support the development of theory, and; fourth, communicating my methodology, which incorporates reflexive practice knowledge. In summary, my practice enabled me to visually record my research processes,



theory, knowledge formation and to develop design materials. My design practice and its use as a method of inquiry are outlined in more detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, alongside quantitative and qualitative methods discussions. All of this design practice work accompanies this thesis and is presented sequentially in a visual practice process book (Figure 6).

By means of my methods (Creswell, 2011, 2014 and Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010, DiSalvo, 2022), the methodology and the research outcomes, reflexive practice knowledge has enlightened my perspectives and enhanced my knowledge and design capabilities. My overarching research journey is described in Figure 7. This shows the research process and the relationship between its four specific research phases as well as my practice and where decisions regarding methods were made.



**Figure 6** Visual practice process book that accompanies this thesis.

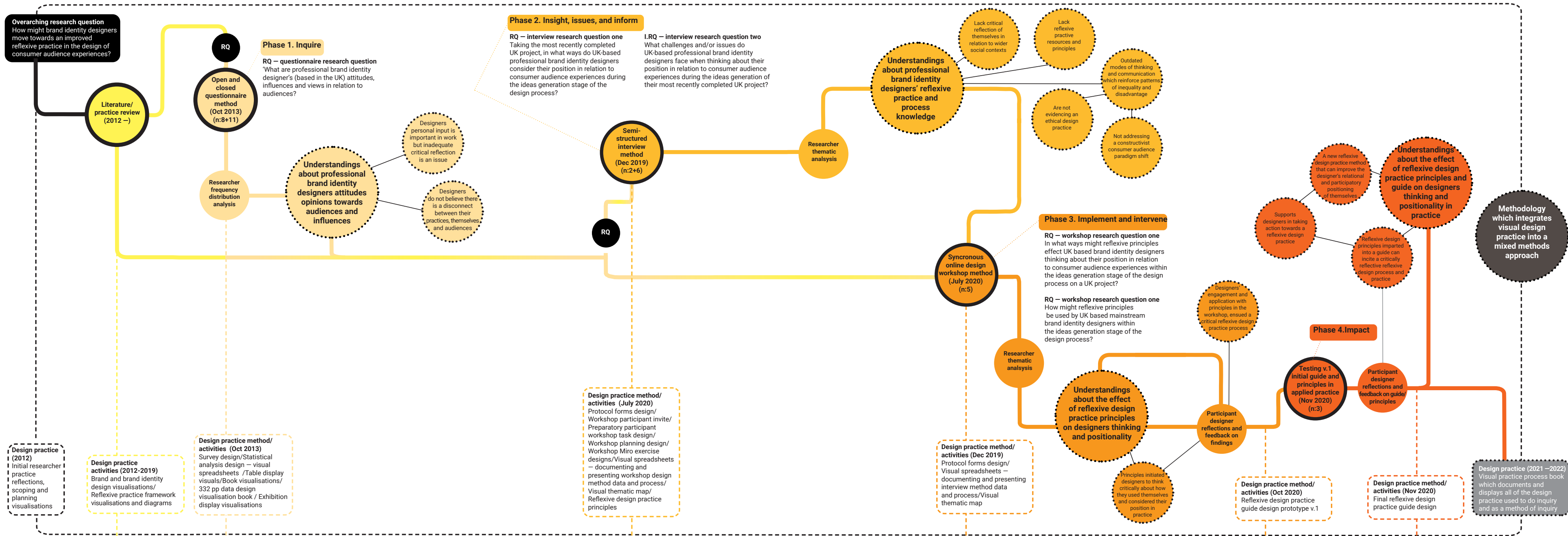


Figure 7 Overarching research journey.

## 1.6. Initial findings – contributions to brand identity design

My contribution to knowledge is threefold:

First, this research adds new understandings about professional brand identity designers' reflexive practice and process knowledge which was formerly insufficient. Second, this thesis contributes insights using eight main and eighteen sub reflexive design principles presented in a guide to advance designers' critically reflective thinking about and use of their relational positionality. Furthermore, these principles may be used to generate a critically reflective reflexive design process. This is in the ideas generation stage of designers' design processes in relation to their consumer audience experiences. Subsequently, a preliminary new design practice method is offered. This method can improve how designers' undertake the activity of deliberation when they are relationally thinking about, and employing themselves in relation to their consumer audience experiences in their applied practice and simultaneously develop their reflexive practice. The third and final contribution is by way of my methodology, which integrates design visualisation practice into a mixed methods approach.

The next section outlines the structure of this thesis.

## 1.7. Thesis structure

This thesis has five Chapters, including this Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology and Methods, Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions, and a Conclusion. This structure allowed me to develop the research iteratively. At the end of each literature review section and chapter section, I summarise key points and learnings. My reflections and evaluations of these learnings led to developments in my understanding of reflexive practice knowledge. This knowledge formation was brought together and documented not only through my undertaking of the research process and thesis writing but also using my design visualisation practice. My practice was undertaken as this thesis evolved, and its explanation as a method is discussed in Chapter 3 alongside quantitative and qualitative methods discussions.

Chapter 1 – Introduction provides an overview of the research. This Chapter outlines the background to the study, giving a brief insight into the brand identity context of the thesis and presenting a statement of my motivations for undertaking this PhD. An explanation of the research aims follow, along with a discussion of the overarching research and method questions. An introduction to the methodology and methods is discussed, along with a summary of research contributions.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review presents an account of the theory of Reflexive Practice, Brand Identity Design and Communication Design from key scholars and frames the terms and terminology of these distinct areas. This Chapter highlights what exists in reflexive practice linked to a design perspective, specifically brand identity design, and what exists in Brand Identity Design and Communication Design associated with reflexive practice. A review of what professional brand identity designers do, their practice, processes and current consumer audience experience approaches, including tools and techniques, are also discussed. This phase led to identifying research gaps, opportunities, a research proposition, and two method questions, which were in addition to and built upon an early scoping first method question.

Chapter 3 – Methodology, Methods, and Research Design discusses my pragmatic worldview, how this connects to the mixed methods methodology and the four methods employed: questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, an online design workshop and design practice. This Chapter explains in four phases the rationale for each method approach, the questions connected to each method, the participants involved and preparation undertaken as part of each method, and an account of how data was collected.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion presents data analysis from the research methods used in the four phases and the resultant findings. My design practice, which aided my data analysis, is displayed in a visual practice process book accompanying this thesis. This Chapter explains in four phases how the data for each of the methods was analysed and progresses into the documentation of participant responses and my interpretation of the data. It concludes with my reflections and discussions and a summary of results from each method. Each method phase in this Chapter contributed to new knowledge understandings, detailed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion offers a summary of the research investigations and findings of the thesis. This Chapter explains that reflexive design practice has been built into my professional brand identity design practice, my design learning and teaching practice, and my worldview when engaging with others. It concludes with a discussion of the contribution to knowledge and explains recommendations for how this research can provide a basis for future research as well as its limitations.

## Literature Review

# Chapter 2

**2.0.****Introduction**

Literature pertinent to the context of this study is reviewed. This chapter assesses reflective, critically reflective and reflexive practice, including reflexive practice strategies and techniques. It explores reflexive practice in contemporary brand identity design, and communication design and reviews existing brand identity design audience experiences approaches and resources. This review of literature led to the discovery of gaps and the formulation of methods questions and identified an opportunity to contribute to new knowledge in Brand Identity Design.

**2.0.1.****Purpose of review**

Three sections form this Literature Review Chapter. The first explores reflexive practice theory to ascertain whether Brand Identity Design is included in these discussions. This review additionally seeks to understand reflexive practice definitions, terminology and approaches. In doing so, I attempt to understand better the relevancy of reflexive practice to design and how this area might potentially inform future stages of the research. Following this, existing brand identity design literature is discussed. This includes a review of audience approaches to assist my understanding regarding what reflexive audience experience methods and techniques exist for brand identity designers to use within their processes and practice. This process is to identify limitations as well as opportunities and assist my understanding as to whether present professional approaches are concerned with aiding or facilitating designers to be reflexive. This is when designers are using their professional practice position in their processes to consider audiences' experiences.

As Brand Identity Design is a sub-specialised branch of Design connected to the specialised branch of Communication Design, the third part of the review examines reflexive practice in communication design. Communication Design was given precedence over a review of Branding, as the latter is more closely affiliated with the Marketing field. This enables this study to understand present reflexive communication design knowledge, reveal what this might offer to this research and uncover how this might be extended.

## 2.1. Review of Reflective and Reflexive Practice

As this research is specifically concerned with professional designers' practice, this review will scope existing literature from a practice theory perspective. Two theoretical areas: reflective and critically reflective practice, are introduced at the start of this chapter section. The focus of this section is concerned though with reflexive practice.

### 2.1.1. Reflective Practice

Donald Schön (1983), whose vision draws upon a key scholar who has impacted this research – John Dewey and his theory of inquiry (Dixon, 2020), has contributed seminal literature to understanding reflection-in<sup>7</sup> action and reflection-on<sup>8</sup> action in practice. Schön's research includes how professionals think in action in design. He viewed that practitioners engage with tacit knowledge (Polyani, 2009), which runs counter to the technical rationality and systematic method described by Bruce Archer (1968).

Corresponding with Schön's view is abduction<sup>9</sup>, the 'logic of design activity' (Cross, 2011:28), i.e., designers use abductive reasoning. Schön declared that designing is an interactive process in which problems arise, implications are explored, and possible solutions emerge. He proposes that via these processes, unintended consequences may arise in which the designer reflects upon the changes they have made in the situation, i.e., reflection-in-action. This, in turn, he argues, activates new understandings. In this way, the practitioner's relationship, in any design discipline, is assigned with the transactional situation in which their stance toward inquiry is their attitude toward the reality with which they deal (Schön, 1983:163). Cross explains that Schön's insights, whilst influential, are based upon one partial example of design activity (Cross 2011:21)<sup>10</sup>. Significant to this is that beyond Schön's work, there remains limited theory and research that has investigated reflection within a professional practice setting and particularly from a professional brand identity design practice perspective.

<sup>7</sup> Requires the ability to think about 'doing' whilst engaged in the process of doing (Crouch and Pearce, 2013:45) which involves 'testing and evaluating simultaneously to progress and correct immediate performance within their situation' (Dixon, 2020:69).

<sup>8</sup> When the practitioner has finished a task and can reflect on why decisions were made the way they were or why people behaved the way they did. (Crouch and Pearce, 2013:45) thus involves 'post-event evaluation to also reorientate their future performance' (Dixon, 2020:69).

<sup>9</sup> According to C.S. Pierce, 'abduction suggests that something may be.' This is different to what he describes as induction, 'which shows that something is actually operative,' and 'deduction which 'proves that something must be' (In Cross 2011:27. See also Crouch and Pearce, 2013:22).

<sup>10</sup> This example is of an experienced male architect designer – Quist, tutoring a female student – Petra, in an academic design studio.

Crouch and Pearce claim that 'Schön has been criticised for not making the critical aspect of his modes of reflection more explicit' (2013:46). They propose that this conception is limited because it does not contest the practice of the designer beyond an individual level to question the broader social conventions within the parameters of practice. Thus, giving little attention to the critical and emotional aspects of reflection (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). Crouch and Pearce argue that there is a distinction between reflection, which stays within the confines of a system of practice, and critical reflection, which leads directly to praxis. However, reflective practice is not the predominant and central focus of this study; reflexive practice is. The latter is discussed in the next section (2.1.2) to comprehensively understand its definitions and terms.

### 2.1.2. **Reflexive Practice**

My research focuses on reflexivity in a practice context rather than in sociology or the broader expanse of social theory. Cunliffe (2004, 2009), Bolton (2014), Thompson and Thompson (2008), and Fook and Gardner (2007) view reflection and reflexivity within practice as two distinct ideas, although they suggest that they are interlinked. Thus, reflective practice is briefly discussed in this section.

Bolton, whose research is within the field of management, defines reflexivity as 'focused, in-depth reflection upon one's perspectives, values and assumptions' (2014, xxiii). For her, it involves reflecting upon what these bring to the practical values, theories, principles, and assumptions in the relationship between theory and practice. (Bolton, 2014). Whilst Fook and Gardner (2007) define reflexivity as involving the ability to recognise that all aspects of ourselves, including physical and bodily aspects, and our contexts influence the way we research or create knowledge (2007).

Cunliffe moves beyond the term reflexivity with the addition of the word critical. Discussing the field of management education, i.e. learning and teaching, she proposes that this form of practice is when subjective understanding of one's reality is critically reviewed in terms of assumptions, values and actions on others and involves 'examining critically the assumptions underlying our actions, the impact of those actions' (2004:407). Cunliffe states that this helps us understand how we constitute realities and identities in relational ways and can extend knowledge related to collaboration and responsive ways of working (2004:407). This stance suggests that critically reflexive practice is fundamental to brand identity designers' processes in practices, as it includes the thinking, creation and production of communications and involves designer-audience relations. This is proposed as key to any practices that acknowledge, as this research does, that audiences are active and not passive in communications processes.



Thompson and Thompson (2008), who write within a context of nursing, social work, education, and management, view reflective practice as reflexive. They see that this is only possible if reflection is aligned appropriately with a critical perspective and if a practitioner engages in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This is by using self-awareness and thoughtfulness of their engagement, influence and analysis towards their role in the process of their action. They claim that 'a reflective practice that does not adopt a critical perspective would produce poor-quality practice and, in some cases, dangerous practice' (2008:27). They suggest that reflective means that one can reflect on an action but also look back on oneself (2008:19). Furthermore, they state that it can allow practitioners to look forward to what might be encountered, and reflect-for-action, which they claim Schön (1983) did not discuss.

'Reflexivity is a sophisticated human process' (Bolton, 2014:5), requiring support to facilitate change and learning. This research intends to explore with, and support designers, to positively understand how they might make a change and enhance their current practice. Change can cause uncertainty and make practitioners potentially defensive (Bolton, 2014), but doing so can make them more aware. Exploring and experimenting with complex areas of experience, including how to perceive and value others' perspectives, even if they are different from our own, means that understanding can be developed and enhanced regarding what to change and what cannot be changed in our own context/s (Bolton, 2014). As 'professionals face complex and unpredictable situations; they need complex and diverse reflective and reflexive processes' (Bolton, 2014:2). If such processes are engaged with critically, it is reflected in the quality of professional practitioners' work (Bolton, 2014), which signals that reflexive practice can enhance working practices.

My evaluation on the review above clarified my understanding of the distinction between reflexivity and reflection. I view that reflexivity must be undertaken with 'critical' attention for reflection of individual self-awareness in relation to others. Furthermore, I acknowledge that critical reflection and reflexivity can be analogous. However, I propose that there is a distinction. Critically reflective practice might involve taking into account multiple perspectives, but the specific focus is not on doing so concurrently in relation to the interaction/s with other individuals/stakeholders connected with that practice. Whereas this is fundamental to a reflexive practice and it is only when reflection is engaged with critically and consideration is given to a practitioner's perspective and role and implications of their actions in relation to or towards others in this context that reflexive practice occurs.

This research is not concerned with reflective practice associated with a traditional approach, as discussed in 2.1.1., or critically reflective practice that does not move beyond the individual themselves with no concern for practitioners relation/s and interaction/s with other individuals/stakeholders connected with that practice.

This thesis embraces Thompson and Thompson's outlook that critically reflective reflexive practice in professional practice can advocate 'positive, emancipatory outcomes, rather than reinforcing existing patterns of inequality and disadvantage' (2008:30). Drawing upon design researchers Crouch and Pearce's (2013) view, of the distinctions between reflexivity as empowerment and narcissism<sup>11</sup> the focus of this study is on reflexive practice as empowerment.

<sup>11</sup> Crouch and Pearce outline that in connection with reflexivity, there is a difference between self-identity and narcissism. They point out that 'the struggle for self-identity is part of a struggle for emancipation, whereas narcissism is the (2013:48) 'pre-occupation with the self which prevents the individual from establishing valid boundaries between self and external worlds.' (Giddens, 1991:170, In Crouch and Pearce, 2013:48).



After reviewing the reflexive practice literature of Thompson and Thompson (2008), Cunliffe (2004, 2009) Fook and Gardner (2007), and Bolton (2014), I identified that their discussions omit design. Understanding the work reviewed in this section provided an early indication of an opportunity to explore the professional brand identity designer's reflexive practice. Presented in the next section is a discussion regarding practitioner engagement with reflexive practice.

### 2.1.3. Engaging Reflexive Practice

According to Thompson and Thompson, there are three dimensions that professionals must be able to manage in practice if they want to engage with reflexive practice. These configurations and their specific characteristics are summarised below in Figure 8 and are described more extensively with questions in Figure 9 and in Chapter 2 of their book (2008, pp.32-54).

Characteristic	Sub themes
<b>Cognitive dimension</b>	Correlated with the power of thought . Includes mindfulness, analytical, creative and critical thinking.
<b>Affective dimension</b>	Corresponds to the importance of emotions and feeling. Understanding the significance of taking and not taking emotions and feeling into account, specifically empathy.
<b>Values dimension</b>	Parallel with being aware of values and the moral-political of actors which shape our thoughts, feelings but most importantly, our actions.

**Figure 8** Summary table of my reflections and synthesis of Thompson and Thompson's (2008: 32-54) three dimensions that they argue professionals must be able to manage in practice if they want to engage with reflexive practice.

Cognitive dimension	Affective dimension	Values dimension
<p><b>Power of thought</b></p>	<p><b>Emotions and feeling</b></p>	<p><b>Awareness of values, and the moral-political factors which shape our thoughts, feelings but most importantly our actions</b></p>
<p>In what ways did you make the implicit explicit? (mindfulness). How did you make sense of the situation and what questions did you ask yourself to do so. These could include: – What type of situation am I dealing with here? – What are the key issues I need to be aware of? – What is happening? What processes are shaping what is happening? – What do other people expect of me here? Is this consistent with professional role and the specific duties of my job? If not, what negotiations need to take place to remedy the situation? – Who else needs to be involved? Who do I need to communicate with? – What options are available in terms of dealing with this situation? How do I evaluate those options? – Are there any values issues here I need to consider) for example, showing respect?</p> <hr/> <p>Did you look at things in a new way to move beyond routine practices?</p>	<p>How did you recognize the feelings of others? (i.e. empathy). How did you read subtle cues in other people's language and behaviour? (i.e. emotional intelligence). How did you think about the other persons gender and culture? (essential to take into account differences in cultural expression and interpretation of emotions and different gender experiences of emotion).</p>	<p>Did you ask yourself questions related to value? These could include: – What are the values associated with my profession, i.e. codes of practice? What do these mean to me in practice? – What are my personal values? What do these mean to me in practice? – Are there conflicts between these two sets of values and how I practice? – How can I safeguard my personal and professional values if they are under threat in any way.</p> <hr/> <p>How did you consider the inclusion and participation of other people?</p> <hr/> <p>How did you empower others? This could include thinking about: Taking into account the barriers related to others that exist at: Persona levels (self-esteem and confidence). Cultural levels (stereotyping that stigmatizes). Socially structural (i.e. which exclude opportunities and disadvantages certain groups based on race, class and gender) levels.</p> <hr/> <p>How did you think about the wider social and political aspects of situations and our professional roles?</p> <hr/> <p>Did you use non-discriminatory forms of language?</p>

**Figure 9** Summary table of my reflections and synthesis of the Thompson and Thompson's (2008:32-54) three dimensions and questions that they argue professionals must be able to manage in practice if they want to engage with reflexive practice.

Recognising the values that inform these three dimensions includes asking questions in practice about the significance of the partnership of the inclusion and participation of other people. (i.e. relationships between practitioners with users, citizen participation and clients)<sup>12</sup>

Reflexive practice is a 'moral and principled practice itself based upon ethical values' (Bolton, 2014: 21) and is an approach that supports the critique of one's involvement in professional life. According to Bolton, our values in practice are rarely ever analysed or questioned, which is in contrast to our espoused values, which are values that most people live by in society, such as respect for others. Professional integrity can be defined as having values in practice that are as close as possible to espoused values (Bolton, 2014). 'We intuitively base our actions on implicit knowledge and values' (Bolton, 2014:22). Therefore, by asking people to talk about important experiences, we can gain insights into their values.

<sup>12</sup>Schön touches upon this approach in his discussions related to working relationship regarding the traditional and reflective contract (see Schön, 1983:302).

#### 2.1.4.

## Reflexive Practice as responsive practice

Drawing upon Bolton's definition of reflective responsibility<sup>13</sup> (2014:10), reflexive practice denotes a requirement of practitioner responsibility. According to designer Steven Heller, this includes the designer who 'must be professionally, culturally and socially responsible for the impact his or her design has on the citizenry'. (2003:x) This research draws upon Gamman and Thorpe's (2006) socially responsive design and Larry May's use of the term responsive rather than responsibility. May sees the self as having a duality being 'both a passive recipient of social stimuli and active participant in the social milieu' (1996:2). This duality between the individual and social context suggests a correlation that the self can only be responsive and not responsible.

Thompson and Thompson (2008:55-76) advise that understanding and sensitivity towards particular contexts are required to facilitate critical reflection and reflexivity. They discuss three ways practitioners can use their critical analysis and agency to contribute to these contexts and subsequently aid their responsiveness. These include, first, personal individual reflective space, second, dyadic reflective space<sup>14</sup>, and finally, group learning space<sup>15</sup>. This research focuses on exploring and understanding the first of these three ways proposed by Thompson and Thompson - the practitioner's personal reflective space' (2008:55). This involves practitioners contemplating how they can maximise their potential to guide their critical reflection and promote it to themselves, for themselves. According to Thompson and Thompson (2008), this might include; being able to manage work pressures, which can support creating free time and space for personal reflection; practitioner's self-awareness and questioning the impact that they are personally having upon the situation, and vice versa, via themselves and through

<sup>13</sup> When practitioners take their share of the responsibility for the political, social and cultural situations within which they live and work, as well as for their own actions and values.

<sup>14</sup> This means sharing and promoting critical reflection and reflexivity via one-to-one interactions with another.

<sup>15</sup> This requires collective learning to maximize critical reflection and reflexivity.

feedback from others; being able to avoid routine, formulaic solutions and doing solely what one is expected to do, all of which can negate practitioners own free-thinking; having an overview of the situation from a wide and broad perspective; maintaining clear aims and goals, and having sound focus and engaging in problem setting and not just problem-solving.

2.1.5. **Reflexive Practice techniques, approaches, and strategies**

Cunliffe (2004), Bolton (2014) and Thompson and Thompson's (2008) research revealed strategies and techniques that can be adopted to stimulate reflexive practice. These are summarised and presented in Figures 10 and 11. As the locus of this study is specifically concerned with identifying what is needed to support designers' reflexive practice actions, reviewing these aided my understanding of existing reflexive practice.

Stimulates critical reflexivity	Strategy/Technique
	Learning exercises Mapping Critically reflexive journaling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>aids in thinking about social</i></li> <li>– <i>situates reflective and constructed nature of reality reflexive practice</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 10** Summary table of my synthesis of Cunliffe's (2004) strategies and techniques that can be adopted to initiate reflexive practice.

Stimulates critical reflexivity	Strategy/Technique
<b>Within reflection -for action</b> (Planning, to look forward, being able to think ahead about what we might encounter, to anticipate what might happen).	<b>Question based techniques.</b> <b>Emancipatory techniques.</b> <b>Problem solving techniques</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Systemic practice</i></li> <li>– <i>Visioning</i></li> <li>– <i>RED approach</i></li> <li>– <i>Objective trees</i></li> <li>– <i>Chunk up, chunk down</i></li> <li>– <i>Cost benefit analysis</i></li> <li>– <i>Embedded whys</i></li> <li>– <i>Rehearsing.</i></li> </ul>
<b>From a reflection -in-action perspective</b> (Thinking we do while actually practising, a sort of thinking on our feet).	<b>Question based approaches.</b> <b>Emancipatory techniques.</b> <b>Problem solving techniques</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Risk assessment model</i></li> <li>– <i>Reframing</i></li> <li>– <i>Using dissonance</i></li> <li>– <i>The 3 Hs: head-heart-habit</i></li> <li>– <i>Noticing</i></li> <li>– <i>Elegant challenging</i></li> <li>– <i>Think-feel-do</i></li> <li>– <i>Avoiding or breaking out of,</i></li> <li>– <i>Force-field analysis the drama triangle</i></li> <li>– <i>Writing</i></li> <li>– <i>Filming (reflexive recording).</i></li> </ul>
<b>From a reflection-on-action perspective</b> (After the event, reviewing our experience, make sense of it, try to learn from it. Reflection on action should refer back to back to what was going on through our mind during the practice encounter of reflection-in-action).	<b>Question based approaches.</b> <b>Emancipatory techniques.</b> <b>Problem solving techniques</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>What? So what? Now what</i></li> <li>– <i>The CIA framework</i></li> <li>– <i>Mind mapping</i></li> <li>– <i>Preparing for supervision</i></li> <li>– <i>The drawbridge exercise</i></li> <li>– <i>Process recording</i></li> <li>– <i>Prompts</i></li> <li>– <i>Avoiding or breaking out of</i></li> <li>– <i>Differing perspectives the drama triangle.</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 11** Summary table of my synthesis of Bolton (2014), and Thompson and Thompson's (2008) strategies and techniques that can be adopted to initiate reflexive practice.

The strategies and techniques in Figures 10 and 11 are presented as significant to education, management, health and disciplines. To date, there are limited discussions linking the adoption of these strategies and techniques to design. I will reflect upon this as this study progresses. Design academic Mirja Kälviäinen in Mike Press and Rachel Cooper's (2003) publication *'The Design Experience'* does provide insights for the designer to draw upon; see Figure 12. However, the focus is on products, not brand identity design and is framed around reflexivity and taste of the designer and consumer.

	Strategy/Technique
<b>The objective framework</b>	<i>Concerns the demographic characteristics of the user group, the context of use and the history of the product within this context</i>
<b>The making of meanings</b>	<i>Interest is in the symbolic meaning in which the life histories of users and how they make meanings from consumption are examined</i>
<b>The network of influences</b>	<i>The designer explores the social world of the user, comprising the social codes and rituals, rules of interaction and key influences</i>

**Figure 12** My adapted outline of Kälviäinen's (1999) product design strategies and techniques to initiate reflexivity linked to the taste of the designer and consumer.

Kälviäinen maintains, 'The element of taste in designed objects should not be based on designers' own beliefs. Reflexivity, the opening to question of the designer's own concepts of taste is fundamental in design processes where customer taste is taken into account' (1999 cited in Hall and Cooper, 2003:114). Whilst I agree with Kälviäinen's view that reflexivity is needed, her insights above are not crucial to this research. This is because her focus is on the consumer and not the designer, which is the impetus of this study.

#### 2.1.6.

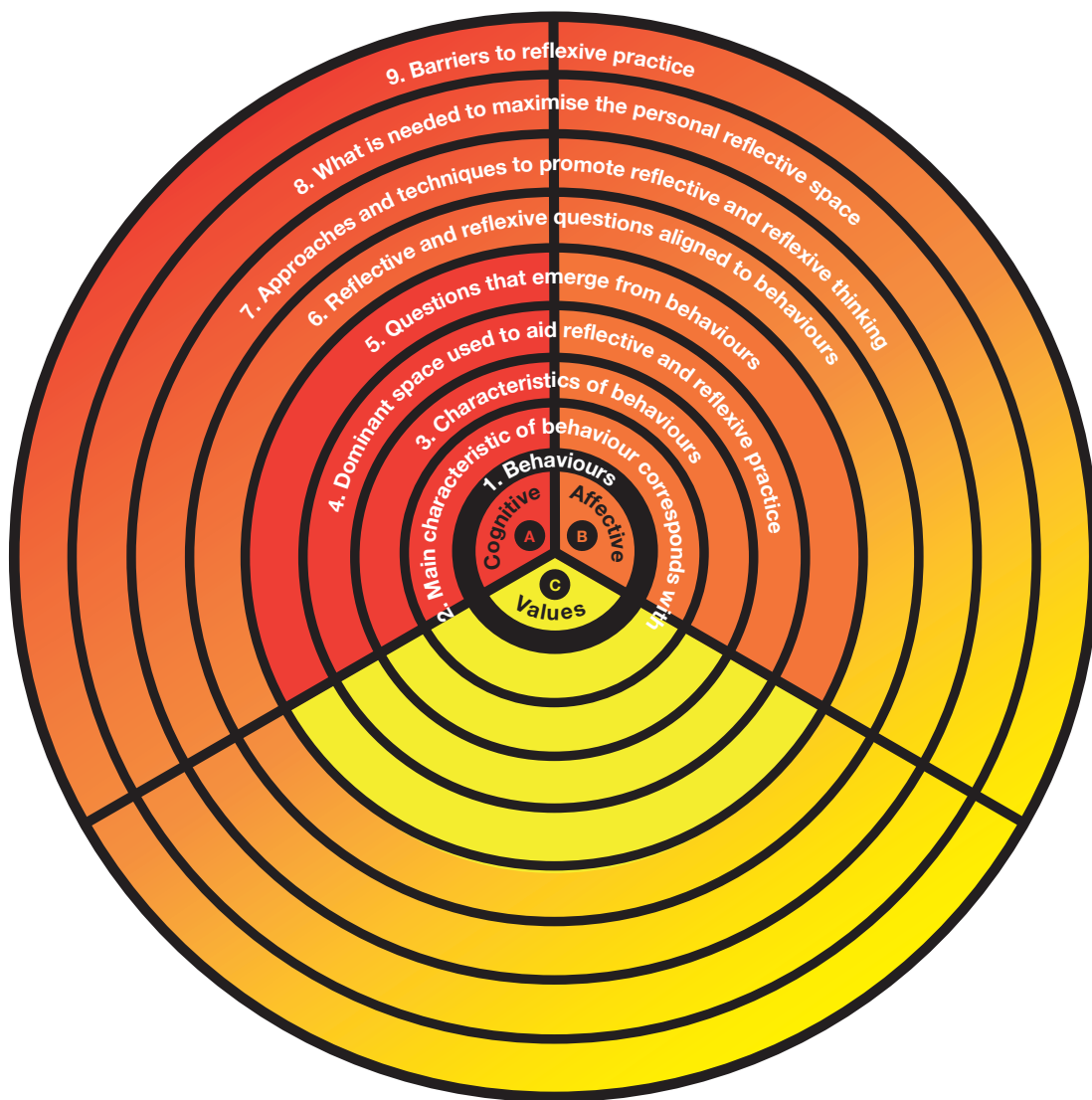
### Review of Reflective and Reflexive Practice section summary

This review has uncovered that within reflexive practice theory and literature, there are no discussions associated with the field of Design, specifically professional brand identity design. Additionally, there is a lack of research, including reflexive strategies, techniques and guiding principles within this context. While it is important to recognise Schön's (1983) theory connected to design, his concern is reflective practice and not critically reflective or reflexive practice. Schön's focus is on the individual practitioner themselves, something this research seeks to expand by exploring the designer's role in relation to broader societal conventions within the parameters of practice. In addition, his research is limited in terms of studies of professional design activity.

This reflective and reflexive practice review section has been fundamental to understanding what distinct theories and knowledge exist and what may or may not be relevant to include in my future investigations.

The frameworks in Figures 13 and 14 use my design visualisation practice to synthesise and present the information and arguments of other researchers' reflective and reflexive practice literature (Thompson and Thompson, 2008; Cunliffe, 2004, 2009; Bolton, 2014) as diagrams and tables. This documentation and synthesis aided me in being able to highlight subtle differences in ideas explanations and variances in proposed applications and operational contexts of reflexive practice in their work.

Furthermore, my practice assisted me in unravelling, analysing and reflecting on these contradictions and nuances to support me in evaluating and constructing my reflexive practice knowledge perspective. Key to this was that I discovered that for a genuine reflexive practice to occur, practitioners need to critically reflect on how they are positioning themselves in relation to others. Yet, this notion of criticality was absent in some of this reflexive practice literature. As such, my practice supported in providing me with a clear conceptual structure of reflexive practice to build and reflect upon in future stages of this research.



**Figure 13** My reflexive practice framework visualisation as an overview diagram, synthesised from Thompson and Thompson, (2008) Cunliffe (2004, 2009) and Bolton's (2014) reflexive practice arguments conveyed in their literature.

A1. Behaviour Cognitive	B1. Behaviour Affective	C1. Behaviour Values	A1/B1/C1 (all behaviours)
A2. Main characteristic of cognitive behaviour corresponds with Thought/thinking	B2. Main characteristic of affective behaviour corresponds with Feelings/emotions	C2. Main characteristic of values behaviour corresponds with Awareness of actions	A7/B7/C7. Approaches and techniques to promote reflective and reflexive thinking
A3. Characteristics of cognitive behaviour might include mindfulness / analytical thinking / creative thinking / critical thinking / making the implicit explicit / examining and analysing a situation to make sense of it, via questions to identify themes, patterns and issues / looking at things in a new way to move beyond routine practices	B3. Characteristics of affective behaviour might include understanding the significance of taking and not taking them into account / being empathic in which we recognise the feelings of another but do not necessarily share them directly (not i.e. sympathy) / emotional intelligence sensitivity to, and understanding others emotional states (as well as self-care of oneself) / work in uncertain situations, recognising what we are afraid of and identifying relevant mechanisms to cope with this / understanding that emotion is not necessarily biological and thus can be connected to social contexts – it can include factors such as gender and culture so it is essential to take into account differences in cultural expression and interpretation of emotions and different gender experiences of emotion	C3. Characteristics of values behaviour might include recognising moral-political factors – the values that inform thoughts, feelings and actions and asking questions of these / understanding the significance of the inclusion and participation of other people / empowering others, via identifying the barriers related to others that exist at personal (self-esteem and confidence), cultural (stereotyping that stigmatises) and socially structural (i.e. which exclude opportunities and disadvantages certain groups based on race, class and gender) levels / understanding the wider social and political aspects of situations and professional roles / a well-informed approach to issues of discrimination, which is often institutionalised via our working and personal lives at both structural and cultural levels (as described above) and emerges via the use of discriminatory forms of language	A7/B7/C7. Approaches and techniques to promote reflective and reflexive thinking question based techniques / approaches; risk assessment model; the 3 Hs: head-heart-habit; think-feel-do / emancipatory techniques/approaches; reframing; noticing; avoiding, or breaking out of the drama triangle / problem solving techniques; using dissonance; elegant challenging; force-field analysis / writing techniques/approaches; serious playfulness by penning 100 words to describe something; the writing of phrases to do with names, (i.e. memories, impressions, like, hates); documenting milestones achieved composing words or phrases that give insights about work significant descriptions / visual techniques/approaches; filming; reflexive recording
A4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice mostly own personal space but also includes social space	B4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice equally own personal space and social space	C4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice mostly social space but also inherently requires personal space	A8/B8/C8. What is needed to maximise the personal reflexive space
A5. Questions that emerge from cognitive behaviour what do I think?	B5. Questions that emerge from affective behaviour what is the significance of taking and not taking my feelings and emotions into account? / asking questions and embracing uncertainty, to uncover assumptions and do something about them / challenging imbalances of power / talking about experiences – to gain insights	C5. Questions that emerge from values behaviour am I aware of my values, and the moral-political factors which shape my thoughts, feelings but most importantly my actions / awareness for our own personal and professional actions, identity, values and feelings and having empathy for others / actions are based on implicit knowledge and values	A8/B8/C8. What is needed to maximise the personal reflexive space management of work pressures, which can support in creating free time and space for personal reflection / self-awareness and questioning the impact that one is personally, having upon the situation, and vice versa, both via themselves and through feedback from others / avoiding routine and formulaic solutions and doing solely what one is expected to do, all of which can negate practitioners own free thinking / having an overview of the situation from a wide and broad perspective, to 'form a view of the overall picture so that we can reflect on what our role needs to be in general and what specific steps we need to take / maintaining clear aims and goals, and having sound focus and engaging in problem setting and not just problem solving
A6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to cognitive behaviour what type of situation am I dealing with here? / what are the key issues I need to be aware of? / what is happening? What processes are shaping what is happening? / what do other people expect of me here? Is this consistent with my professional role and the specific duties of my job? If not, what negotiations need to take place to remedy the situation? / do I have the information I need to act? If not, what do I need to do to find out and how? / who else needs to be involved? Who do I need to communicate with? / what options are available in terms of dealing with this situation? How do I evaluate those options? / are there any values issues here I need to consider (for example, showing respect, maintaining confidentiality valuing diversity?)	B6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to affective behaviour None	C6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to values behaviour what are the values associated with my profession, i.e. codes of practice? / what do these mean to me in practice? / what are my personal values? What do these mean to me in practice? / are there conflicts between these two sets of values and how I practise? / how can I safeguard my personal and professional values if they are under threat in any way?	A9/B9/C9. Barriers to reflexive practice time constraints: incorporates reflection as part of the workload rather than separate from it / waning commitment: not seeing reflective practice as fundamental, document learning, reflective log or diary, lead by example, address accountability / organizational culture: cultures (i.e. managerialism) that sees reflective practice as a threat or nuisance, have a mistrust about change, and anti-intellectualism in the wider discourse of the field of the profession itself, all of which can be a barrier to progress / a lack of skills: i.e. analytical, self-awareness, critical thinking and communication. It requires taking the initiative / anxiety, fear or low confidence: concerns regarding inadequate or out of date knowledge, a fear of taking risks to discover new things, exposure to criticism and role anxiety in which some people may not be comfortable using particular reflective tools/techniques / misunderstandings about the nature of reflective practice

**Figure 14** My reflexive practice framework as a detailed table, synthesised from Thompson and Thompson,(2008) Cunliffe (2004, 2009) and Bolton's (2014) reflexive practice arguments conveyed in their literature.



The insights and discoveries in this review highlighted a lack of reflexive practice knowledge connected to brand identity design. They signalled an opportunity for this research to explore the dimensions of reflexive practice with brand identity designers in their practice. However, there is a need to review existing literature on Brand Identity Design, to identify what might exist related to reflexive practice in this area and to reveal if other gaps and opportunities might exist for this research in contributing to theory in this area and vice-versa. This is presented in the next section. Subsequent phases of my research that extend upon and contribute to gaps in Figure 14 from a brand identity design practice perspective are discussed in Chapter 4 findings and are shown in Figure 58.

2.2.

## Review of Brand Identity Design

Within Brand Identity,<sup>16</sup> Design<sup>17</sup> is the specific focus of this research and is given prominence in this section. There are however very few publications aligned with this territory. The most eminent literature associated with this area<sup>18</sup> is by British design consultant Olins (1978, 1994, 1995, 2003, 2003, 2008, 2014)<sup>19</sup>. Other brand identity design literature exists by Alina Wheeler (2009) and Catherine Slade-Brooking (2016). Within broader branding design contexts, Michael Johnson (2016), Melissa Davis and Jonathan Baldwin (2006) and David Airey (2015, 2019) discuss brand identity design.

<sup>16</sup> As well as design, brand identity includes literature in marketing (Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 2012; De Chernatony, 1999; Csaba and Bengtsson, 2005) and organisational brand identity (Hatch and Schulz, 1997, 2003; Balmer, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2015; Balmer Johansen and Nielsen, 2016)

<sup>17</sup> Brand identity design, encapsulates how an organization looks, how it feels and how it wants others to feel about it' (Johnson, 2016:14).

<sup>18</sup> It does however not solely focus upon brand identity design

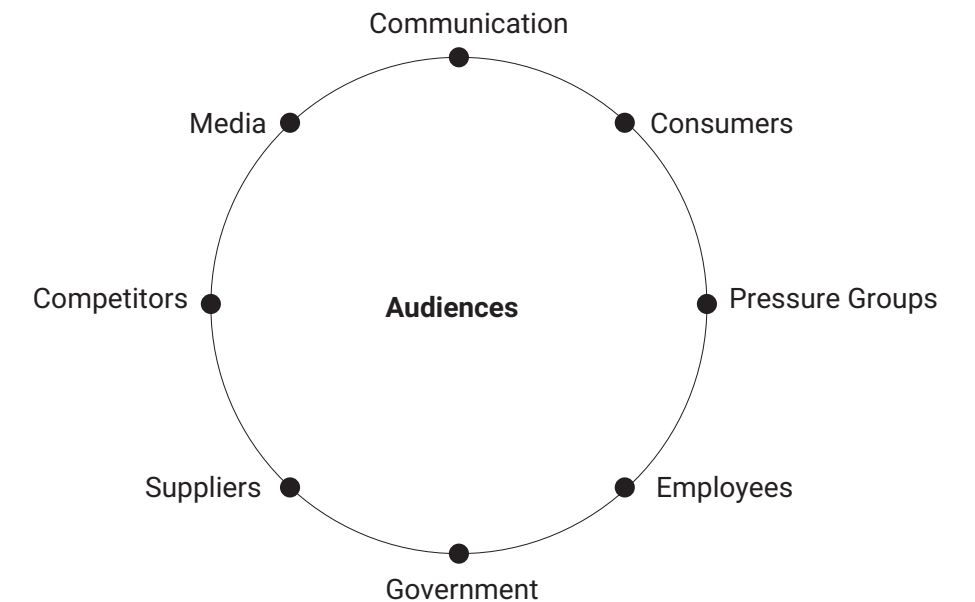
<sup>19</sup> Olins was notably regarded as one of, if not the most influential figures in the broader realm of corporate identity and was instrumental in defining the three visual identity modes, one of which includes: 'branded' (where a subsidiary company makes no reference to the holding company).

### 2.2.1. Background and contemporary Brand Identity Design

Brand Identity Design evolved from demarcation, identification, differentiation, trademarks and symbols into visual identity, with the notion of commercial brands traceable back to the eighteenth century (see Lury, cited in Slade-Brooking, 2016; Slade-Brooking, 2016; Healey, 2008; Sabin Mindrut *et al.*, 2015; Olins, 1978; Moor, 2014). Geographical and societal developments propelled companies who offered products to focus predominantly on one particular audience: consumers. Furthermore, as trade became more prevalent, it increased competitiveness and a demand for greater differentiation (Slade-Brooking, 2016). Marketing became the driver of communication strategies, including the development of visual identity and symbols of product brands.

Corporate Branding emerged in the 1980s and early 90s, which is key to understanding contemporary Brand Identity Design. Olins describes that the purpose of Corporate Branding was 'to differentiate the organisation, and its products and services from those of its competitors' (1995:16). This drew comparisons with communication strategies of the 18th-century that focused on considerations of what sectors and consumers might comprise and extended beyond an impetus on product led brands. The emergence of diverse sectors, including the arts and charities, led to communication in a visual context being associated and concerned with addressing a much broader consumer audience beyond that situated in a product branding context and the marketing of consumer goods. (Olins, 2008). As internal and external audience groups (Figure 15) within each sector and their markets became more prominent and significant, so too did the demands on organisations to deal with their reputation, as an organisation uses a corporate name to project to these audiences who it is (Olins, 2008). This increased demand for their service, brand and identity design. Notably, the number of agencies offering branding and graphics work rose from 48 per cent in 2000-01 to 65 per cent in 2003-04 (Moor, 2014:78).

This research focuses on and uses the term 'consumer' as its audience group. Within this study, the consumer comprises the customer who buys goods and services and the consumer who uses goods and services.



**Figure 15** My adaptation of Olins's (2008:17) internal/external audiences.

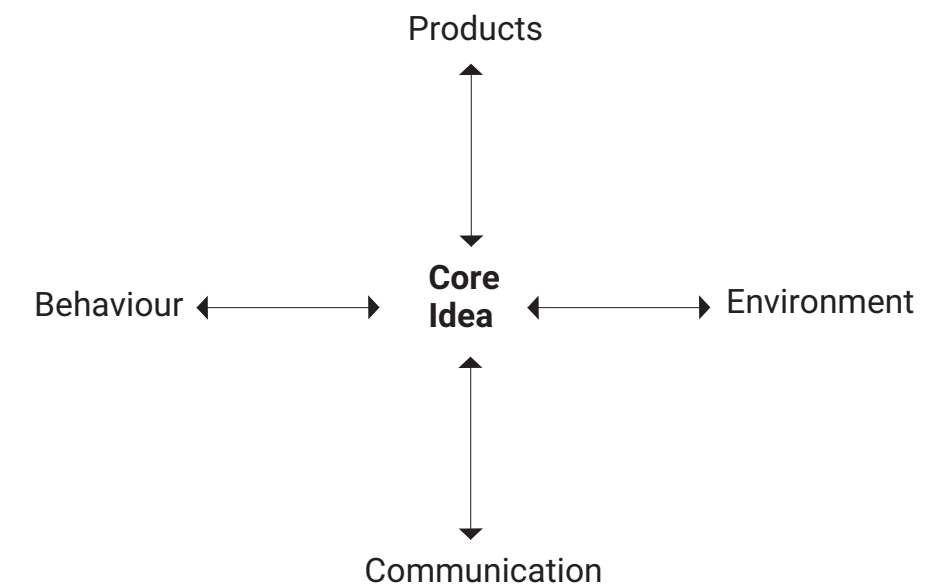
According to Michael Johnson, founder of branding agency Johnson Banks, Brand Identity Design is the visual aspect and a small offering that contributes to a much larger 'branding' whole, which includes 'values, behaviours, markets, personalities of founders, as well as the visual' (Johnson, 2016: 74). He defines brand identity design as 'how an organisation looks, how it feels and how it wants others to feel about it' (2016:14). He advises that 'a complete brand cannot be condensed into a single logo or symbol' (Johnson, 2016:180). For him, brand identity is verbal and visual. It includes advertising/direct communications, signage/wayfinding, printed items, web/online/animation, typography, photography, illustration, logos, symbols, core brand assets, external brand expression, internal brand expression, values and behaviours, tone of voice, naming, strategy and narrative, research and consultation, and change management (2016:180).



Slade-Brooking explains that brand identity is a unique set of designed elements that identify the brand and express brand promise, including the name, type logo/symbols, icons and colours (2016:156). Alina Wheeler (2009) states that brand identity is 'tangible and appeals to the senses. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation and makes big ideas and meaning accessible. Brand identity takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole systems' (2009:4).

### 2.2.2. Brand Identity Design and the consumer audience

According to Olins, the visual elements' prime purpose is 'to present the central idea of the organisation with impact, brevity and immediacy. The symbol encapsulates the identity' (1995;11). He sees four vectors through which a brand emerges (Figure 16). The vector most significantly associated with Design, and which Olins aligns with visual elements, is communication. These visual elements and styles include colour, typeface/s, means of expression, and a logo or symbol and lie at the heart of a brand identity programme (Olins, 1995, 2008). These aspects of the communication vector focus on engaging audience/s, and specifically, the consumer audience is probed in more detail below.



**Figure 16** My adaption of Olins's (2008:29) four vectors through which a brand emerges.

Throughout the 1990s, Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre (2009) discuss that counter to a positivistic functionalist audience paradigm<sup>20</sup> that had been present in the world of Branding since 1985, an audience paradigm shift occurred. Attention in the academic but not the practice world of Branding shifted to an interpretive view in which brand equity was something created in the interaction between marketer and active consumers. Hence, the relational approach and a constructionist outlook on managing a brand arose. Davis and Hunt (2017) explain how, historically and throughout the twentieth century, 'designers' relationships with audiences were one in which they made expert

<sup>20</sup> This positivist functionalist stance implies that the brand is owned by the marketer who controls communication to a passive recipient/consumer (Heding, et.al, 2009).

judgements about what people wanted and needed' (2017:10). This idea of the designer as being in control has now shifted to one in which some designers now see their relationship as not designing for audiences but designing with and by them. (Sanders, 2006 in Davis and Hunt, 2017.)

Other modern branding literature aimed at designers' (Davis and Baldwin, 2006, Davis, 2012, Healey, 2008) discusses approaches toward the audience and consumer relationship. Davis and Baldwin, write that Branding is seen as 'a product of a companies vision' (2006:42) but that the audience is an essential part of the brand process. Johnson (2016) proposes that a brand, at a functional and emotional level, can be defined from one of two perspectives: customers /clients or the brand owner. In addition, Wheeler (2009) advises that a seismic shift is taking place in branding in which the customer experience and every point of contact with a customer is an opportunity to enhance an emotional connection (2009:18). Design theorist Meredith Davis (2012) describes how with the evolution of the digital world, designers who seemingly once had control over the audience no longer do. Design Writer and Critic Alice Twemlow cautions that 'the days when we designers could rely on sharing a common cultural background and esthetic sensibility with their audience are behind us' (2006:80). Brand designer and consultant Matthew Healey states, 'Branding is a two-way process, a dialogue between producers and customers' (2008:14).

With the advent of the internet and social media, communications allow a broad and diverse range of audiences, internally and externally, to openly engage in dialogue with each other and the brand or company itself. Because of increasingly talkative, articulate and critical customers (Olins, 2008; Jones, 2012, 2017), it is evident that companies and brands are increasingly questioned to deal with their reputation. According to Jones, traditional branding is now challenged by a new, less corporate alternative (2017:108), one in which there is an emerging role of affiliation. As part of this, companies' communication processes which include verbal and visual elements, which are central characteristics of the communication of brand identity design, have to respond to this shift. Yet, Jones asserts, 'practitioners – the people who manage brands and the people who advise them – naturally tend to have an insider view' (2017:18).

Drawing parallels with earlier discussions in 'Reflexive practice as responsive practice', see section 2.1.4., Davis and Hunt explain that 'there is no guarantee that interpretive judgements made by audiences will be the same as those made by the designer or that meaning will be the same, regardless of the circumstances in which the message is read or viewed' (2017:195). Aligned to this, Kathman (2002) proposes that the designer can only enable choices and does not control the final composition about the audience, as they control this themselves. He claims, 'designers have to redefine their role from one of leadership to facilitation' (2002:34). I accept that subjectivity allows for designer autonomy, and objectivity correlates with a functionalist rational stance. Nevertheless, I contend that objective and subjective viewpoints must, as a central focus, include a critically reflective relational perspective and self-awareness to promote responsive design practices.

It is essential to clarify that this study is confined to investigating opportunities to assist designers' critically reflective, responsive and relational positioning in relation to their consumer audience experiences. This is rather than research that focuses on aiding the consumer audience. In parallel with this, Akama (2007) and Krippendorff (2006 cited in Akama, 2007) argue that the value of the agency of the designer and 'their important but rarely explicitly acknowledged competence' (Krippendorff: 2006:8, cited in Akama, 2007) has been underexplored from a human-centred design perspective. Their actions have been excluded whilst the locus has been upon the user's human agency.

Additionally, Moore and Reid identify that 'three groups of actors, the practitioner, scholar and consumer have played key roles in the evolution of branding', yet most of the existing research on brands has 'focused almost exclusively on the consumer side of the equation to determine what makes an effective brand from the perspective of the consumer' (2008:420 cited in Bastos and Levy 2012:348).

## 2.2.3.

## What does a brand identity designer do?

This section explains the literature reviewed that discussed what the brand identity designer does. Design scholars (Cross, 2001a, 2001b, 2011; Lloyd, McDonnell, and Cross, 2007; Lawson, 2005; Lawson and Dorst, 2009; Dorst, 2003; McDonnell, 2009, 2015; Julier, 2000; Crouch and Pearce, 2013; Schön, 1983; Lockton, 2013; Press and Cooper, 2003; Crilly, Maier, and Clarkson, 2008; Crilly et.al. 2008; Bayzait, 1993, 2004; Margolin, 2002, 2010; Archer, 1968, 1978, 1979, 1995; Buchanan, 1998, 2001, 2019) have provided research and theory related to designers in a practice and studio environment, designers thinking, designers positioning and re-positioning within the context of changing conditions, their expertise and ability in design, and how professional designers engage with their processes, including systematic methods and reflection. These are located in design disciplines, including Product, Industrial, Fashion and Architectural Design, not Brand Identity Design. There have also been several significant design thinking symposiums (i.e., DTRS1, DTRS2, DTRS5, DTRS7, DTRS8, DTRS9, DTRS10, DTRS11, see Cross, 2018) that have presented studies that discuss designers and their abilities in their professional contexts. According to Cross, methods used to enhance our understanding of designers' abilities have included observations, case studies, and experimental studies, including verbal protocols, interviews, reflection and theorising (Cross, 2011)<sup>21</sup>. Catherine Slade-Brooking (2016) states that there is a wide range of literature covering branding perspectives. However, only a few are written from the designer's perspective. Consequently, there is a lack of literature concerning Brand Identity Design, not only from the designer's perspective but also regarding brand identity designer thinking, practices, expertise, ability, and approaches. This is particularly within professional practice and designer-audience relational contexts. The minimal brand identity design literature aligned to this area is discussed on the next page.

<sup>21</sup> It is not possible within the scope of this study to present a review of all of this literature. However, this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, the methodology section, where it is deemed to be most relevant. Furthermore, whilst this is useful in terms of providing insight for this research into wider discoveries in design, and in some cases highlighted research methods connected with some of the relational aspects of design practices, these were predominantly focused upon designer's internal rather than external relationships, i.e. in Cross and teamwork (2011: 93-96). In addition, the focus was also not situated within the Communication Design field or Brand Identity Design. Thus, none of the work from the academics discussed above offers a research contribution specifically to Brand Identity Design.

For Moor, designers working in Branding work on the material culture of a brand and translate brand values from one space or material to another' (Moor 2014:81). She states that it depends 'upon the branding consultancy's understanding of the communicative potential of different aspects of the brand's visual and material output as to what gets changed'. Moor claims 'that even when substantial research has been undertaken, its application depends upon the interpretation of findings, of key personnel, as well as decisions about implementation them in a design form' (2014:84). Johnson (2016) proposes that individuals employed in Brand Identity Design are designers and communicators who interpret strategic ideas and bring a Brand to life through creating a visual identity. Robert Jones's (2017) view is that brand designers have in the past concentrated on the most obvious signifiers of the Brand, such as logo, colours and typefaces, but that they also now contemplate verbal attributes such as naming, slogans, tone of voice, written style/s associated with a Brand. In addition, sensory dimensions, for example, smell, gestures, taste and textures and interaction/s within digital situation/s, are considered by designers. In essence, 'designers will often look at the whole consumer experience, often as a customer journey through time' (Jones, 2017:94). Wheeler aligns the role of brand identity designers with the distillation of meaning into visual form and expression. She claims, 'it is critical that this meaning is explained so that it can be understood, communicated and approved' (2009:35). The above insights illustrate and corroborate the designer's hegemonic involvement in interpretation and implementation within branding and brand identity design. Designers must interpret, make a connection between meaning and visual form, expression, and experiences, generate ideas and contemplate visual and verbal attributes. According to Johnson, many companies work in a team structure during the early stages of brand identity design (2016). He proposes that 'this is when the critical early design steps of a project occur and when editing, crits and discussions regarding the design, sometimes with the client, take place' (2016:175).

The team structure discussed above might encourage a way that challenges individual designers to think critically about their input on a project. Yet, I propose limitations to these team critiques and discussions. They first imply that the designer has to be in a collective or group scenario to engage in such an approach. Second, even if designers may have to be explicit about their decision-making to others involved in the designing of a brand project, there is an absence of discussions regarding what might be guiding decision-making about positionality towards other individuals in their designing. The onus of team critiques, discussions and review activities, which I have enacted and witnessed in my practice were weighted towards a focus on design aesthetics and driven by hierarchies. This dominance was sometimes client-led and sometimes internally led but was mainly a mechanism for justifying brand identity design agency developmental decision-making, primarily aesthetic, to and for clients. This decision-making failed to require careful, systematic and critically reflective thought linked to designer relational positionality connected to audience contexts. Presented in the next section is a discussion of the design process with which brand identity design is associated in the wider context of Design. This review is to understand more about the general operation of designers' actions in designing.

### 2.2.3.1. The design process

A 'process' suggests that it is undertaken through a series of steps to achieve a particular goal, which may or may not be pre-determined. Before 1914, no clarification on the nature of the design process or single model for designing existed. Linked with processes of mass production, a key moment in the development of the design process emerged when its exploration 'began to be taken seriously in the work of the Bauhaus in the early 20th century' (Design Council, 2007:5). However, 'Despite the extensive research undertaken since the 1950s, there is no single model which is agreed to provide a satisfactory description of the design process' (Clarkson and Eckert, 2005, quoted in Design Council, 2007:4). This research draws initially upon the Design Council's (2007) design process definition, which consists of a series of activities and methods that are pulled together to meet the requirements of a problem or project. Cross (2011) attributes an exploratory approach as the process used in designing. Yet, he warns that 'designers themselves are often not very good at explaining what they do' (2011:6). He sees their focus as being on the outcomes of activities rather than analysing the process of how they produce them.

Whilst there is acknowledgement of a need for reflection in designers' design processes, there is lack of discussions in the design process literature surveyed regarding reflexive practice or critical reflection linked to positionality in designers' design processes. This review firmly established that this study is concerned with exploring an aspect of the designers' design process activity and not with investigating the physical product derived from the designer's activity of designing. This study is also not directed towards developing or defining a new design process, nor is it concerned with abolishing what already exists. Instead, it seeks to offer a way to support brand identity designers' to move towards an improved reflexive design practice within their design process and practices. Therefore, this requires a review of literature, as presented in the next section, to understand existing design processes, specifically within Brand Identity Design. This will provide theoretical insights into what is available to date regarding critically reflective and reflexive practice in relation to other individuals within brand identity design processes. Additionally, this review will support me in identifying at what phase in the designers process this research and its potential enhancement will be most applicable.

2.2.3.2.  
**Branding programme process stages – the brand identity designers’ processes**

According to Olins (2008), brand identity designers are iteratively informed by and subsequently inform several branding programme process 'stages of work'. These are described in Figure 17.

In addition, Michael Johnson (2016) offers an alternative and more recent five-and-a-half steps brand process with two specific design stages, denoted in Figure 18. The particular design stages in Figures 17 and 18 are shown in darker grey. Within Olins and Johnson's stages of these processes, there is no discussion or presentation pertinent to critically reflective or reflexive practice methods, techniques or principles available to or used by designers, and specifically none concerning audience or consumer audience experiences in this context.

Stage 1	Investigation, analysis + strategic recommendations	Briefing and project planning in detail. Audits and research. Core idea defined.
Stage 2	Developing the identity or brand idea(look + feel)	Look and feel. Can include action to undertake behavioural change, brand architecture, name and visual style
Stage 3	Launch and introduction	Communicating the vision. Articulates where brand has come from, where it is going and how the visual identity will get it there. Internal and external launch
Stage 4	Implementation	Making it happen. Guidelines created regarding brand

**Figure 17** My adapted outline of a four-stage brand programme process (Olins 2008).

Step 1	Investigate	Defining the brand Research of market
Step 2	Strategy and narrative	Defining the brand
Step 2.5	Bridging the gap	Translation of brand into creative design stage
Step 3	Design (and approaches)	Design work starts here
Step 4	Implement (design)	Putting design into context across applications or environments

**Figure 18** My adapted outline of branding in five and a half steps, including two design stages/steps indicated in dark grey (Johnson, 2016).

Alina Wheeler (2009) provides a universal brand identity process. Designing the identity in her process takes place in phase three and she explains that it includes; logotype and signature; colour; typography; sound; motion; trial applications and; presentation.

By contrast Catherine Slade-Brooking's (2016) publication, *Creating a Brand Identity: A Guide for Designers*, provides an explicit framework of the complete brand identity creative process. For her, this personal internal process reflects the individual personality of a designer and is distinct from a design process. According to her, 'a standardised process has evolved within the industry that provides the designer with the resources and framework for producing their most innovative and creative work within a reasonable time' (2016:73). This process includes 13 stages summarised in Figure 19.

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	Detailed examination and evaluation. Prior to this stage extensive consumer research will have been carried out <b>(Prior) audience and consumer research carried out</b>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	Explores findings of the analysis and the clients needs. Determines drive and direction of the new design
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Design platform</b>	Senior creative produce a summary of the analysis and the direction requested by the client. Links findings of analysis to design strategy
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Briefing the designers</b>	Senior creatives brief creative team
<b>Stage 5</b>	<b>Brainstorming</b>	Ideas are brainstormed or discussed collectively so that designers can fine tune perception of brands identity
<b>Stage 6</b>	<b>Independent research</b>	Research undertaken independantly by designers/design team to inform and inspire initial ideas
<b>Stage 7</b>	<b>Concept development</b>	Creation of different ideas, and brand elements demanded by the client. Can be undertaken individually or by design team. No. of ideas depend on time available. Ideas at this stage are still based on initial thoughts. Exploration of ideas is key. Ideas are reviewed against brief /design platform.
<b>Stage 8</b>	<b>Analysis of design development</b>	Ideas from stage 7 are now reviewed and analysis in light of all research and analysis undertaken and referencing the original brief. Concepts are reduced to a few key options and then offered to a client.
<b>Stage 9</b>	<b>Refining the final concepts</b>	Ensures concepts selected by the team communicate the desired message and meets the brief. Ideas are developed further to show a range of creative approaches.
<b>Stage 10</b>	<b>Client presentation</b>	Presenting the final concepts to the client
<b>Stage 11</b>	<b>Finishing/ prototyping the designs</b>	The choosen client concept now undergoes final development and any changes that have been discussed are made. All supporting elements of the brand identity are created to artwork stage.
<b>Stage 12</b>	<b>Testing/market research / consu.reactions</b>	This stage achieves its most important aim, that it speaks effectively to the desired audience. Small tweaks are made if necessary. Various methods are used to test the success of a final brand identity. These might include for example focus groups. <b>Audience and consumer research carried out</b>
<b>Stage 13</b>	<b>Delivery of final artwork</b>	All creative outcomes are now developed and work is signed off by designers and delivered to client.

**Figure 19** My adapted outline of brand identity design process cycle stages. Shown in darker grey is where in this process, audience and consumer involvement occurs (Slade-Brooking, 2016:78-82).

Slade-Brooking (2016) discusses that research for the brand design practitioner is probably the most crucial stage of the design process and outlines independent research in stage 6 (Figure 19). Yet in her discussions and this research stage there is no discussion surrounding critically reflective or reflexive practice methods, techniques or principles available to, or used by designers aligned to their positionality when designing in relation to audience or consumer audience experiences. Furthermore, Slade-Brooking (2016) discusses that research is located in the realm of market researchers rather than designers. According to Lawson and Dorst, 'developments in the complexities of design problems and a growing number of parties involved in design, which includes the various fields that comprise the term design, have led to new ways of dealing with practice, in which there is much more active engagement by the designer with the prospective user' (2009:64). Yet, the brand identity design processes reviewed and presented in this section demonstrate a lack of documentation of designer engagement and participation with consumer audiences. During all stages of the brand identity design processes examined, there is no understanding or discussions that demonstrate designer critical reflection or reflexive practice of their positionality in relation to others during early concept/ideas generation or design development stages. In the ideas generation stages, a vital stage of the designer's process, there is a lack of knowledge of how brand identity designers are critically reflecting upon their positionality within design work when engaging with or considering audience experiences and audience experiences approaches. Techniques and approaches available to brand identity designers to aid them in their consumer audience experience designing are discussed in 2.2.4 to ascertain whether these include or discuss reflexive practice.



#### 2.2.4. Approaches used by/ available to the brand identity designer – visual style approaches and audience experience approaches

##### Visual style approaches

According to Johnson (2016), within Step 3 (Figure 18) of the contemporary branding process – what he terms the design stage, there are seven approaches designers might use, all of which focus on visual style<sup>22</sup>. None of these approaches discusses critically reflective or reflexive practice aligned with the designer.

##### Audience experience approaches

There are nineteen audience experience approaches (Appendix 1) discussed in the brand identity design literature reviewed, which describe approaches that can be utilised within the brand identity design process. This review did not uncover how brand identity designers might apply any of these audience experience approaches within practice. In addition, this review has examined experience design literature by Newberry and Farnham (2013) which discusses brand value pillar and brand attribute frameworks<sup>23</sup>. Significantly, none of the approaches discussed in the reviewed literature discusses reflexive practice or the potential effects of these approaches on designers' critically reflective or reflexive practice or vice versa in brand identity design. Furthermore, none of these audience experience approaches prioritises critically questioning or challenging the designer and their positionality.

<sup>22</sup> These include approaches based upon; typography, monograms and acronyms, symbolism, combinations of word, monogram and picture, the art of the invisible (principles of optical illusions), language and analogy, metaphor or diagram.

<sup>23</sup> Brand Value Pillars and Brand Attribute Frameworks (Newberry and Farnham, 2013) focus on approaches regarding what the designer can do to enhance the audience relationship with the brand rather than the designer's relationship with the brand or audience. The Brand value pillars framework is for translating brand concept into customer value and is concerned with value proposition or themes that inform service development to help designers approach developing new services in a way that ensures that the experiences people have with the services reinforces the brands position and meaning. The Brand attribute framework is used to develop and evaluate design outcomes of brands. This framework helps identify what the purpose of an attribute is and make it more effective as a criterion for developing and evaluating experiences customers can have with a brand.

#### 2.2.5. Review of Brand Identity Design section summary

This review has highlighted that the majority of brand identity design theory and literature is located within the broader scope of Branding (Johnson, 2016, Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014), with only several books specifically titled Brand Identity Design<sup>24</sup> (Wheeler, 2009, Slade-Brooking, 2016). Moor (2014) calls for more studies of the work that goes on inside Branding Consultancies, including on designers, as detailed observations, specifically regarding different types and sizes, are lacking to date.

Reflecting on this brand identity design review identified several issues and gaps. First, there has been a paradigm shift in how audiences are discussed in terms of brand interactions and relations. Second and interrelated to the first, a need for effective collaborative brand relationships between producers and audiences in brand identity design appears to be well-recognised by scholars, including Olins (2003, 2008, 2014), Johnson (2016), Wheeler (2009), Slade Brooking (2016), Davis and Baldwin (2006) Jones (2012, 2017) and Kathman (2002). This suggests awareness of the need for brand identity designers to move beyond unidirectional and non-relational consumer audience communications approaches in practice. However, there is insufficient knowledge of how this need has or might be addressed via existing brand identity design literature. These findings correlate with my initial motivations and reflections before starting this research, as discussed on pages 25-26. This review revealed that, to date, there is a lack of knowledge that makes explicit brand identity designers' thinking and attitudes towards audiences. Most significantly and aligned to the previous reflexive practice literature review, there is inadequate understanding of how the designer, during their ideas generation stages, is engaging with reflexive practice in relation to consumer audience experiences within their design processes. This includes design processes in the wider context of the field of design to which brand identity design is connected.

<sup>24</sup> Within academic journals, there are even fewer brand identity design articles published.

Additionally, how designers' are or might be assisted in engaging with reflexive practice via principles, tools, or techniques is absent. I contend that in brand identity design theory, there is a lack of credible resources and reliable systematic guiding principles available to assist designers' reflexive practice. Furthermore, to date, this review indicates that within the ideas generation stage of the designers' design process reflexive practice in relation to consumer audience experiences is insufficient. Subsequently, I propose that designers reflexive design practice in this context is unsatisfactory.

This review provided further knowledge substantiation to contribute to extending upon propositions put forward in this research in section 2.1.6. Reflecting on the discussion in the previous two sections confirms that the initial motivations of this study and the problem indicated at the outset of this research were justifiable. This verifies a need for further investigation and, presents opportunity for this research. As Brand Identity Design is a sub-specialised branch of design connected to the main branch of Communication Design, my literature review warrants an examination of what exists regarding reflexive practice in Communication Design. This is presented in the next section, 2.3.

2.3.

## **Review of Communication Design**

According to Moor, Communication Design comprises Graphics, Brand, Print, Information Design, and Corporate Identity. It represents the largest single category of all design work conducted in the UK (Design Council, 2005 via Moor, 2014:78). Yet, the territory of Communication Design is limited in terms of a specific definition or view that has been universally accepted in literature or practice.



### 2.3.1.

## Background and contemporary Communication Design practice

This research takes as its starting point the perspectives of Davis and Hunt, who see Communication Design as organising experience in various structures. They assert that there has been 'a shift in professional practice from designing objects to designing the conditions for experience' (2017:19). Teal Triggs writes that Visual Communication Design has become an expanded practice, indicating that it includes not only the visual but other perceptions and senses, i.e. auditory, gustatory and olfactory senses. She writes that the designer's remit has shifted beyond a sole focus of the visual to 'include the design of sound, haptics, experiences and services, and as a result, it might be argued that the term 'communication design' better describes and supports a range of new kinds of practices, processes, and methods' (2015). Yates and Price suggest that Communication Design requires new skillsets, as new paradigms are creating fundamental shifts, in which the 'traditional techniques for shaping perception are being re-assessed. There is a realisation that we need to find new ways to engage an audience' (2015:6). The following section reviews what exists regarding communication design and reflexive practice to understand knowledge in this area, specifically regarding designer-audience relations.

### 2.3.2.

## Communication Design and Reflexive Practice

Since the 1960's Dutch academic practitioner Jan van Toorn (1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015) probed and adopted a critical stance toward Communication Design. Notably, scholars and practitioners including Clive Dilnot (2008) and Tony Fry (2008, 2010) and Tony Dunne and Fiona Raby (in Tharp and Tharp, 2018) and Tharp and Tharp (2018) have been vital contributors to critical design theory and its practice. This theory and practice in design includes Architecture, Product, Industrial, Fashion and Engineering Design. Hence, this study will build upon Jan van Toorn's work as a design practitioner who offers credence to theory concerning reflexive practice within communication design. For van Toorn, 'Communication Design is a commission-bound social practice in which the designer visualises the message through a public medium. It is a process of communication in which meaning is produced and conveyed' (2015). Van Toorn consistently challenged designers to question their moral, persuasive and dialogical activities and how they intertwined this with their professional, personal, and social roles. The aim focused upon academic and practice outcomes centred around democratic communications. Key to this was dialogism involving audience reciprocity and solidarity, by offering aesthetic counter-images in communications to enable commentary rather than manipulation or deception. He neglected to prioritise ephemeral results, focusing on meaning rather than stylistic and aesthetic expression. (Poynor, 2008:80)

In 2003 Graphic Designer, Art Director and critic Steven Heller and art director and writer Veronique Vienne voiced a broad range of designers' views, including their own. Heller claims that the designer must understand that the creation and manufacture of their work for a client, undertaken as an individual act, will impact others. According to van Toorn (1997), the focus on ephemeral results has consequently led to communication design now being devoid of reflection regarding its social role, which has led to the obsolescence of the critical distance that determined the designer's relation with regard to the clients brief. He encourages the designer to be critical and challenge what he

sees as an entrenched ideology in practice. However, van Toorn has proposed that there are challenges to be addressed with regard to areas of reflection and reflexivity in the commercial practices of communication design (1994, 1997, 2006, 2015). In 1997, he organised a symposium on critical and dissident communication design, from which the book *Design Beyond Design* (1997) was published. He proclaimed that there was great intellectual support for this design area but that this space lacked actual examples that demonstrated and provided alternative approaches.

For van Toorn, 'communicative design, as reflexive practice, must be realistic in its social ambitions. This mentality demands a major investment in practical discourse in those fields and situations where experience and insight can be acquired through work' (2009:105-6). He claimed that this requires adopting a radically different position regarding the 'production relationship' through 'making explicit the interests and beliefs in the making of messages which are commented on and held together' (2009:104) by the designer. Van Toorn identified readers as people actively engaged in interpreting information and viewers as people passively interpreting information. He claimed that in the 1970s and 80s as readers and viewers developed they moved beyond the organised interests of business and corporate groups. He claimed they firmly established themselves as individuals but, on a mass scale, as a fragmented audience (van Toorn, 1997). He suggested that it became harder to sell to audiences, and subsequently, cultural and commercial mass production became fixated on beauty and the surface of artefacts to sell design. This focus on style hid the dialectical relationship between audiences and consumers. Van Toorn alleged that the emphasis given to beauty in communication design has led to a fetishism of aesthetics and what I understand him to mean as 'neo-liberal' designers, whose focus was upon the motives and pursuits of profit. Van Toorn viewed that these designers succumbed to the social relations of power neglecting to reflect critically upon the conditions upon which their actions emerge<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Associated to this, academics Forlizzi and Lebbon (2006) and Frascara, et.al. (1997), Victor Margolin (2002), Nathan Crilly et.al (2008) and Klaus Krippendorff (2006) also provide differing discussions regarding the significance of two-way processes between those involved in its actions, particularly regarding the intentions of the designer.

Van Toorn's passion was to impress upon designer and viewer how syntax, i.e. image and text, are used in communication design as a form of manipulation. His ambition was to make the viewer aware of this in the final work's outcome/display/dissemination. Van Toorn focuses on challenging and re-evaluating the 'dialogic' present within the actual construction of content and message as outcome using visual form. He is concerned with ways to prompt designer and audience reflexivity towards the actual content and construction of the image and text itself. His pursuits were to emancipate the audience and explore and uncover ways commercial work can respond to this through an interactive dialogical communicative design approach<sup>26</sup> and dialogism<sup>27</sup>. Van Toorn illustrated that the relationship between designers, which comprises those involved in brand identity design, and audiences/consumers need to be interrogated through the commentary of the making of the message. He viewed them as collaborating with and promoting the depoliticisation of the media through the generation of visuals and communication that allure and eradicate much of the concern for democracy and participation. Therefore, this dominance of power is viewed as limiting how much these designers might engage in a dialogic relationship with audiences and consumers (van Toorn, 1997, 2006; Kuijpers and van Toorn, 2014). He stated that in design, the reflexive practice should focus upon 'a working method that produces commentaries rather than confirms self-referential fictions' (2009:105). Essential to this research is that van Toorn's discussions regarding reflexive practice (1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015) included his claims that explicitness is needed in the production relationship of the making of messages by the designer. For him, the designer practitioner operates in response to the representations of the culture industry and the market economy itself and not beyond this, by contributing message content and their aesthetic involvement to the shaping of messages. He advocated for a move away from this approach proposing that to ensue reflexivity; designers must take an oppositional stance, engage in a political approach, and ask

<sup>26</sup> For van Toorn this 'storytelling structure, is a connective model of visual rhetoric that produces degrees of distinction – revealing the many opposing elements of the message so that they can be triangulated by the viewer.' (van Toorn, 2006:333) It is a radical democratic commitment from which emerges a mental encounter with others instead of a functional interactivity (van Toorn, 2006:328).

<sup>27</sup> Dialogism is described as adopting an approach based on democratic reciprocity and solidarity which inherently involves both aesthetics and ethical attributes. It 'aims to involve spectators in the communication in a recognizable and critical manner and thus to offer them counter-images dealing with reality' (Kuijpers and van Toorn, 2014:14).

critical questions of the dialectal relationship. Van Toorn sought to explore how the viewer/audience can be made aware of forms of communication in shaping their opinion and how they can be emancipated through an interactive dialogical design approach. Questioning this notion of dialogical relationship design, critic Rick Poynor warns that 'van Toorn's conception of reflexive design places a great deal of faith in people's willingness and ability to interpret complex graphic signals that might, in practice, baffle or pass them by' (2008:109).

In the book *Jan Van Toorn: Critical Practice*, Poynor discusses van Toorn's work and position and poses questions surrounding a designer's viewpoint with their work. He outlines the complexities a designer faces, stating that they face obligations and have to fulfil a duty in their relationship with clients and audiences while raising the question of how the designer's personal agenda is situated within this process. For Poynor, van Toorn's way of working opposes the above routine professional modes of thinking. Poynor does however recognise that van Toorn's 'issues are still crucially important and require even greater attention and effort by designers and design analysts who endorse his concerns' (2008:125). Designer Francisco Laranjo (2017) responds to some of the issues van Toorn raises by the development of a critically reflexive design method. The aim of Laranjo's critical method, as a reflexive activity, was concerned with 'a greater awareness of the unavoidable editorial act by the designer when researching and designing'. He used his own graphic/communication design practice in collaboration with design students through a process of research in action. For Laranjo, practitioners who operate in the margins of critical practice<sup>28</sup> and critical design<sup>29</sup> are more than often involved in design education, what he terms 'an idyllic place' (2017:65). This is a significant statement in terms of the non-design education and professional applied design practice focus of this design study which is concerned with exploring ways for Reflexive Design Practice to exist outside of what Laranjo describes as the margins of design (2017:65).

<sup>28</sup> Laranjo's view is that 'Critical design is an emerging field with particular methods (such as speculation and design fiction) and aiming at debate, research and emancipation. Critical practice is the conscious articulation of the personal, disciplinary and public dimensions of design over a long period of time, providing a critique of the context and conditions in which design is produced and its effect on society, with particular attention to the public sphere' (2017:59).

<sup>29</sup> Laranjo's opinion is that critical design can exist as an isolated event yet critical design practice has to be sustained through a long period of time. To add to this is that Laranjo states, 'this terminology emerged due to a generally uncritical state of the discipline' (2017:68).

In the publication *Design practices are not neutral*, design researcher and educator Ramia Mazé advises,

*'increasing reflexivity is especially at stake for 'post-industrial' design. Design today engages society in unprecedented and powerful ways, yet our traditional education is still based on Industrial Age concerns about material production and consumption. Engaging 'other' people, practices, values and futures demands different foundations – which is the responsibility of design education and research to build. This will open the space for asking 'for who', raising questions about who does design and who benefits from it, as well as other issues of power, class, ethnic, global, and gender dimensions involved. Reflexivity in design is not about intellectualising or navel-gazing but about an increased engagement in aspects of design practice including its consequences "outside of" design' (2016:22).*

Akin to the critical approach to practice described on page 93 by Laranjo, Mazé, in *Iaspis Forum on Design and Critical Practice - The Reader* (2009:389), discusses three distinct but interrelated forms of critical practice. The first concerns the designer and their attitude towards their practice, how they scrutinise themselves and what they bring to their work<sup>30</sup>. The second is affiliated with a community of practice challenging and changing traditions of paradigms in practice. Thus, critiquing the discipline itself and its operations. The third involves engaging with or in pressing issues related to society<sup>31</sup>. For Laranjo, the second form of critical practice is where critical practice and critical design meet, as they expand the design discipline as a consequence of their activity

<sup>30</sup> Mazé argues that this can be understood as a kind of internal questioning and a way of designers positioning themselves within their practice. 'The reflective or critical practitioner might be thinking about what their unique concerns are, what their particular sort of knowledge or contribution might be within a particular situation. By reflecting on what they do and how they do it, and how that's different from what and how other people do things, they try to build the particular identity of, or idea behind, their practice' (Mazé, 2009:389).

<sup>31</sup> For Mazé, (2016) design today must redefine the premises and purposes of the discipline beyond its Industrial Age inception and logics, e.g. mass-production, market consumption, economies of scale, corporate protectionism, etc. Today, designers are operating within the academia, art world, public realm and developing world claiming a place for design in relation to a range of "other" people, practices, values and futures than those traditionally served by design.

(2018). My research is concerned with providing knowledge that contributes to a critical practice and critical design. Whilst not focused upon reflexivity or reflexive practice from a solely pedagogic educational perspective, my research proposes to explore and build upon Mazé's argument and ideological view. This is from a design research educational stance and her three forms of critical practice and opinions surrounding reflexivity in practice.

### 2.3.3. Review of Communication Design section summary

The review of communication design theory in this thesis sets out a context for collaborative and user-centred approaches towards communications with audiences in practice. The authors argue for the emergence of a critically reflective and reflexive designer with affiliated approaches. Yet, there is an absence of relevant scholarship in the field from a communication design practice perspective. This limitation is specifically evident in the area of the relationship between designer's reflective and reflexive practice towards their audiences. This is different to the reflexive practice associated with the dialogic, the content and construction of the design elements, and the syntax of images and text, as discussed by van Toorn. His interest was in the outcome and delivery of messages, particularly the design outcome or artefact itself as a reflexive act or the acquiring of the elements of the design – the dialogic as the mechanism to prompt commentary and viewer reflexivity. Instead, this thesis seeks to examine and develop the role of the designers thinking and actions rather than 'making viewers of design aware of the mechanics of manipulation' (Poynor: 20008:97). Furthermore, while I recognise the importance of drawing upon van Toorn's reflexive and critical approach to Communication Design this research views that his perspective offers only a partial response. This is because van Toorn's focus was on his own reflexive practice, its commentary and its framing within a politicised context to disseminate research and knowledge as a means to impel other designers to enact a reflexive practice linked to the design outcome or artefact of their designing. As such, he did not include a study, research or knowledge that specifically investigated reflexive practice in relation to other designers or their reflexive practice process in applied professional design practice to assist them in this context. I contend that there remains inadequate reflexive practice theory in the profession of Communication Design, indicating a gap and opportunity for this study to fill by building upon van Toorn's approach. Akin to this, van Toorn made an urgent call for reflexivity in this field of study, particularly research that explores this discourse within professional practice rather than from a solely academic theoretical viewpoint.

Reflecting upon this Communication Design review further verifies the need to explore from the perspective of brand identity designers, their role, activities as producers and how they think about and use their positioning. This involves their experiences, beliefs, and motivations in designing, message construction and meaning. Thus, exploring a gap concerned with the relationship between designers and audiences/consumers (Frascara, *et.al.*, 1997; Frascara 2005, 2006; Akama, 2007; Krippendorff, 2006; Forlizzi and Lebbon, 2006; Crilly, Maier, and Clarkson, 2008). Alongside the earlier suggestion in the brand identity design section summary (pages 86-87), in which I discuss the need for professionals to develop future audience approaches aligned to constructivist relational audience developments, this review indicates that communication design from a professional context has also neglected evolve effectively in line with consumer audience developments aligned to its social role. This further presents an opportunity to take present-day audience changes seriously, forcing choices to be made that 'follow scenarios that have more to do with society than with professions or institutions' (van Toorn, 1997:11). This PhD seeks as van Toorn (1997) advocated to reflect upon social and cultural perspectives to make a change to practice rather than generating responses that do not address audience and consumer developments. As van Toorn explains, 'this change, however, cannot be achieved through philosophical theory, but only through an empirical approach; 'learning through experience, through observation and interpretation of effects' (1997:11).

#### 2.4.

### Chapter summary – the gap, opportunity and questions

In reviewing, analysing and reflecting upon each section and summary of this literature review, I present below the main gaps and opportunities that I view exist for this research. These insights offer partial yet incomplete understandings to support addressing the second and third method questions, discussed on pages 99-100. This review has uncovered that brand identity design, is not discussed in reflexive practice literature. It revealed that an ongoing paradigm shift in branding (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002), and progressive contestation of corporate and market ideologies of brands (Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Slade-Brooking, 2016; Jones, 2012, 2017) requires effective collaborative brand relationships between producers and audiences. Yet, a lack of theory exists regarding how designers are or might engage with reflexive practice or critically reflect on their thinking about and use of their positionality in professional brand identity design and communication design more broadly. Subsequently, it is proposed that there are insufficiencies in understanding the employment and operation of brand identity designers' reflexive design practice in relation to their consumer audience experience designing. Linked to this is a lack of resources, and identifying principles to inform professional brand identity designers thinking, actions or activities in this context.

Notably, most research and theory centred around relational design approaches in practice are situated and contextualised within Service Design, Co-Design, Co-Creation, Generative Design and Design for Social Change (Stickdorn, 2014; Stickdorn *et.al.* 2018a; Stickdorn *et.al.* 2018b; Sanders, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008; Sanders and Simons, 2009; Sanders and Stappers 2014; Shea, 2012) rather than within professional communication or brand identity design practice. These relational design approaches involve users, audiences or communities in and throughout design processes. This is not evidenced in the Communication Design or Brand Identity Design literature reviewed in this thesis. Furthermore, as highlighted at the start of Chapter 1 professional brand identity designers, are often unable to participate directly or have personal contact with the consumer audience community. This is often due to for example client/s, time and audience accessibility limitations in their processes.

A gap and opportunity exist to investigate professional brand identity designers' reflexive practice knowledge, actions and activities, leading to two method questions, as presented below in Figures 20 and 21. A questionnaire method asks, 'What are professional brand identity designers' (based in the UK) attitudes, influences and views in relation to audiences?' This question was explored as part of early-stage scoping alongside the initial stages of my Literature Review, and findings contributed to the development of the two further questions below. This questionnaire method is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Phase One. This is to aid reader continuity as it forms part of the research methodology, method discussions, and methods analysis.

**Semi-structured  
Interview questions**

*Taking the most recently completed UK project, in what ways do UK-based professional brand identity designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

And, interlinked to the question above:

*What challenges and/or issues do UK-based professional brand identity designers face when thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation of their most recent UK project?*

**Figure 20** Semi-structured interview questions in the research.

My research draws and builds upon the reflexive practice framework (Figure 14) using method findings from semi-structured interview questions (Figure 20) to inform the development of initial reflexive design practice principles. These principles will be explored and tested via online workshop questions (Figure 21) to understand their impact on designers thinking regarding the positioning and employment of themselves in practice towards their consumer audiences.

**Synchronous online  
design workshop  
questions**

*In what ways might reflexive principles affect UK based brand identity designers thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of the design process on a UK project?*

And, interlinked to the question above:

*How might reflexive principles be used by UK based brand identity designers within the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

**Figure 21** Synchronous online design workshop questions in the research.

As this research seeks to reveal knowledge specific and relevant to practising professional brand identity designers and respecting the reflexive design practice impetus of this study, these designers will be involved as participants and collaborators throughout my research methodology. This and all three of my questions are explored through the methods discussed in the next chapter.



# Methodology, Methods and Research Design

## Chapter 3

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter articulates my epistemology/worldview, which is situated in John Dewey's pragmatism (1905, 1941, Dewey in Dixon 2020a, 2020b, Dixon, McHattie, and Broadley, 2022, Kadlec, 2006, 2007). I draw upon the model of Crotty (1998) to discuss my methodological approach, including the methods data collection phases employed. Any research is positioned from a particular perspective of the researcher, their interpretations and assumptions about the knowledge of a problem. My initial reflections and early unmasking of an issue in a practice context led to identifying the problem. Hence, my value system and position as a designer-practitioner was used as a guide at the start of this research and are innate in the direction of this study as it progressed. Reflecting on my perspectives led to opportunities for further exploration into other designers positioning within the audience relationship and a reason to review reflexive practice. Key to this and my ethical view was the involvement of participant designers in the research process. This process drew upon their opinions, voices and experiences, and the professional context of their design practice as well as employing my design visualisation (Drucker, 2020) practice as a method of inquiry and which is used to do inquiry and (DiSalvo, 2022) to inform theory and vice-versa. This is important to note, as it is suggested a non-design practitioner-researcher could undertake research that looks into design practices (Crouch and Pearce, 2013). Yet, they would undoubtedly not be able to step into my position which as a brand identity and communication designer offers a unique position to the subject as presented in this research.



## 3.1.

## Researcher worldview and theoretical perspective

A theoretical perspective sets forth a view of the human world and social life within that world, wherein such assumptions are grounded (Crotty, 1998:7). Whilst this research recognises that the significance of Dewey's contributions to thinking regarding pragmatism (Dewey, 1905, 1941; Dewey in Dixon 2020a, 2020b; Dixon, McHattie, and Broadley, 2022; Kadlec, 2006, 2007) is vast, the focus of my worldview and theoretical perspective is specifically on his theory of inquiry related to ethical pragmatism. This perspective involves ethics as democracy and democracy as ethics and 'the notion of social reconstruction – the ambition to build a better, fairer society for all' (Dixon, 2020a:157).

Designer researcher Brian Dixon (2020a) provides an in-depth overview of Dewey's ethical and democratic thinking and its connection to design research in his publication 'Dewey and Design'. His book offers insights into Dewey's perspectives, including; his theory of inquiry argument related to knowing; his view on social inquiry and the social inclusion of people; cooperative communications; experience as being social, and; reflection, consequences and reflective intelligence. Design and design research needs to pay attention to Dewey's theories because, as Dixon explains, 'little work has been done exploring Dewey's democratic vision, his related ethical stance and his melioristic outlook, all of which can be understood to sit behind the publics concept' (2020a:146). Dewey adopts an action-orientated epistemology and a transformational ontology (Dixon, 2020a) in which new knowledge is to be discovered through experiencing, doing and action via inquiry. Dewey viewed that knowing is always a result of our actions through intervening in a current situation and understanding the consequences of our actions at a particular time through reflection<sup>32</sup>. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) provide a helpful discussion regarding Dewey's approach to reflective considerations and problems to possible solutions.

<sup>32</sup> Notably this draws a close affiliation with the work of Donald Schön, as discussed in the literature review on page 32 and who has undoubtedly been informed by Dewey.

Dewey believed that research or intelligent inquiry, and not general practice inquiry<sup>33</sup> is 'a transformational act which reconfigures the world' (Dixon, 2020a:155). For him, there can be no absolutism of truth in the outcome of doing but only warranted assertions,<sup>34</sup> which denies foundationalism<sup>35</sup>. For Dewey, inquiry is always progressive, and his democracy as ethics asserts that knowing, rather than knowledge, can never be final or finished. It can't be imposed or absolute and knowing can always inform further works. According to Dixon, it is in the 'activity of deliberation' (2022a:154) that Dewey links democracy and ethics. Dixon describes that Dewey believes this involves what we do and do not find acceptable and in collectively testing what does and doesn't work. This research draws upon this positioning and the activity of deliberation to make my links with reflexive practice. I propose that reflexive practice can offer a way for practitioners to engage in an 'activity of deliberation' by critically reflecting on what works and what doesn't regarding the positioning of themselves in relation to others. Practitioners question and challenge themselves to understand and test what is and isn't collectively acceptable to others in society, specifically their consumer audiences to aid action to be taken based on their reflections. Concurrently they engage with reflexive design practice. Aligned with this, this research does not suggest that its discoveries can be universal to all professional brand designers practices in relation to audiences. Dewey initiates a challenge to the notion of power as he does not deem one inquiry and knowing more eminent than another. His view is one of a contextualist in which ethical inquiry is the use of reflective intelligence to revise our judgments in light of the consequences of acting on them (Dixon, 2020a). His ethics as democracy is rooted in context and reflection as he sees this as the only way in which individuals or anything can be seen to be moral and offer improvements.

<sup>33</sup> A general practice inquiry is personal and whilst it can provide individual insights it doesn't offer a contribution to a Deweyan intelligent inquiry or field, as it is not positioned within the context of the work of other researchers and theorists.

<sup>34</sup> A justifiable and transferable knowledge contribution, and which although its knowledge can be used to inform further inquiry, it can only be definitively applicable to the particular situation in which it is produced. Assertions are connected to what Dewey termed generic traits of existence (Dixon, 2020). He views that they can be transferred from one situation to another, but they need to be investigated to understand whether they address the problem in this other situation.

<sup>35</sup> For Dewey it is impossible to view knowing as being separated from its context.

Central to Deweyan democracy and ethics is negotiation/ envisaging of possibilities. This is by making ideas visible and tangible and generating scenarios and debates in which social conversations can be had to understand how ideas might be situated in real-world contexts. 'As far as he is concerned, to collectively deliberate over action, trialling all the various possibilities that a situation may throw up, is the only equitable method of managing the future' (LW 7, p. 349 in Dixon, 2020a:144). Fundamental to Dewey were cooperation, collaboration, compromise, and accepting that there can be different perspectives. For him, what unifies diversity is deliberation. He recognises that there does not have to be a majority to define something as acceptable.

Dewey's perspective provides a fundamental foundation upon which my research builds. This is three-fold and in the ways that it first enables the inclusion and manifestation of diverse voices of designers, as well as those of the audience/users of my research. Designers' participation and collaboration provides a variety of perspectives and opinions beyond that of one individual or solely my own within the research. This aids collectively deliberations challenging other participants and my biases concerning the situations that emerge within this inquiry.

Notably, researchers are part of an institution and connected to a hierarchy. Based on my worldview, it is acknowledged that no researcher or research can be entirely objective or devoid of biases, although I propose that this can be mitigated. In the course of my design and research activities and actions in this study, I am using my assumptions, biases and interpretations, but I present my attempts to do so responsively using critical reflection and reflexive practice. For example, but not limited to, by making my worldview that underpins this research explicit; being contemplative, and thinking about the consequences of this research by reflecting upon and documenting decisions made during and throughout the data collection and analysis and creation of design visualisations in this study; reflecting upon the

results in relation to the design community for whom the research is intended to assist, and; being reflexive towards participants, questions asked, data collected and its interpretation, including asking participants to also reflect on some results.

Second, this study adopts Dewey's meliorist<sup>36</sup> attitude: what designers do in relation to the social activity of their practice, and its context can continually be improved. This improvement is through reflection and discovering what is useful as a way of always making progress. This research seeks to propel other designers' and my reflective intelligence by initiating critical thinking about acts of connecting when using our position in practice work and communications in relation to audiences. I am not suggesting that what other designers or I already know is not valuable. Instead, adopting intelligent inquiry, I propose a distinct way to further build upon and offer an extension to these designers' existing practices. The polling of representative sampling took place as away to ask design participants to question and think critically. This was regarding what takes place through their interactions with another, the consumer audience community, which are fundamental to the design community. Significant to this is that within their practice processes, professional designers are often unlikely able to participate with or have direct involvement or contact with the consumer audience community. My thesis and practice is intended to be used to assist designers, to support them to critique and critically reflect upon their ethical judgements in light of the consequences of acting upon them to then enable them to revise how they use their positionality. This is rather than using the term 'revise' their ethical judgements as discussed by Dixon (2020a). I see that critical reflection is imperative to, and has to take place and be made explicit so that judgements can then be justly revised.

<sup>36</sup> 'Meliorism refers to the belief that the world can be made better through human effort. In holding such a belief, one is not insisting upon the view that betterment will necessarily be achieved, only that it is likely to be possible if an appropriate course of action is identified' (Dixon, 2020:145).

Third, reflexive practice aligns with the consideration of the inclusion of others and the critique and reflection of ourselves and thinking about our thoughts, views, values or assumptions in relation to others. Reflexive practice, therefore, prompts re-evaluations of how we use our position towards others. In summary, Dewey's ethical and democratic pragmatism is closely connected with reflexive practice theory and the overarching ambitions this research seeks to initiate and intends to offer to design.

Notably, according to Dixon, 'democracy has traditionally been associated with historical participatory design practices emerging in the Scandinavian design movement' (Dixon, 2020a:127). In drawing upon reflexive practice, Dewey's outlook and being situated in a professional design context, it is suggested that this research on professional brand identity design can additionally contribute to a democratic design (Carl DiSalvo, 2022). I propose that my research offers new insight into this area in addition to for example Participatory, Service and Co-Design theoretical perspectives in which designers engage and interact directly with participants, users and communities. This is in because within and through this research and as a consequence of its intended outcomes, I propose, as discussed on pages 104, to facilitate 'the activity of deliberation' (Dixon, 2020a:154). How the theoretical perspective in this research aligns with the methodology and methods employed in this study is discussed in the next section.

3.2.

### **Research Methodology: Multiphase mixed methods, including practice**

Crotty (1998) suggests that the research question that the inquiry seeks to answer initiates the methodology and, therefore, the methods that are employed in research. He states that a methodology is a plan of action, which requires an 'account of the rationale it provides for the choice of methods and the particular forms in which the methods are employed' (Crotty, 1998:7). My methodology and methods, which link to Dewey are informed by the ethical pragmatic perspective and questions in this research. The literature of Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), Creswell and Clark (2011) Creswell (2014) and Robson (2011) were used to advise researcher knowledge regarding the methodological approach that was most appropriate to this study.

Pragmatism is concerned with using the most appropriate means to solve problems and what works rather than a principal preoccupation with methods (Creswell and Clark, 2011). The methods and focus on whether a solely quantitative or qualitative stance is adopted is not the primary concern. The emphasis of Pragmatism is on a problem-centred real-world practice (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2014), the questions asked about the problem and finding and using the most appropriate methods and way to be able to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014). This is through acting and intervening in a particular setting to understand the consequences of action and find a solution. This is so that an advancement can be made for a new way/s that can make a difference. It is through reflecting upon experience and what is experienced in a specific context that is significant to knowing, which according to Dewey, offers justifiable knowledge as closure, a settled outcome that is in some way conclusive but not finalised. From this viewpoint, Pragmatism endorses eclecticism and pluralism (Robson, 2011). It rebuts the view that researchers cannot have freedom of choice regarding the research methods, techniques, and procedures that best meet their needs and purposes (Creswell, 2014:11). Furthermore, drawing upon Dewey's worldview, my outlook sees that a solely objective epistemology is limiting. This is because this view assumes reality can be a definitive truth in which the world is

independent from the knower, which I oppose. If from a solely constructive or subjective lens, reality is acknowledged and understood through multiple realities. Such lenses consider the voices of participants at an individual level, but do not prioritise action or problem-solving. I believe neither objective nor constructive/subjective epistemologies individually go far enough in seeking to make change (Creswell, 2014) or improvements. Yet, making something better is a primary objective of a pragmatic worldview and this research. This study does not favour one method over another, and one approach and data method would be ineffectual in addressing the research problem and the initial research question. Instead, I adopted those that were most suitable, i.e. what works. These methods, which include my design visualisation (Drucker, 2020) practice as a method of inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022), were used together to address a set of incremental questions and provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than if only one approach or method had been used alone. Some findings and themes are followed up in subsequent phases to expand upon the previous Phase. Results build upon each other to uncover what is helpful to improve existing knowing and understanding.

The diversity of methods and the mixing and connecting of data facilitated the opportunity to develop my study skills as a researcher. It allows alternative and differing deliberations initiating greater awareness to provide a more complete understanding and potentially more robust research than either approach alone regarding my identified research problem and its questions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Creswell, and Clark, 2011). Furthermore, as my questions do not fit neatly within the system of study of a specific methodology, they require the combination, integration and building of data using several approaches, and the use of different methods. This research follows a multiphase sequential mixed methods methodology and design (Creswell and Clark, 2011). A multiphase sequential design is adopted when a problem or topic is examined iteratively through interconnected studies which are sequentially aligned,

with each phase building upon what was learned previously to address a central objective (Creswell and Clark 2011). Using a multiphase design allows this study to ask different questions (see pages 36-37), which have been carefully stated. As each Phase evolves, learning and previous results from each stage of the study, which can be qualitative or quantitative data or vice-versa, are connected and built upon in succession, leading to results (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

Sequencing was a contributing factor as to why an action research approach, which concerns a cyclical process and can also fit with a pragmatic perspective was not selected over a mixed methods approach in this research. Furthermore, the reflexive vision of this research provides a clear rationale for the selected methods. They require participation and collaboration while allowing for a probing of designers' hegemonic practices in relation to audiences. This includes between designers as participants and the participants and myself in several ways, as outlined in Appendix 2.

The approach to methods was conducted in a way which was consistent and equitable. The research ethics section at 3.6. discusses this in more detail. Questions aligned to the methods were written to avoid jargon and unnecessary vocabulary. Consideration was given to the use of accessible and non-academic jargon to avoid miscommunication of my intentions. Before two of the methods were employed, pilot testing was undertaken to expand, reflect upon and revise ideas and questions and avoid misunderstandings. After reflecting on questionnaire feedback, I acknowledged that some of the questions could have been written in a less ambiguous language in terms of sentence structure. These reflections were taken forwards as learning into the writing of future questions in each methods phase and for future research.

Whilst quantitative and qualitative mixed methods are emphasised in this research, central to this inquiry is my design practice which is inherent in each Phase of the study. My practice is employed to create design visualisations (Drucker, 2020) and used to do inquiry and as a method of inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022). This includes my practice reflections which further aided in developing my design practice and theoretical knowledge formations, including the links between the two. It is fundamental to explain this design practice research which is discussed in the next section.

### 3.3. What is design practice research?

This research acknowledges that there have been significant contributors to design inquiry, including Nigel Cross (2001a, 2001b, 2011), Richard Buchanan (1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015), Bryan Lawson (2005), Lawson and Kees Dorst (2009), Nigan Bayazit (1993, 2004), Horst Rittel (Rittel and Webber, 1973 in Forlizzi, Zimmerman and Stolterman, 2009) and Donald Schön (1983). This study builds upon Frayling (1993) and Archer (1995) and Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey's (2022) positioning, definition and classificatory scheme and analytical framework of design practice research. Frayling (1993) suggests three approaches in which an art and design inquiry might be undertaken. He states that these approaches are research 'into' art and design, research 'through' art and design and research 'for' art and design. Archer draws close similarities with Frayling's three approaches above, and outlines that it is 'useful to distinguish between research about practice; research for the purposes of practice; and research through practice' (1995:9). To note, Frayling's research into art and design draws a parallel with what Forlizzi, Zimmerman and Stolterman (2009) term research on design - a detailed and unified understanding of the human activity of design or design-related activities. Forlizzi, Zimmerman and Stolterman (2009) suggest that research on design does not necessarily improve the practice of design, and Archer states that practitioner activity itself does not permit an investigation to be described as research (1995). Instead, he claims 'that an investigation has to be systematically conducted, the activity recorded transparently, and the findings made explicit in which the outcome is knowledge that is valid and made transmissible to others and not merely information' (Archer, 1995:10-11). Forlizzi, Zimmerman and Stolterman (2009) and Archer's (1995) views of research on design imply a connection to Dewey's distinctions between intelligent and general practice inquiry and action.

Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey (2022) describe three conditions – sited, situated and situating, that must be included for research to be deemed practice research. They outline this in their Triple S framework (Appendix 3), which explains how my practice is situated in the context of this framework. Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey (2022) propose that a further analytical framework

which draws upon C-K theory (Hatchuel & Weil, 2009; Le Masson *et al.*, 2010, cited in Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, 2022:2) is needed 'specifically for design practice research emphasising that its outcomes are different from those of research and those of practice' (2022:2). According to Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, this theory proposes that 'design creates both new 'concepts' or designs (C) and new knowledge (K)' (2022:3). Furthermore, they argue via this analytical framework (Figure 22), 'practice research in design produces concepts and knowledge that make a contribution to any or all of three different contexts' (2022:3).

To the **issue domain** within which the practice research is sited and situated.

To the **current design practice** – the doings and sayings – of a community of validation involved in designing in or beyond that domain.

To **design research itself**, understood as having a distinct body of disciplinary knowledge and community of validation; and, potentially, to research in other disciplines.

*Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey (2022:3).*

**Figure 22** Contributions of the C-K analytical framework (Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, 2022).

Building upon these two frameworks, Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, define practice design research as shown in Figure 23.

*'Practice research in design is a form of networked, constructive knowledge production and practice development. It is carried out through inquiring into situations, informed by domain-and discipline-relevant knowledge and in relation to an appropriate and relevant community of validation. It results in the production of new concepts/designs and new knowledge, relevant to and for assessment by the community in the situation, as well as in new concepts/designs and new knowledge for design practice and for design research, relevant to and for assessment by design practice and research communities'*

*Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey (2022:3).*

**Figure 23** Practice design research definition (Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, 2022).

### 3.4. Why this research is design practice research

This research intrinsically involves what Archer (1995) terms research 'through the medium of practitioner activity', which has practical significance for the area, and 'for the purposes of practitioner activity'. My research involves designers and explores their activities through the medium of their practice. The findings and impact of these research explorations are then presented. Aligned with the pragmatic theoretical perspective of ongoing progress, my discoveries offer justifiable new design research knowledge and theory which is transmissible. This can then be drawn and built upon by other design and research practitioners for the purposes of their activities. Thereby offering a way to address the issue connected to the research problem, its question and theoretical perspective of exploring practical practitioner activity in a specific design context. Furthermore, drawing upon Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey. (2022:23) and their Triple S framework, this research is practice research because it is sited, situated and situating. Additionally, this research is specifically design practice research because it builds upon Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey's analytical framework (2022:23) (Figure 24).

What is produced through practice research in design	For the site/issue	For design-as-practice	For design research
<b>Concepts/designs</b>	New approach and proposal for professional brand identity designers using a reflexive design practice approach in applied practice, informed by the insights into the domain and by academic knowledge	The development of a new design method to aid professional brand identity designers to critically reflect when using themselves within their practice towards their audience experiences.	The development of a new design method that design researchers can employ for exploration in academic research
<b>Knowledge</b>	Insights into the domain relevant to a community of inquiry, e.g. new knowledge about UK based professional brand identity designers reflexive design practice and how they can employ reflexive practice to improve their ethical working practices towards their audiences	The development of new knowledge theories that professional brand identity designers/ can reference to for understanding how they might be using themselves within their practice towards their audience experiences	Theoretical developments explaining how (design) practice can be incorporated with existing understandings about mixed methodology, accepted by the community of validation in academic research

**Figure 24** My adapted mapping of my design practice research outcomes in my research onto Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey's analytic framework (2022) to show contributions of this research.



I am a designer-practitioner-researcher attempting to reveal new understandings about practice for other designers, researchers, myself and my practice. I propose that this role aids the avoidance of misunderstanding, confusion and misinterpretations regarding terminology and established knowledge in design practice and better supports the enhancement of research insights, evaluation and reflections.

### 3.5.

## Methods

My research is concerned with re-evaluating existing approaches, developing new theories and suggesting an enhanced way that designers can develop and improve their future practice. This is investigated using various methods. Crotty (1998:6) defines methods as 'techniques or procedures used' that are selected according to what information is wanted to be uncovered, from whom, where and why. Creswell advises that 'when selecting methods, it should also include considerations regarding forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies' (2014:17). All of the methods employed followed Royal College of Art standard ethics processes as discussed at section 3.6 at the end of this Chapter, further supporting the ethical impetus of this PhD.



### 3.5.1. Methods used in the phases of this Mixed Methods study

My Multiphase Mixed Method Methodology draws upon four methods, which are one Quantitative method – an open and closed Likert scale questionnaire. The main emphasis of this research is on Qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews, and a synchronous online design workshop, and Design – design visualisation practice.

Each method is inherent within four specific research phases, as stated in Figure 25.

**Phase 1 – Inquire:** questionnaire

**Phase 2 – Insight, issues, and inform:** semi-structured interviews

**Phase 3 – Implement and intervene:** synchronous online design workshop

**Phase 4 – Impact:** reflexive design principles in a reflexive design guide for professional brand identity designers explored in applied practice

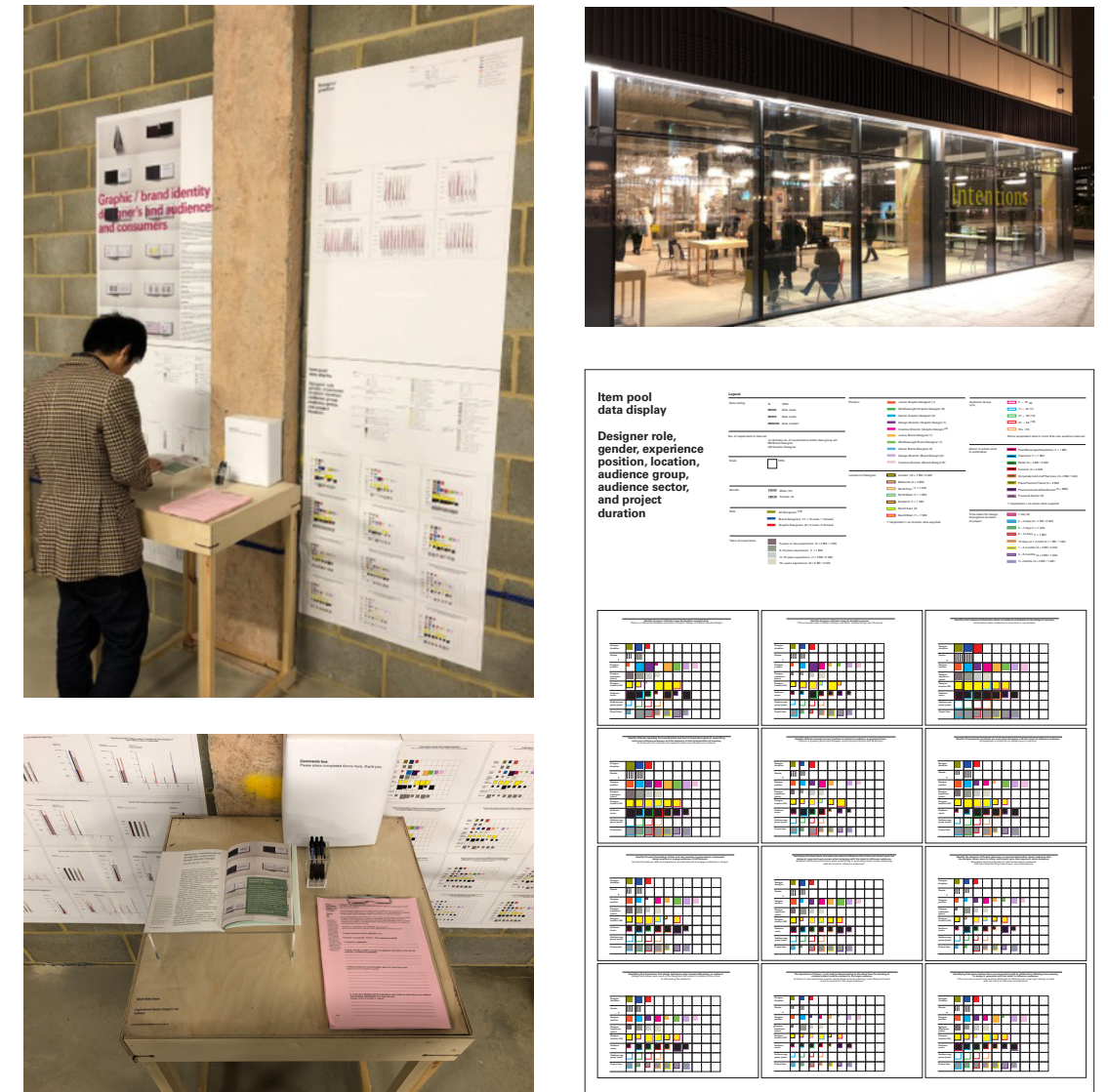
**All phases –** design visualisation practice is a method inherent in each phase (1-4)

**Figure 25** The Phases and methods in this research.

Essential to each Phase in this research is my communication design practice. I employ my practice to generate and develop design visualisations which draw upon Joanna Drucker's (2020) notion of modelling interpretation, in which graphic expression is viewed as interpretive by the producer and user. Building upon DiSalvo's (2022) terms, my design visualisations within this research are an approach of practice used to do inquiry and are employed as a method of inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022). These are an apparatus that can provide myself, designers' and design researchers' with insight and agency. DiSalvo's interest lies in making and using such design things as a means of, and to do, inquiry, specifically regarding the conditions and experiences of democracy. Integral to each Phase in this research, my design visualisations comprise forms; spreadsheets; diagrams; tables; a communication design book which displays questionnaire data findings as visual information; thematic maps; online design workshop materials for design participants; a design guide prototype for testing and; a final design guide.

### 3.5.2. My design practice as a method

Some of my design visualisations from my questionnaire findings were presented in a Royal College of Art Work in Progress' Intentions' public exhibition at Westworks in London between the 5-12th December 2017 (Figure 26 and discussed in Appendix 2). This participation was to gain feedback and reflections on my findings and design visualisation practice from the public, designers' and design researchers'.



**Figure 26** Work in progress exhibition visualisations.

My design practice which involves the transformation of data into visualisation, serves as a primary mode of knowing production (Drucker, 2020). My practice is employed not only to design things but to visually document and present the other (quantitative and qualitative) methods, data and processes, their findings, and to aid my analysis and reflection upon these. This is to uncover theory and research and practice process knowledge. I use my practice, with examples shown throughout this PhD (see Figures, 13-14, 26, 31, 33, 35, 36-40, 42-45, 48-50, 52-53, 58-59, 61-65, 71-72, 78-80) as a means to document, iterate, develop and critically reflect upon and present the doing and making of my research reflexive practice knowledge, research practice designing and other designers' reflexive practice.

I am not merely considering how data is displayed as information rather I am involved in the activity of deliberating how I am creating interpretation (Drucker, 2020). I do not see individuals as passive recipients in which the design visualisations are imposed upon them, but instead as active participants. In my practice interpretation construction and production, I am aligning myself with this research's reflexive design practice initiatives. My intent is to mitigate my assumptions and biases. I critically reflect and think about how I am using myself in designing and how my practice looks and might communicate in relation to others designers and those interested in this PhD. I am using my design visualisations to record and present reflexive practice research and reflexive practice in design. My design visualisation practice is first made and used in this research as a way to do inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022) about reflexive design practice knowledge, which includes the reflexive practice designing of other designers. And second, as a method of inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022) which supported me in generating, formulating, presenting and interweaving first, theoretical design research knowledge; second, designer practice knowledge and; third, my own design practice research knowledge. These forms of inquiry demonstrate a linking of practice and theory. My research is a symbiotic relationship between my design practice research which is a theoretically and reflectively, and reflexively made and created design research reflexive practice inquiry, alongside knowledge generated and developed by critically reflecting and reflexively inquiring about theoretical reflexive practice literature knowledge and designers' opinions and experiences. My reflections of theory, including my

own and other designers' practice, are iteratively built upon in this research. This further informs the evolution of my practice and research, leading to the development of a design guide prototype and final guide for users, which includes reflexive design practice principles for professional practitioners. Additionally, this design research reflexive practice inquiry is interpretively communicated and presented collectively and chronologically in a visual practice process book which employs my practice.

My practice is not an inquiry through making, but instead is employed to do inquiry and as and as a method of inquiry. This addition of visual practice as a method alongside quantitative and qualitative approaches offers me a deeper understanding through a process of critical and self-reflection on the visual. This aided me in developing my design research practice, design research theory and design visualisation practice knowledge. Consequently, this process of critical and self-reflection and knowledge gained through this process, enabled me to communicate a more comprehensive picture and in turn, clarifies and enhances my research argument of how from the interrelationship between these, new knowing can emerge about reflexive design practice in brand identity design.

This research will be of potential interest to other researchers, particularly design researchers. A visual practice offers a means of communication that is identifiable and easily comprehensible for use by a wide range of design researchers and brand identity design practitioners – a key user group for whom this is intended<sup>37</sup>. The visual practice aspect of my thesis is, therefore, one of the strategies that are important in assisting design researchers and designers knowing, maintaining the inclusive and reflexive-impetus of this research. My visual practice process book was designed after the final chapter of this thesis was drafted and visually recorded my design research process. This book communicates all of the work I have engaged with from a visual standpoint that has helped support my main arguments.

<sup>37</sup> It is not just about illustrating the analysis and findings but also about communicating this analysis appropriately to the audience, other design researchers and the brand identity designers for whom this research is intended to have relevance.

My design visualisations invite and pose questions to designers asking them to reflect upon their reflexive practice, including their use within their processes. My design visualisations seek a questioning and transformative impetus for brand identity design practitioners and design researchers. Design practice is inherent to the other methods in this research. An explanation of these methods linked to three questions, their phases, sequencing, data collection and an outline of why and how each method was selected are described in more detail in sections 3.5.3, 3.5.4. and 3.5.5.

3.5.3.

### Phase One – Inquire: Questionnaire

The first phase of the research took place in parallel with an early review of theories in the Literature Review (Chapter 2), where a gap was identified as to a lack of understanding about the ways in which designers 'design' in relation to their audiences. Phase One enabled me to challenge my assumptions further, undertake early scoping, and assist in determining the feasibility of further stages of this study. It was used to identify potential design participants for future phases of this research and to reveal possible avenues for greater focus within the study. Phase One asked the question below (Figure 27).

**Questionnaire question**

*What are professional brand identity designers (based in the UK) attitudes, influences and views in relation to audiences?*

**Figure 27** Phase One, questionnaire question.

### 3.5.3.1. Participants'

#### Sampling approach, sample size and selection

In October 2013, a self-completion questionnaire survey<sup>38</sup> method<sup>39</sup> using the non-probability approach of purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014; Robson, 2011) was undertaken. This method sought to understand professional brand identity designers' attitudes towards audiences. The sample aligned to the context of a particular group that the questions aimed to address. The criteria for selecting participants correlated closely with the purpose of the research study. Participants included professional graphic/brand identity designers (based in the UK) employed within top 100 Brand agencies<sup>40</sup> and brand identity tutors who were also industry practitioners. Drawing upon Robson's (2011:128) suggestion that as the sample size in Phase One did not as seek to make inferences, predictions or generalisations about a whole population of designers employed in professional brand identity design, a large number of responses was not a primary concern. This Phase instead sought to present and summarise the data, providing a description from the participants who responded and identified themselves as brand identity designers<sup>41</sup>. Based on the goals of this Phase, the time and resources available, and its aspiration to provide insights into the feasibility of the research, the small sample size was intentional for this study. More detail on the stages of sampling selection used in this study is shown in Appendix 4.

<sup>38</sup> Questionnaire survey can be either a questionnaire, interviews or a combination of both, in which approaches include self-completion, face-to face interviews, and telephone interviews (Robson, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> A relatively straightforward and quick approach to retrieving information from a large, albeit particular set of people, that allows for their anonymity (Robson, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> This was based on award success, rated by clients for their work, turnover and profit and national recognition.

<sup>41</sup> In total 19 designers responded to the survey, and from this 11 identified as brand identity designers.

### 3.5.1.2. Questionnaire content and preparation

Phase One used descriptive statistics and examined professional designers' attitudes and current insights towards their audiences. The specific aim was to understand opinions and gain knowledge regarding what influences them in their work towards affecting the people they aim to engage, as well as establishing the relevance of existing approaches, expertise in this context and potential opportunities and directions for further research. Drawing upon Robson's (2011) recommendation, careful consideration was given to how the questionnaire was designed. Two pilot survey stages (Appendix 5) were undertaken to identify any ambiguities in the dissemination and design of the questionnaire and demonstrated inclusivity linked to the reflexive impetus of this research. An advantage of questionnaires is that they are relatively straightforward to administer. They are an easily adaptable and quick way to collect a generalisable amount of standardised data from a large, albeit particular set of people that allows for anonymity in data coding (Robson, 2011). They offer an easy, cost and time-effective approach to retrieving past historical information. This method provided the opportunity to efficiently analyse the data in a more effective timeframe than was feasible if a large group of interviews had been undertaken (Robson, 2011). An overview of Phase One, its purpose, content and individual questions asked are shown in Figures 28, 29 and 30.

Section 1	
1A-Questions 01 -09	1B-Question 10- 19
<p><b>The attitude of Designers' towards engaging and influencing audiences'</b></p> <p><b>Purpose</b> Identify any distinctions between areas of practices. Make explicit the attitudes of Designers' and the relevance placed upon understanding audiences in relation to the communication of information and meaning with the intent to engage and influence people.</p> <p><b>Content</b> Reveal level of importance given to audiences in design.</p> <p><b>Question</b> What are the current attitudes of Graphic/ Brand Designers in their intentions a towards engaging audiences?</p>	<p><b>Attitudes towards Social Design and the use of its application in current practice</b></p> <p><b>Purpose</b> Identify if Graphic/Brand Designers believe that current audience knowledge and the frameworks/methods that are used to understand audiences are sill relevant to the practices of Graphic Design /Branding.</p> <p><b>Content</b> Critical reflections of the current role of professional Graphic Design/ Branding in engaging audiences and the level of understanding of Social Design/sustainability discourses in current commercial practice.</p> <p><b>Question</b> What is known about social discourses in relation to audience engagement and what emphasis is it given in the practices of commercial Graphic Design/ Branding?</p>

**Figure 28** Overview of research study and detailed questionnaire questions in Phase One – Section 1.

Section 2	
2A - Questions 20 - 26	2B - Questions 27 - 34
<p><b>Current practice, roles, and the influences in practices towards engaging audiences</b></p> <p><b>Purpose</b> Examining the techniques/concepts and practices related to audiences. Exploring who and what influences Designers' understanding throughout their Design processes in relation to particular sectors and audience groups.</p> <p><b>Content</b> Discover information regarding the designerly practices relating to audience groups and sectors. Identify what externally influences Designers' processes and intent to influence audiences.</p> <p><b>Question</b> What and who contributes to Designers' practice and to what extent in relation to the ways in which they consider audience groups?</p>	<p><b>Relevance of current knowledge and skills in engaging audiences</b></p> <p><b>Purpose</b> Investigating stages and strategies adopted with the intent to influence people. Exploring what the current issues are with regard to meaningfully influencing audience groups. (i.e. what impacts upon the professional capabilities of the designer). Examining future directions and potential areas of focus to contribute the development of a new framework.</p> <p><b>Content</b> Reveal Designers' influence, strategies adopted and how prnjcts are evaluated. Identify future directions and potential areas of focus.</p> <p><b>Question</b> What directly informs Designers' processes in their intent to influence audiences? Is current knowledge and understanding of how to engage audiences still relevant and what is the potential for further investigation?</p>

**Figure 29** Overview of research study and detailed questionnaire questions in Phase One – Section 2.

Section 3
3 - Questions 35 – 40
<p><b>Classification questions</b></p> <p><b>Purpose</b> To identify the most recently completed project, target audience, sector and time period, gender, role and longevity of professional practice (experience) and location. To establish agreement to be contacted for further research contribution.</p> <p><b>Content</b> Name, gender, role, geographic location, agreement for future contact and email.</p>

**Figure 30** Overview of research study and questionnaire classification questions in Phase One – Section 3.



Phase One involved three stages, of which two were pilot stages, across several weeks between August and September in 2013<sup>42</sup>. It drew upon the literature of Oppenheim (1992), Lewis (1994), Robson (2011), Creswell and Clark (2011), Creswell (2014) and Foddy (1993) to inform understanding. This stage employed a retrospective design<sup>43</sup> closed – 28 questions, and open – 3 questions, Likert Scale questionnaire.

The questionnaire, as a designed interactive digital pdf<sup>44</sup> (Figure 31) with cover information, was emailed<sup>45</sup> to the selected participants at the end of October 2013, and participants were asked to reply by 5th November 2013.

The figure displays two pages of an interactive PDF questionnaire. The left page is the title page, titled 'Questionnaire Survey', and includes a key for the Likert scale: 1 (Not important at all), 2 (Slightly important), 3 (Quite important), 4 (Important), and 5 (Very important). It also contains instructions for Section 2A, asking respondents to read questions and statements and give an answer in all boxes. The right page shows the first question (Q01) with a list of 5 possible options for audience age: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55+. It also includes a key for the Likert scale and instructions for Section 2A.

**Figure 31** The interactive pdf questionnaire survey design emailed to designers.

<sup>42</sup> Throughout these two stages some inevitable problems were highlighted and changes were made to the third stage. Robson (2011) advises that this is one of the reasons to undertake such a task. These changes are discussed in Appendix 5 of this thesis.

<sup>43</sup> In non-experimental fixed design it is asserted that there are three common types of survey design which are formulated based on dimensions of time. This study used retrospective design as it combined questions related to a past project as well as current conditions.

<sup>44</sup> One of the benefits of producing the questionnaire as an interactive pdf is that single transfer coding (Robson, 2011) can be undertaken. This means that the participants responses were returned, and selections of the designer's answers could be automatically embedded, as the actual codes were within each interactive pdf. (Robson, 2011). Participants findings were then exported to a CVS file, in which the original data was then transferred directly into the relevant excel files.

<sup>45</sup> The use of direct emailing enabled designers to complete the questionnaire, when it was convenient to them within a stated but flexible timeframe with the intent of providing responses whilst situated in their creative environment. Also significant to designers is that items that are sent to them are in essence 'designed'. As such my design of the questionnaire, its typography and layout were carefully considered in its creation to instigate designers to engage with the questionnaire and its content.

When the interactive PDF was created, each meaning – strongly agree to strongly disagree was given a numeric code for the rating scales. This initial preparation stage enabled returned responses to be immediately transferred into a digital format for analysis. Rating scale coding, which was more complex due to the possible diversity of answers to each item within one question, was coded in the interactive PDF to enable responses to again be transferred digitally.

In the email, 180 designers and 62 design agencies were contacted. Emails were sent to named individuals and addresses (where appropriate), through in some cases, a generic studio address was used with a request to forward on the PDF. A total of 242 emails were sent with 19 responses. This method follows a fixed design non-experimental approach as a confirmatory task<sup>46</sup>, and the questionnaire data is analysed using a descriptive<sup>47</sup> rather than an inferential approach (Robson, 2011). Standard deviation<sup>48</sup> was used to measure the statistical dispersion of the numerical data using the mean as a measure of central tendency. In addition, the mode was used to uncover the most frequently occurring value (Robson, 2011). The themes and findings uncovered in Phase One are discussed in section 4.1.4 and were followed up and used to inform areas explored in Phase Two, semi-structured interviews, which are discussed in the next section. Connecting and building upon key findings from one set of data to facilitated more in-depth understanding.

<sup>46</sup> A confirmatory task does not simply suggest that the data will provide a conclusive theory. Hence, an analysis of the data, in a following chapter also took place, which afforded further opportunity for unexpected findings or patterns to occur and the discovery of a more cogent theory of current modes of practice (Robson, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Robson asserts that descriptive statistics, 'are ways of representing some important aspect of a set of data by a single number. The two aspects most commonly dealt with in this way are the level of the distribution and its spread (otherwise known as dispersion)' (2011:423).

<sup>48</sup> Standard deviation provides a measure of the concentration and variability from each of the data points to the mean. A larger standard deviation is further away from the mean and a smaller standard deviation is more concentrated and closer to the mean. The significance of either a large or small standard deviation in a study is dependent upon what the study seeks to reveal. Thus, neither is correct or incorrect but dependent upon what one is expecting to find.

## 3.5.4.

### Phase Two – Insight, issues, and inform: semi-structured interviews

Phase Two used semi-structured open-type interviews and was selected from various interview types<sup>49</sup>. This method was chosen as it provided a flexible, cooperative and adaptable way to converse in-depth (Robson, 2011, Creswell and Clark, 2011), discover underlying motives, and test six participants' knowledge limits. Phase Two asked the questions below (Figure 32).

#### Semi-structured Interview questions

*Taking the most recently completed UK project, in what ways do UK-based professional brand identity designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

And, interlinked to the question above:

*What challenges and/or issues do UK-based professional brand identity designers face when thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation of their most recent UK project?*

**Figure 32** Phase Two, semi-structured interview questions.

This method was employed to offer insights into designers' existing thinking about how they were using and considering themselves and their position in relation to consumer audience experiences. Its approach supports an understanding of what designers believed and why they gave the responses they did. Additionally, it was adopted to uncover challenges in this context and to gain insights into what may or may not be helpful to these designers in the future. The focus was on the idea generation stage of the designer's design process on their most recently completed project.

<sup>49</sup> This can include structured, or semi-structured and there are three main question types used in interviews; closed questions, from which the interviewee selects one of two pre-determined options, open ended questions with no restriction on the reply and no predetermined categories, other than the subject area, and scale items which ask for a response on a scale, i.e. strongly agree/agree/disagree etc (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2011).

The interviews were carried out one-to-one and face-to-face with six participants starting early December 2019 with a pilot study. This pilot was undertaken with one male and one female gender identity brand identity designers based in the UK. They were employed in two different London design agencies, and the interviews were conducted outside their studio context. This pilot was to identify if interview content was coherent, verify the number of questions, the time needed and uncover if any changes were needed. This is discussed in more detail in Appendix 6. The six primary interviews were undertaken in mid-December 2019 and organised around participants' schedules continued for eight weeks.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews included building upon prior questionnaire key findings and themes to elicit more in-depth data; identifying possible areas of focus when designers are considering their positionality; understanding to what extent designers consider their positionality towards consumer audience experiences and; revealing challenges and issues that might be faced and what might be needed to develop reflexive practice and associated principles. This Phase involved pre-preparations, including a pre-planned designed interview protocol guide and development of a list of ordered questions, which, dependent on the interview flow, could be modified.



### 3.5.4.1. Participants'

#### Sampling approach, sample size and selection

Whilst Phase One did identify some participants who agreed to be involved in this second Phase, it highlighted that they lacked gender identity<sup>50</sup> diversity. Corresponding with the reflexive intent of this research, in this Phase, purposeful maximal variation sampling (Creswell and Clark, 2011) was used 'to select new and a more varied selection of participants, to provide different perspectives, and offer greater diversity in helping to explain the phenomenon of interest' (Creswell and Clark, 2011:186).

From a search of UK-based brand identity designers on LinkedIn, a small number of equally balanced gender identity participants were recruited, i.e. three identified as female gender identity and three identified as male gender identity. This small number of participants were recruited based on Creswell and Clark's suggestion that 'they will provide in-depth information about the central phenomenon or concept being explored in the study' (2011:174), and in light of the limitations of the time available within the scope of this research. Participants were all employed in professional brand identity design practice, had differing levels of experience and responded about a UK-based project. They were specifically selected as sample individuals as 'they were able to shed light on the phenomenon being studied' (Creswell and Clark, 2011:174). The study was intentionally scaled to focus on UK practices and the context of audiences located in this area. For these reasons, it was essential to engage designers' based in the UK rather than in Europe or Internationally.

<sup>50</sup> Stonewall define gender identity as, 'A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something else (see non-binary below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth' (<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms>).

### 3.5.4.2. Semi-structured interview content, question development and preparation prior to interviews

Drawing upon Robson's (2011) suggestion, in advance of asking the questions, I planned question content and designed and prepared what was needed within the interview phase. This assisted with question structuring and sequencing within the interviews and included the development of interview protocol forms (Figure 33).

PhD – With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: Reflexive Communication Design for mainstream Brand Identity Designers

*Cool down – simple questions to diffuse any tension that may have built up*

**Section 2 – Challenges or issues faced when thinking about audience experiences**

**Aim 4**  
Identify any challenges and issues designers may have faced when considering their position (being reflexive) in relation to consumer audience experiences

**Aim 5**  
Recognise what is needed to develop new reflexive principles for brand identity designers and the level at which these might be most suitably positioned within the next stage

**Question 7.**  
When thinking about your own position in relation to consumer audience experience can you describe any challenges or issues you faced in your most recently completed project?

Probe: If so what were these?

Probe: What do you feel might help you in the future to overcome these challenges/ issues and how?

Figure 33 Designed semi-structured interview protocol forms.

Creswell and Poth advise that five to seven interview questions are sufficient (2018:164). All participants were asked seven sub-questions and two background/role questions. The seven individual questions connected to Phase Two main method questions. All interview questions were grouped using topic headings on note sheets, to further aid with interview sequencing and assist with what the main interview questions were asking, as shown in Appendix 7. Each interview was scheduled for 45 minutes, with two interviews finishing around this duration. Other participants' said that they wanted to continue responding to the questions for the remaining four interviews. Robson (2011) warns that anything under half an hour or over an hour is likely unreasonable<sup>51</sup>. Data was collected from the six participants employing two audio recordings, a primary recording device and a backup device. These were left recording until the interviewee had finished talking to avoid missing out on any important disclosures. Alongside the recordings, my observations throughout the interview were documented using notes. Participant's insights, reflections and interactions were recorded related to the questions asked. The time allocated to this stage included approximately 10 hours for the writing up and transcription verbatim of each interview by hand. As there were six participants, 60 hours were planned and accounted for within this Phase of the research. Findings from Phase One and Phase Two interviews supported the development of the reflexive practice framework (Figure 14). They led to a reflexive design practice framework (Figure 58) which provided the foundations for the generation of v.1 reflexive design practice principles (Figure 59). These principles were explored within the next Phase – a design workshop, as discussed in the following section 3.5.5.

<sup>51</sup> An interview under half an hour is unlikely to be valuable, and over an hour makes unreasonable demands on busy interviewees and can lead to fewer people wanting to participate and potential biases in the sample (Robson 2011).

### 3.5.5.

## Phase Three – Implement and intervene: investigating reflexive design principles and their use and application in a synchronous online design workshop

Informed by each prior research phase, including the Literature Review, Phase Three employed a synchronous online design workshop and asked the questions shown below in Figure 34.

This online workshop involved participant designers and activities in a practical design scenario that sought to interactively explore the use and implementation of eighteen individual reflexive design practice principles<sup>52</sup> as a design intervention. This exploration was to verify the impact and efficacy of the effect of the principles on designers thinking about their position and actions in relation to the consumer audience experience and uncover which principles may or may not be effective or valuable to the design participants and why. Consequently, it revealed the indicative usefulness of their transformative potential in impacting brand identity designers.

#### Synchronous online design workshop questions

*In what ways might reflexive principles affect UK based brand identity designers thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of the design process on a UK project?*

And, interlinked to the question above:

*How might reflexive principles be used by UK based brand identity designers within the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

**Figure 34** Phase Three, synchronous online design workshop questions.

<sup>52</sup> The reflexive design principles were developed after drawing and building upon the conclusions of the Phase Two results and mapping results onto the reflexive practice framework (Figure 14) developed by me after reviewing and reflecting upon the reflexive practice literature.

Building upon literature regarding workshop as a method by Hamilton<sup>53</sup> (2016), Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017), Sufi *et al.* (2018) and Lockton (2013), this route was selected as it used the built-in cooperative nature of a collaborative design approach. It enabled participants by means of engagement with the principles to experience and take action in generating visual content and responses. This learning type workshop<sup>54</sup> supported participants in taking turns in verbal conversations and as a way to 'promote debate and self-reflection' (Laranjo, 2017:121). This method was concerned with the participant's reflexive practice, the application of the reflexive practice principles and the designer participants' reflexive practice process. This method suited the subject of my thesis<sup>55</sup> – reflexive practice. The workshop enabled designers and me as a researcher to apply and engage in a reflective reflexive practice and process during and after the workshop event. This method strengthened my understanding regarding the contribution that the reflexive principles can offer to designers and their reflexive practice. And, it enhanced my researcher reflexive practice capabilities aligned with the reflexive design practice endeavours of this research.

<sup>53</sup> Hamilton defines the workshop method as 'a creative thinking method that allows for a way to proceed towards, 'a topic in a new way, in order to find new solutions' (2016:7).

<sup>54</sup> Sufi *et al.* (2018) state a learning type workshop uses brainstorming, idea-generation and an ideation. Participants in this research were asked to generate thoughts and concepts, individually or together in response to a researcher pre-provided project brief whilst each participant has reference to and used three for four from a total of the 18 reflexive principles. 'The expected outcome is increased knowledge, competence, or confidence in a particular area or set of techniques. Such workshops typically include practical exercises to apply the knowledge gained with assistance provided by the workshop organisers' (Sufi *et al.* 2018:4).

<sup>55</sup> Other methods such as interviews, focus groups and researcher direct observations would not have provided the opportunity for all the following to be documented via data collection at the time of the method taking place; participant and researcher engagement, interaction, experiencing, collaborative discussion, reflection and reflexivity in action as part of an activity, as well as after its actions. Notably, it is not an intention of this research to investigate and analyse online workshops as a research method, but rather examine the content and data that arise from the online workshop itself.

### 3.5.5.1. Participants'

#### Sampling approach, sample size and selection

Five participants were involved in this synchronous online workshop<sup>56</sup> undertaken via the internet and Miro<sup>57</sup> and Zoom<sup>58</sup> on Thursday, 30th July 2020, between 3.30 pm and 5.30 pm (BST). It involved participants' and myself using our computers. Participants were selected because Phase Three sought to predominantly address questions and uncover knowledge related to and for brand identity designers. All participants who indicated they were happy to be contacted from the previous Phases – 1 and 2 were sent an email<sup>59</sup>. Three individuals from these two prior phases responded, and two other participants came forward after the workshop was publicised using an animated gif design invite (Figure 35) on my LinkedIn page. This approach to promoting the workshop on social media was undertaken to support in the recruitment of participants with greater ethnic and gender identity diversity and a wider range of experience levels. The intent was to support an even more comprehensive range of perspectives, strengthening the democratic ambitions of the study.



Figure 35 Designed online design workshop invite.

<sup>56</sup> This workshop session was intended to be undertaken in a pre-prepared creative studio at the Royal College of Art at Kensington. However due to Covid-19 restrictions the workshop was undertaken online.

<sup>57</sup> Miro is a digital communication whiteboard platform, often utilised by designers in applied practice (and increasingly so during the Covid-19 pandemic).

<sup>58</sup> Zoom is a free (within time periods) digital video conferencing platform that enables individual participant and group interactions.

<sup>59</sup> In this email I also included that I was seeking to recruit design participants of diverse gender identity or who are Black, Asian or from a Minority Ethnic groups. Thus, I attempted to use a snowball effect to recruit a more diverse group of designers.

## 3.5.5.2.

## Design workshop planning, designing, preparation, content, and question development

According to Lockton, 'workshops as a method can have disadvantages as the ideas and outcomes generated in an artificial setting may not have ecological validity' (2013:100). Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017) discuss the need for participants to feel part of a collaborative environment. It was important that a small sample size of designers was used in the workshop to draw parallels with applied practice and 'to allow everyone personal attention and the chance to be heard' (Ørngreen and Levinsen, 2017:72). Before the workshop, participants were emailed (Appendix 8) to establish a connection and given Miro links (Figure 36), and a small list of online workshop etiquette considerations.

<p><b>Workshop date and time</b> Thurs. 30.07.2020 at 15.30</p> <p><b>Researchers email</b> sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk</p> <p>On the day of the workshop if you have any problems with joining us initially on Zoom, please email me (as above) and I'll reply immediately</p>	<p><b>Online Design Workshop — Links</b></p> <p><b>Participant 1</b></p> <p><b>Zoom meeting link</b> (please click on the link below to join the opening/start of the workshop on 30.07.2020 at 03:30 PM London) <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86177327984?pwd=MEEwQ09GdC8ycjZ2bmlRclFSNGFndz09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86177327984?pwd=MEEwQ09GdC8ycjZ2bmlRclFSNGFndz09</a></p> <p><b>Meeting ID — 861 7732 7984</b> <b>Passcode — 928413</b></p> <p><b>Miro links as below (which will be explained in more detail in the Zoom chat above and will be available after the opening/start of the workshop):</b></p> <p><b>Brief</b> — <a href="https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_kpDolWg=/">https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_kpDolWg=/</a></p> <p><b>Stage 1A</b> — <a href="https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_krdci9U=/">https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_krdci9U=/</a></p> <p><b>Stage 1B</b> — <a href="https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_krd8BHk=/">https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_krd8BHk=/</a></p> <p><b>Stage 2</b> — <a href="https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_krcCagw=/">https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_krcCagw=/</a></p> <p>(Please note: none of the Miro links above will be available or live until the date of the workshop and the specific time of the opening of the workshop. If you dont have an account with Miro (you can set up a free account) you may be asked to sign in/create an account. You <u>do not</u> have to do this if you do not wish to, as once I make the the Miro links above accessible to you after the opening of the workshop (on Zoom as above) you should not have to sign in or create an account but instead just click on the links)</p> <p><b>Miro test link as below (if you want to see what Miro is and explore the tools etc before the workshop if you haven't used it before):</b></p> <p>Test/Learn the tools link — <a href="https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_ko-5SHo=/">https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_ko-5SHo=/</a></p> <p>(If you click on the test link above, Miro is accessible and you can access now, before the workshop. You do not need to sign in/have an account)</p>
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**Figure 36** Designed online design workshop Miro links emailed to designers prior to the online design workshop.

After the workshop introduction on Zoom, the group was separated into two groups – one of three and one of two. These were determined based on two different audience groups in a pre-provided design brief<sup>60</sup> (Figure 37) contextualised within the ideas generation stage of professional practitioner brand identity designer's process. Similar to an applied design practice team/ collaborative scenario, this approach enabled individual ideas to emerge as well as combined when presented back for discussion to the main group.

<p><b>Workshop date and time</b> Thurs. 30.07.2020 at 15.30</p> <p><b>Where</b> Online via Zoom Online via Miro All links to the workshop will be provided via email one day before the workshop</p> <p><b>Researchers email</b> sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk</p>	<p><b>Online Design Workshop Project A — Pre-Brief</b></p> <p><b>Audience group research</b> As a preparatory workshop task, please could you bring research (this could be for example primary or secondary audience data) related to the audience group — women who live in the UK and are lone parents under 35 years of age.</p> <p><b>Subject area/topic research</b> Please could you also bring to the workshop some research related to gut health with a focus on empowering the gut health of the audience (as above)</p> <p>'Gut health' refers to the overall health of your digestive tract. It is a term that's come to prominence over the last couple of decades as more research has been done into what constitutes a healthy gut. In general parlance, gut health is used to refer to the balance of microorganisms that live in your digestive tract. This is also known as your gut microbiome.</p> <p><b>Why is this preparatory task required?</b> <i>To note is that the workshop itself is not specifically concerned with investigating the audience group or subject area/topic of gut health itself, but instead this is used to provide a framework for exploring and giving feedback back on reflexivity.</i></p> <p>However, this research will support you in being able to undertake the main exercise in the workshop.</p> <p>It will provide some subject knowledge of the topic and audience research information in advance to be able to refer it in the workshop session.</p> <p>The amount of time you give to this research is entirely your choice, (you may choose not to do this at all) but it would be helpful if it was comparable to/approx the same amount of time you give or are would be able to give yourself (not what you are potentially pre-provided with) to undertake this process at the start of a project in industry practice.</p> <p><b>Consent form</b> Prior to attending the workshop, please can you also read and if you agree sign and return via email (to: sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk) the enclosed consent form. If you do not wish to be involved in the research please can you also email me in advance of the workshop to let me know that you wont be attending</p> <p><b>Info regarding workshop links</b> One day prior to the workshop all the links for the event will be emailed to you (please note none of the links will be available or live until the date of the workshop and the specific time of the opening of the workshop)</p> <p>These links will include one Zoom link (which is for the opening/start of the workshop) and several Miro links (one for each of the iterative stages of the workshop)</p>
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Page 1 of 1

**Figure 37** Designed project brief preparatory task sent to all participants prior to the online design workshop.

<sup>60</sup> One group of three participants were given the audience group - women who live in the UK and are lone parents under 35 years of age and the other group of three participants was given the audience group - males over 55 years of age who are in full time employment and live in the UK.

The small-scale workshop size was an attempt to avoid possible group effects of what Lockton (2013) terms production blocking<sup>61</sup>, social loafing<sup>62</sup> and evaluation apprehension<sup>63</sup>, which as a consequence, may have an impact on the diversity or quantity of ideas generated. Phase Three draws upon Ørngreen and Levinson's (2017:79) view that workshops are advantageous when combined with other empirical approaches, such as mixed methods. To note is that it was not feasible in this research to undertake observations or ethnography of designers in action working on a current project in practice due to client and project confidentiality. In advance of employing and undertaking the workshop as a method, I planned and prepared content. This included question development, as advised by Hamilton<sup>64</sup> (2016) and designing workshop materials, including observational protocols<sup>65</sup> (Creswell, and Clark 2011) (Figure 38) and Miro whiteboard content (Figures 39 and 40).

<sup>61</sup> 'The more participants, the less chance each person has to contribute' (Lockton, 2013:100).

<sup>62</sup> 'The more participants, the less accountability each person may feel' (Lockton, 2013:100).

<sup>63</sup> 'The more participants, the greater the worry that ideas will be poorly received, hence they are suppressed' (Lockton, 2013:100).

<sup>64</sup> Hamilton suggests that the design of a workshop is as important to the delivery to ensure its success (2016:5).

<sup>65</sup> An observational protocol form was used to descriptively record notes and quotes, capture descriptive information, document and identify each participant contributor and speaker.

PhD – With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: Reflexive Communication Design for mainstream Brand Identity Designers

**Phase 3: Design Workshop 1 – Observational Protocol/ Dimensions for collecting descriptive observational data – Responses**

Describes the setting, the people and the events that took place and used to: 'identify and follow processes in witnessed events'; 'understand how members themselves characterise and describe particular activities, events and groups'; 'convey members' explanations for when, why or how particular things happen and, thereby, to elicit members' theories of the causes of particular happenings'; 'identify the practical concerns, conditions and constraints that people confront and deal with in their everyday lives and action.' (Silverman, 2013:243)

Participant no. \_\_\_\_\_

**Usability of the principles**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**Indicating and understanding its effect and transformation**

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 38 Designed online design workshop protocol forms.



PhD — With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: Reflexive Communication Design for mainstream Brand Identity Designers

**Design Workshop 1 will specifically investigate**

**Stage 2. Discussing the principles**

Distilling the data uncovered from stage 1 (1A. Brief + ideas generation — Exploring principles and 1B. Documenting feedback on the principles) by asking design participants to discuss, present back and share their responses (both visually and verbally) from the questions asked in stage 1B that had been documented on their whiteboard page in Miro.

**Usability**

1. How did you use the reflexive principles?
2. Were they easy or not to use/apply? Or did any issues arise when using /applying them?
3. How would/might you use these principles as an addition to your existing design process during the ideas generation stages?
4. Can you provide some potential recommendations for revision of use of the reflexive principles?

**Impact/Effect**

5. Can you describe in what ways you thought about your own position regarding consumer audience experiences when using the reflexive principles?
6. Did any of the principles effect how you thought about your own position in relation to the consumer audience experiences? If so which which were these and to in what ways did these have an effect upon your thinking and in what way?
7. Were there any reflexive principles that were more significant or not than others? If so which ones and why?
8. Did the reflexive principles assist you to think critically about your position in relation to consumer audience experiences?
9. Would you be confident using the reflexive principles in your design process in practice to aid your thinking about your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences?
10. I could easily introduce and apply the reflexive principles that I have learned from this workshop to the ideas generation stage of my design process in practice
11. Considering two of the reflexive principles two can you suggest one opportunity that you believe that each of these might have for future practice?
12. Considering two of the reflexive principles two can you suggest one concern that you believe that each of these might have for future practice?

**Background and Overview — About the participant**

13. Job title, years experience, studio location, gender identity and nationality

**Closure — Thanks for participating and goodbye. I ensured that the workshop is finished before I switched off my audio recording device.**

Figure 38 Designed online design workshop protocol forms.

Q: - will participants need a miro account?  
- can miro be used for everything if not fully subscribed / paid up  
- things that atm = 5 hrs 10 mins

1) What are goals?  
- to understand + report ways in which principles are used.  
- to understand + report ways in which they might (principles) effect designers thinking about their reflexivity (+ position) in relation to audience experiences.

- to uncover six most significant principles + why.

0 workshop introduction: 20 mins → welcome, objective + outline of workshop behaviours. Participants introduce themselves using sticky notes.

1. Stage 1: 40 mins + 40 mins + 90 mins discussion to use principles.  
40 mins to explore / document ideas.  
40 mins discussion about effect of principles on your design process.  
90 mins discussion to use principles.  
40 mins discussion to use principles.  
40 mins discussion to use principles.

2. Stage 2: 30 mins. take worksheets from C + D + review + discuss.

3. Workshop ending: 10 mins. Thank everyone + where to find results.

Did principles effect designers thinking about their position in ideas generation stages?

pair brief + present 6 x designers  
new brief 6 x designers

3 hrs 10 mins  
1 hr 30 mins  
14 hrs 40 mins  
30 mins  
5 hrs 10 mins

Figure 39 Online design workshop planning design visualisations.

## 3.5.5.3.

## Synchronous online design workshop — data collection

The design workshop was organised into Stages 1A and 1B and Stage 2. Stage 1A was used to facilitate participants when undertaking the workshop exercises to get to know one another and so that they could chat online about anything, which Hamilton advises (2016) facilitates an inclusive approach. Stage 1B, explored 18 reflexive principles (Figure 59) within the designer's ideas generation stage in the context of a researcher pre-provided project brief and encouraged participants to chat online. Stage 1B was used to document the use and impact of the reflexive principles within the designer's idea generation stage in the context of this project brief. In Stage 2, participants used Zoom to collaboratively provide feedback to four other participants and me after using the reflexive design principles in Miro. A detailed structure and design of stages 1A and 1B and two are shown in Appendix 9.

Data were collected from the five participants by way of formal observation (Robson, 2011), conversations, events and visual boards in Miro that were populated during the online workshop (Figure 40). This acquiring of data followed Spradley's (1980, cited in Robson, 2011:325) nine dimensions for collecting descriptive observational data and included some adaptations due to the nature of the workshop being delivered online. Recordings of the session using Zoom's built-in verbal and written chat recording facility and Miro's visual documentation mechanism, which includes the ability to save and download visually created board content, were used to collate data. Throughout the study, my role as designer practitioner researcher was made clear to the group members, supporting the reflexive intentions of this study.



**Figure 40** Pre-prepared design workshop exercise sheets designed in Miro for participants to complete.



All participants facilitated for tomorrow - Stage 2 - Discussion and Identifying the way in these positions might have impacted upon designers thinking in this context and identifying in what ways and future directions

Participant 1 - Stage 2 - Discussion and Feedback Form stage 1	Participant 2 - Stage 2 - Discussion and Feedback Form stage 1	Participant 3 - Stage 2 - Discussion and Feedback Form stage 1
<p>Participant no. 1</p> <p>Participant no. 2</p> <p>Participant no. 3</p>	<p>Participant no. 4</p> <p>Participant no. 5</p> <p>Participant no. 6</p>	<p>Participant no. 7</p> <p>Participant no. 8</p> <p>Participant no. 9</p>
<p>Reflections</p> <p>Thoughts</p> <p>Comments</p>	<p>Reflections</p> <p>Thoughts</p> <p>Comments</p>	<p>Reflections</p> <p>Thoughts</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>Participant no. 10</p> <p>Participant no. 11</p> <p>Participant no. 12</p>	<p>Participant no. 13</p> <p>Participant no. 14</p> <p>Participant no. 15</p>	<p>Participant no. 16</p> <p>Participant no. 17</p> <p>Participant no. 18</p>
<p>Reflections</p> <p>Thoughts</p> <p>Comments</p>	<p>Reflections</p> <p>Thoughts</p> <p>Comments</p>	<p>Reflections</p> <p>Thoughts</p> <p>Comments</p>
<p>General Comments/Discussion</p>	<p>General Comments/Discussion</p>	<p>General Comments/Discussion</p>

**Figure 40** Pre-prepared design workshop exercise sheets designed in Miro for participants to complete.

Data collection in this Phase extended beyond the actual online design workshop at the time of its undertaking. Seven weeks after the workshop, participants were asked several further questions, as shown in Figure 41 below. They were also sent the final thematic map (Figure 65), which visually displayed my analysed, defined themes from the Online Workshop. These were emailed to participants to gain additional feedback on thematic findings and their reflections on their reflexive design practice and process. This additional participant feedback supported me in further scrutinising the analysis, results and reflections upon participant findings, facilitating deeper reflection and reflexive practice.

#### Questions sent to participants after the synchronous online design workshop

1. Please could you take a look at the attached findings and confirm your thoughts on them. Feel free to add any additional comments or provide additional feedback etc.
2. Please could you provide some feedback about your own reflections regarding the consideration of your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences (in your design process) from the workshop?

**Figure 41** Questions asked in the email sent to participants after the synchronous online design workshop.

Phase Three evaluations and reflections informed the revision and development of the reflexive design principles identified from the prior Phase Two. This evaluative and reflective process assisted in understanding which principles might be the most significant, valuable or limiting and which might be further developed for the next Phase. Developed principles were implemented in a v.1 prototype design guide, driven by Phase three participant feedback. This guide prototype was explored and tested by professional brand identity designers in Phase Four.

3.5.6.  
**Phase Four —  
Impact: communicating the reflexive design practice principles and further verifying their use and efficacy in applied practice**

Phase Four was undertaken in November 2020 and included communicating the reflexive design practice principles using their design and presentation in a prototype reflexive design practice guide. This Phase involved the communication, further testing and verifying the efficacy of eight overarching first-tier and eighteen-second-tier reflexive design practice principles. The purpose was to confirm understanding of the contribution of the reflexive principles in offering an approach that can initiate designers' reflexive practice and reflexive process. This includes whether they can prompt and improve how designers critically reflect on their thinking about and use of their positionality in practice, including their self-awareness, assumptions and biases, judgements and relational decision-making. This was specifically within the ideas generation stage of their design process in relation to their consumer audience experience designing. Phase Four provided research evaluations and conclusions that revealed the potential and impact of the reflexive principles and guide. Professional brand identity designers are offered a new preliminary reflexive design method resource to activate a new reflexive design process that involves the activity of deliberation when utilised by them in their design process in their applied practice. Phase Four was used to expand understanding and deepen knowledge of the significance of the reflexive design principles and guide, establish their applicability, and uncover if any visual and/or design refinements of the guide were needed.

3.5.6.1.  
**Reflexive design practice principles and guide as a design method in practice**

This research draws upon the term 'method' in the Cambridge Dictionary as a particular way of doing something alongside Crotty's (1998:6) definition of a method. In the context of practice, the principles are a contribution as a method because they are technique or procedure to uncover information to assist designers thinking about and doing of reflexive practice.

### 3.5.6.2. Participants'

#### Sampling Approach, Sample size and selection

Six design participants involved in Phase Three – the synchronous online design workshop – were sent a first email (Appendix 10) on the 22nd November 2020 This was to confirm if they were happy to explore and use the principles and guide in Phase Four in their application practice and provide feedback. Three out of the six<sup>66</sup> participants contacted agreed to participate in Phase Four and were sent a second email (Appendix 11). This second email included a v.1 prototype reflexive design guide as a high-res pdf to be printed.

<sup>66</sup> One participant was unable to participate due to an excessive workload and two participants couldn't due to having Covid-19.

### 3.5.6.3. Communicating the reflexive design practice principles and implementing them into a design guide prototype – content, format and design

#### Content

Eight overarching primary first-tier and eighteen linked second-tier reflexive design practice principles were explored by participants in Phase Four.

#### Format and design

After feedback from Phase Three, a guide was suggested by participants as a format that provided a way to effectively collate the principles in a coherent and easily accessible way for designers to utilise as a method within their applied practice. In defining what a guide in this research is, it is precisely that; a guide or guidebook. The reflexive principles and the subsequent guide are developed not as a definitive rulebook. Instead, they are proposed as a reference and accessible resource to support designers. Using and applying my visual practice, a reflexive design guide v.1 prototype was designed. My practice carefully considered my researcher reflections and the necessary inclusion of prior participant findings from Phase Three, supporting the reflexive design practice commitment of this study. This included considerations associated with the quantity of the principles and their content, layout, composition and navigational use, which involves design and design decision-making in relation to other designers as users. The guide design and format considered designer usability and production and was designed in A3 format and could be folded to A5 (Figure 42). It was 2pp and produced in black and white for easy print production/reproduction and cost efficiency.



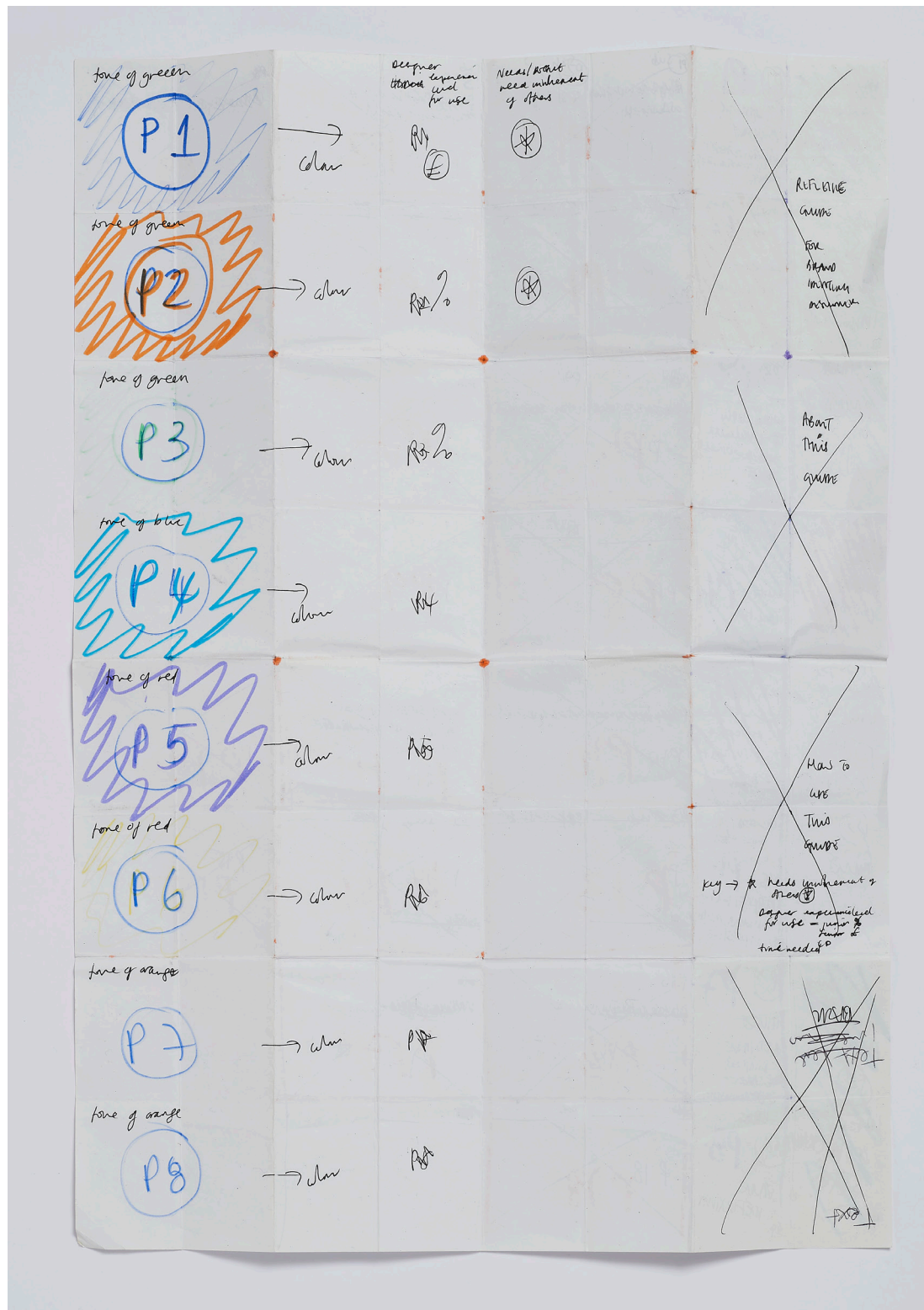


Figure 42 Reflexive guide prototype v.1 format visualisations.



Figure 42 Reflexive guide prototype v.1 format visualisations.

<b>Principle 1</b>				<h3>Reflexive Design Guide</h3> <p>8 overarching main reflexive principles with 18 linked sub principles for Brand Identity Designers</p> <p><b>About this reflexive design guide</b></p> <p>The principles* in this guide have been developed in conjunction with UK based mainstream brand identity designers via a PhD inquiry. They offer a method for use in the ideas generation stage of the design process in practice. They can assist designers 'reflexivity' specifically towards audiences experiences, facilitate an improved equitable approach to aid a responsive practice on UK based projects and transform praxis.</p> <p>This guide, and the principles contained within it are intended as a guidebook only. They are presented with the disclosure that there can always be biases, and the view that individuals can only be equitable and democratic by basing judgements on critical reflection and its application.</p> <p>They are therefore not suggested for use to determine a conclusive absolutism of truth, and as such do not claim to undeniably negate all inequity or resolve all equity issues. Instead, through an engagement with them in action, they offer an opportunity for designers to critically reflect and re-evaluate their reflexivity in practice in relation to differing contexts. Consequently providing an approach that can extend and improve equitable awareness, judgments and decision making towards audience experiences, and thus a method that can assist in mitigating inequity.</p> <p><b>How to use this guide</b></p> <p>The 8 overarching main reflexive principles (P1-P8) are aligned to 18 sub reflexive principles (P1a-P8b). Designers can either refer to; main overarching principles; main overarching principles and sub principles together or individual sub principles, depending on time available, contexts, the project brief and individual requirements.</p> <p>The key below provides information of suggested ways to employ the principles specifically within the ideas generation stage of the design process.</p> <p><b>Key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Denotes at which stage in the ideas generation stage it is most practical to employ the principles</li> <li>Requires involvement of others for effective use</li> <li>Requires substantial time allocation for effective use</li> <li>Most effective when employed at: 'X' designer role ('X' = A/Jr./Jr./Senior/Middleweight/Senior/D/ Director)</li> <li>Reflexivity is when an individual has the mental ability to consider their position in relation to other individuals</li> <li>The principles in this guide were defined through a Deweyan intelligent inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>Principle 2</b>				
<b>Principle 3</b>				
<b>Principle 4</b>				
<b>Principle 5</b>				
<b>Principle 6</b>				
<b>Principle 7</b>				
<b>Principle 8</b>				

Figure 43 Prototype v.1 of the reflexive design guide, front page.

<b>P1</b>	<b>P1a</b>	<b>P1b</b>	<b>P1c</b>
<b>P2</b>	<b>P2a</b>	<b>P2b</b>	<b>P2c</b>
<b>P3</b>	<b>P3a</b>	<b>P3b</b>	<b>P3c</b>
<b>P4</b>	<b>P4a</b>	<b>P4b</b>	<b>P4c</b>
<b>P5</b>	<b>P5a</b>	<b>P5b</b>	<b>P5c</b>
<b>P6</b>	<b>P6a</b>	<b>P6b</b>	<b>P6c</b>
<b>P7</b>	<b>P7a</b>	<b>P7b</b>	<b>P7c</b>
<b>P8</b>	<b>P8a</b>	<b>P8b</b>	<b>P8c</b>

Figure 44 Prototype v.1 of the reflexive design guide, back page.



This guide document file (Figures 43 and 44) could be printed as two A3 individual pages or as a single duplex A3 document. The physical format was intended as an A5 map fold document, and instructions were provided to designers for folding. This format was chosen for its adaptability to be carried, for example; folded and inserted into a wallet to be easily accessed by the designer for reference. Even at a reduced map fold scale, the eight first-tier primary principles and 18-second-tier linked sub-principles could individually be utilised efficiently due to the map fold without having to open out the entire A3 sheet (Figure 45). Thus, enabling designers' the options of easy accessibility and reference of individual or all principles in a practice setting/environment. A corresponding digital pdf of this guide was produced so that designers could also utilise a digital desktop version if required<sup>67</sup>. The specific content of the principles that were developed and imparted into the guide after the online workshop and which were sent to designers is shown in Figure 71. The final guide is shown in Figure 79 and in the accompanying visual practice process book on pages 132-139.

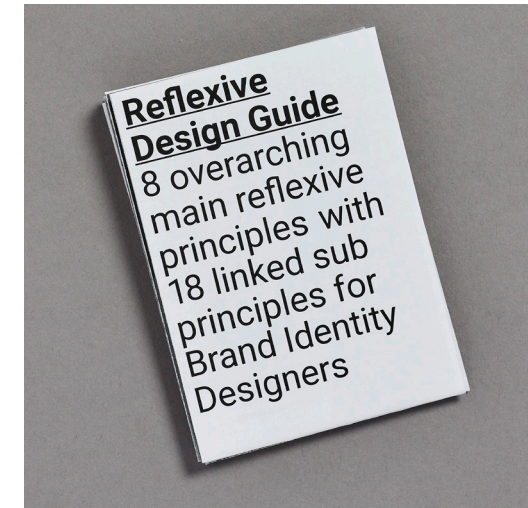


Figure 45 Printed prototype v.1 of the reflexive design guide.

<sup>67</sup> In Phase Three, the online design workshop, participants discussed that a printed version was of initial interest and importance to them more so than a digital version.

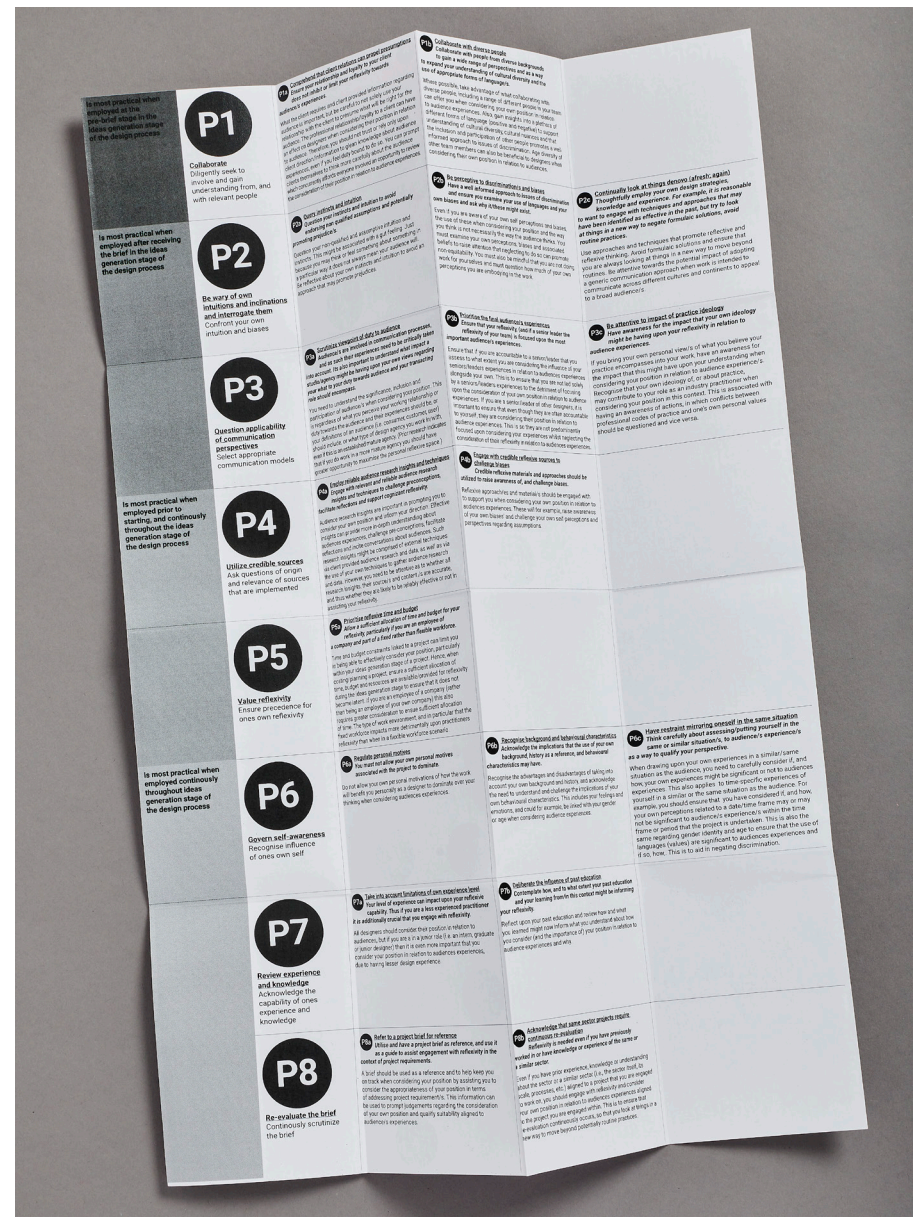


Figure 45 Printed prototype v.1 of the reflexive design guide.

### 3.5.6.4. Reflexive design practice guide in applied practice – data collection

This reflexive design guide prototype for use in physical and digital formats was emailed to designer participants, along with printing and folding guide instructions. Due to Covid-19, using email as a form of distribution was essential. Participants were asked to familiarise themselves with and employ the principles and guide within the ideas generation stage on one of their new UK-based projects within applied practice and reflect upon its use and design. This request was so they could offer further feedback on the reflexive design principles and guide. The email asked participants the questions shown in Figure 46.

Phase 4– questions asked to participants when they employed the reflexive design practice guide in their applied practice	
1. Was the information and content included in the reflexive guide easy to understand or not? Please explain, and also, please feel free to suggest any improvements.	
2. Please could you provide your thoughts on the visual design of the reflexive guide?	
3. Please could you provide some feedback about your own reflections regarding the consideration of your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences (in your design process) from using the reflexive guide and principles in your project?	
4. Please could you provide some feedback about your own reflections regarding whether there were any principles that had greater impact than other principles upon the ways in which you considered your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences? Please can you explain and provide details of the impact.	
5. Would you employ this reflexive guide again in your practice? If so, why, and if not, why not?	
6. Would you recommend this reflexive guide to other brand identity designers for use in their practice? If so, why, and if not, why not?	
7. Feel free to add any additional comments or provide additional feedback etc. about your own reflections regarding the consideration of your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences (in your design process) from using the reflexive guide and principles in your project.	
Can you please also provide the information (as below) of the project within which the guide was used:	
– Project sector:	
– Total expected or predicted duration of project:	
– Duration spent on ideas generation stage of design process:	
– Duration spent on using this guide within the ideas generation stage of design process.	

Figure 46 Questions sent to participants along with the reflexive design guide for exploration in their applied practice.

Phase Four designer participant feedback on the first v.1 prototype as discussed in section 4.4.2. on pages 237-241 led to a further refined and final reflexive guide and digital app as a preliminary design method. These are shown in Figures 78-80 and are presented in the visual practice process book on pages 130-148.



## 3.6.

**Research Ethics**

All of the methods in this research followed the Royal College of Art ethics guidelines. This included ensuring health and safety requirements confidentiality, data gathering, anonymisation and protection were adhered to. This constituted receiving participant consent, removal of participants' identification unless they explicitly stated that they were happy to be identified/named, and an explanation of how data would be stored and how participants could access or have their data removed if they wished. All of this was explained and recorded via formal documentation, for participants to sign if they agreed. See Appendix 12 for selected examples submitted, including consent forms sent to potential participants at each research phase along with covering letters.

All research, including participant data, audio recordings, and visual files, was stored and accessed via my secure password-protected personal computer and accessed via a desktop folder with participants' details only identifiable to me. After data extraction, all data was transferred and backed up onto two password-protected backup storage devices, which will be retained until 2033, ten years after the submission of this research. Any original digital platform sources, including Zoom or Miro, were deleted after data extraction.

The equitable representation of participants was considered throughout the research so as not to exclude any individuals from disadvantaged/marginalised groups. Furthermore, the study sought to recruit an equal balance of designers from different gender identities, who were born in different locations, including outside of the UK, but who were based in the UK and of differing experience levels. The research methods involving each participant adopted the same consent forms, cover sheets and questions, in the same order structure and quantity, within the same suggested time durations. For each participant, the same coding framework was employed by me. This framework

enabled all participants regardless of their role of experience, gender identity, ethnicity or location to respond to the same information to support research reliability<sup>68</sup> and validity<sup>69</sup>. Careful consideration was given to reliability and validity in relation to providing the same conditions where possible by the research for participants.

The questionnaire was emailed to participants to enable inclusion and easy completion for practitioners all over the UK. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken at various locations in consultation with the participants. This consultation discussed where participants felt most comfortable having the interview and where I felt it was most appropriate and safe to undertake the interview recording and at a mutually agreed date and time. The online workshop was undertaken online to support involvement for people who may not have otherwise been able to travel or did not wish to meet indoors, mainly because of Covid-19. Prior acceptance from participants confirmed their agreement to visual and verbal recording and their work/process being documented.

Another ethical consideration was that several designer participants might have been known to me, although not directly connected to me via professional practice affiliations before and ongoing during this research study. Careful consideration was given to every research question to avoid potential bias in responses and in leading participants or deceiving them. For explicitness, I state that changes to participants' opinions or judgements may or may not have occurred after or even during the study. Additional ethical and democratic considerations in this research, including between me as designer-researcher-practitioner and design participants and my bias, reflection and reflexivity, are discussed throughout this research and Appendix 2. The next chapter presents methods findings from the four research phases, providing a further context for ethical implications discussed in this section.

<sup>68</sup> Reliability is concerned with the stability or consistency with which we measure data, (Robson, 2011). Robson articulates that high reliability can be achieved by through the standardisation of the same questions and sent to all participants (2011).

<sup>69</sup> Validity is concerned with the effectiveness of the content to the person responding to it (Robson, 2011). Internal validity is valid information is gathered about participants thoughts and feelings, whereas external validity is sampling and the participants understanding of the nature of the study and questions and correct evaluation.

# Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions of Method Phases

# Chapter 4

## 4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, findings, discussions and summaries of the four research method phases. These phases link with three method questions, which iteratively led to the overarching research question being answered. This chapter includes participant feedback and reflections as well as researcher reflections linked to the application and impact of reflexive design practice principles embedded within a reflexive design practice guide as a prototype in brand identity designers' applied professional practice. This chapter concludes with Phase Four which informed the development of refined final reflexive design principles and guide and a preliminary new reflexive design method.

4.1. **Phase One – Inquire: questionnaire**

The analysis of Phase One, a questionnaire, which asked the question shown in Figure 47, provided insights into how designers work, what knowledge, skills and approaches they draw upon and what influences them including regarding audiences in their processes and professional practice.

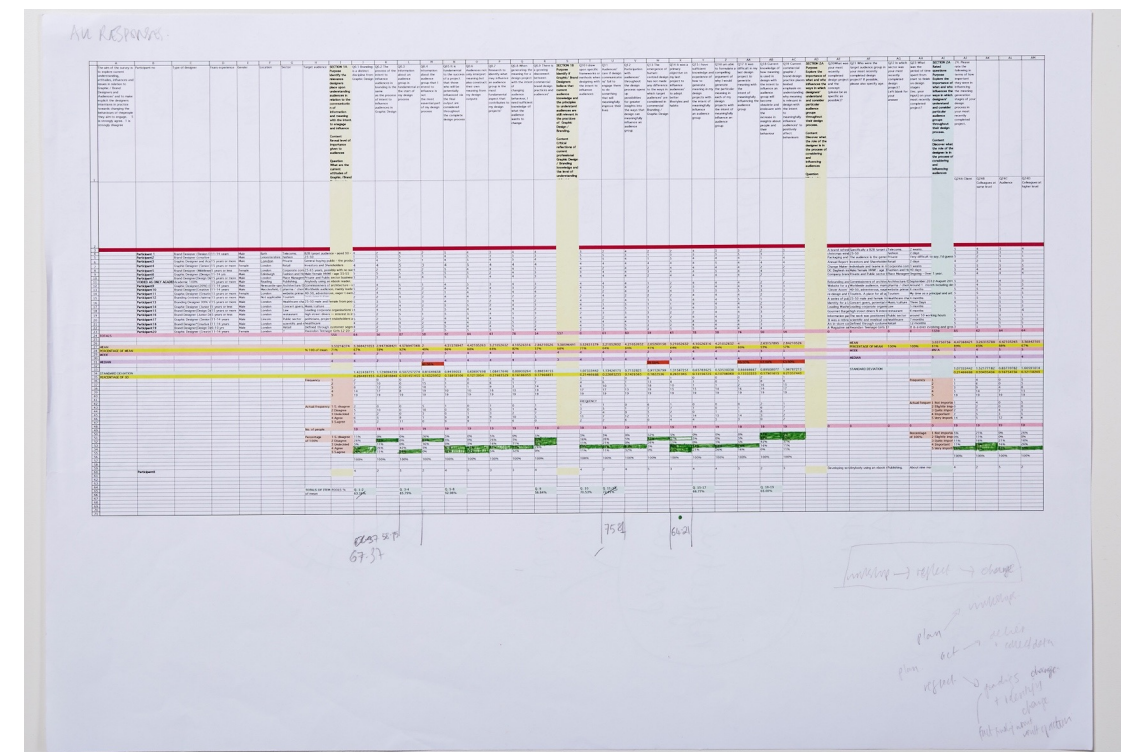
**Questionnaire question** *What are professional brand identity designers (based in the UK) attitudes, influences and views in relation to audiences?*

**Figure 47** Phase One – questionnaire question.

This questionnaire method used frequency distribution analysis in which the general purpose was to provide descriptions and explicit understandings of a range of designer's attitudes and opinions towards audiences rather than the relationships between variables or make comparisons or predictions. This scoping phase sought to aid in further corroborating the feasibility of the study and uncover potential themes to be further investigated in the next phase of this research. Questionnaire participation enabled me to identify participants who may have wanted to participate in future phases of this research. This method revealed that greater participant diversity, specifically from the perspective of gender identity, was needed in subsequent stages of the study. Careful thought was given to the reflexive aspirations of this study, specifically in the inclusion and numbers of potential individuals recruited for future phases of this research taking into account gender identity.

4.1.1. **Data analysis**

The data analysis scale used in this study focused predominantly ordinal data measurement scales. This scale allowed for categorising and labelling variables, ranking categories in order, but not differences, and supporting identifying the mode number in the data set. The interval scale was used on one classification question related to the years that participants had worked in their primary occupation. This was to enable categories, ranking of categories, and equal year intervals. In addition, the first three of Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie's (2003) steps – data reduction, data display, and data transformation, concerning data analysis for quantitative data were followed. The analysis employed standard deviation against the mean to understand the spread of data and further aid in corroborating the feasibility of the study<sup>70</sup>. Collected data was transferred into Excel (Figure 48), and table matrices (Figure 49) were produced for all closed questions. In addition, item pool data was transferred into table matrices. This data transfer enabled the collated analysis to be summarised coherently and practically. Additional excel and table matrices are shown in the visual practice process book on pages 43-49.



**Figure 48** Questionnaire statistical analysis visualisations.

<sup>70</sup> Means and modes were both analysed so that averages as well as the most frequent occurring data could be displayed. This supported my understanding as a researcher of undertaking questionnaire analysis and allowed me to cross reference data results and supporting research reliability.

**Findings**

Section 1 – 1A (Questions 01 – 09). Likert scale, closed questions  
 Key: 1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Uncertain, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree  
 SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, U: Uncertain, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree

All Brand Identity Designer responses n=11

Section 1 1A – The attitudes of the designer towards audiences					
Attitude rating (Likert scale) Range: 5 Strongly agree to 1 Strongly disagree	Mode scores	Frequency Distribution % and scale		Mean scores	Standard Deviation
Branding is a distinct discipline from Graphic Design	4	9.09	SD	3.73	1.27
		9.09	D		
		9.09	U		
		45.45	A		
		27.27	SA		

Section 1 1A – The attitudes of the designer towards audiences					
Attitude rating (Likert scale) Range: 5 Strongly agree to 1 Strongly disagree	Mode scores	Frequency Distribution % and scale		Mean scores	Standard Deviation
The process of the intent to influence audiences' in Branding is the same as the process of intent to influence audiences in Graphic Design	2	0	SD	2.64	1.03
		63.64	D		
		18.18	U		
		9.09	A		
		9.09	SA		

Section 1 1A – The attitudes of the designer towards audiences					
Attitude rating (Likert scale) Range: 5 Strongly agree to 1 Strongly disagree	Mode scores	Frequency Distribution % and scale		Mean scores	Standard Deviation
Information about an audience group is fundamental at the start of my design process	4	0	SD	4.36	0.50
		0	D		
		0	U		
		63.64	A		
		36.36	SA		

Figure 49 Questionnaire excel data was transferred and designed into table display matrices.

#### 4.1.2. Data display, transformation and design practice via visualisations

Following the descriptive analysis, data was used to generate design visualisations using my design practice. This designing was to enable further interrogation and disclosure of the data and make transparent through a pictorial language, the relationships, further patterns and any potential contradictions in the data. Supporting the reflexive intent of this research, it provided an opportunity to communicate in a language relevant to designers and enable more accessible and deeper reflections.

I transformed each question and its numerical data from the matrices into design visualisations using Adobe Illustrator. Each of these visualisations was then visually composed utilising a grid system in Adobe InDesign. This document was then printed and collated into a 352pp visual hardback book with a removable legend (Figure 50). This book accompanies this thesis and, along with some of the Phase One findings, was presented in a Royal College of Art Work in Progress 'Intentions' public exhibition at Westworks in London between the 5–12th December 2017 (Figure 26).



Figure 50 Questionnaire findings as design visualisations presented in a book format.

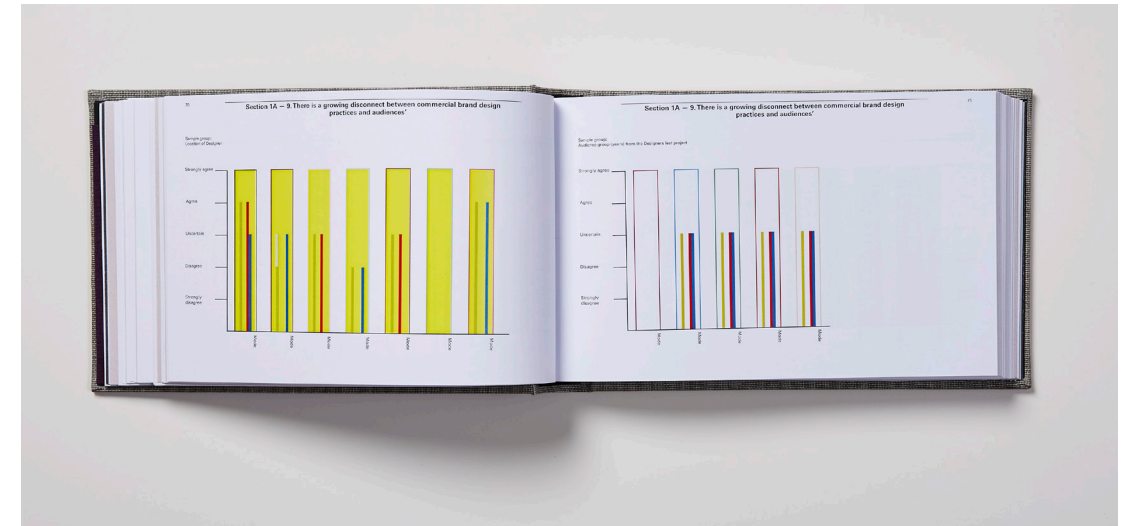
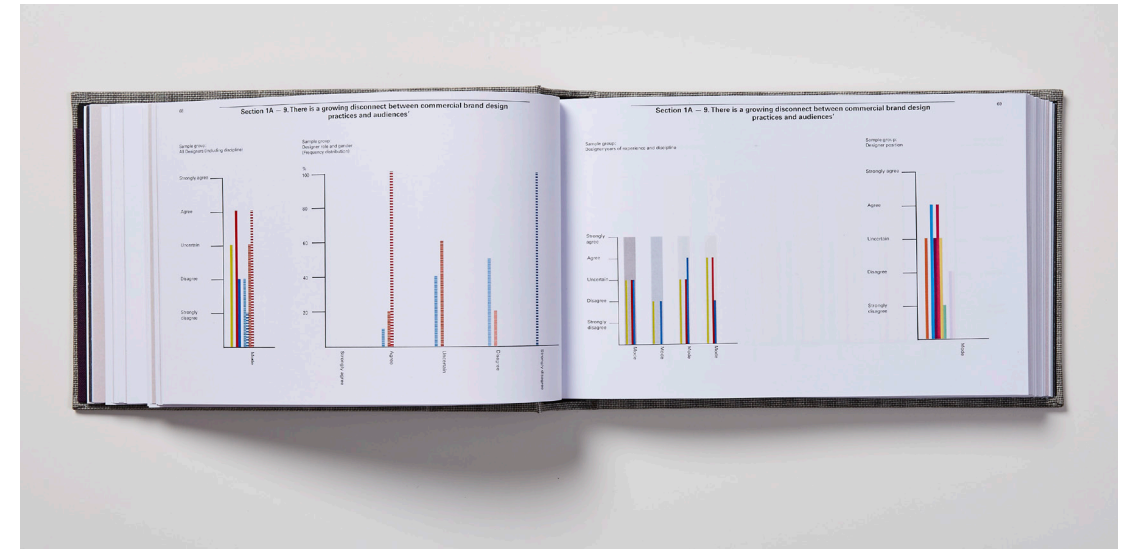


Figure 50 Questionnaire findings as design visualisations presented in a book format.



## 4.1.3

**Participants' responses**

This survey included 19 designer responses<sup>71</sup> of which 11 participants identified themselves specifically as brand identity designers. Whilst data analysis and the 352pp design visualisation book (Figure 50) included responses from all 19 designers, this data was later reviewed and organised into table matrices again. This later review ensured the inclusion of only the findings and a discussion, summary and reflections from the 11 participants who identified their role as a brand identity designer. This edited selection of participants' was because at this early Phase One scoping stage, and taking a cue from participants responses, participants feedback evidenced a distinction between graphic design and brand identity design. Additionally, alongside this scoping, a review of graphic design literature took place. This review revealed that brand identity design had its own, albeit limited body of literature which was distinct to graphic design. Researcher reflections at this point established that there was a need to first, undertake a focused review of reflexive Brand Identity Design and ensure the study going forwards was centered upon this area. And second, undertake a review of Communication Design as it is the overarching branch connected to Brand Identity Design. Key findings from the questionnaire include the specific opinions of 11 participants who identified as brand identity designers and were taken forward to inform future stages of the research

<sup>71</sup> 9 participants identified themselves as Graphic Designers, of which 2 were also design educators and practitioners. One participant's responses were omitted due to this participant being employed in education only and not being involved in learning and teaching Brand Identity Design as a discipline.

## 4.1.4.

**Phase One — Inquire: questionnaire findings**

Linked to the Phase One questionnaire main question (Figure 47), participants were asked nineteen individual sub-questions in the first section of the questionnaire. This was to uncover opinions towards disciplines, perspectives and processes used in influencing audiences and to reveal the importance given to audiences in design. The Likert scale key in section 1 — 1A, Questions 01 — 09 — closed questions, uses a scale and mode key from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The number (n) of brand identity design participants associated with all questions in this first section is 11. Key findings and themes from section one of this questionnaire are discussed below.

**Audience information and research are fundamental to brand identity designers**

Findings from the mode and mean scores of Q3-8, in which the standard deviation was less than one on all of these questions, revealed that brand identity designers are aware that the consideration of audience is fundamental in their design process. Information about audiences is essential to designers and is key to them at the start of their design process, and audience research is the most fundamental aspect that contributes to their project. Item pool data demonstrated that over 80% of brand identity design participants stated that it was important to consider and research what may influence an audience.

**Brand identity designers see no growing disconnect between brand identity design practices and audiences**

In Q9, brand identity designer participants did not believe there is a growing disconnect between commercial brand identity design practices and audiences. The mean was 2.45, and standard deviation 0.82.

**Designers are influenced in their practice by frameworks and methods**

Q10 identified findings that designer participants draw upon frameworks or methods when designing in relation to audiences. The mean was 3.64, and the standard deviation 0.92. This result confirmed that these designers employ practice aids to assist them with their thinking or position in relation to audiences. This result will be probed further in the next phase to establish if any of these are reflexive practice principles and/or methods and incite reflexive practice and in what ways and to what level.

**Participatory audience approaches have changed brand identity practices**

Findings demonstrated that design participants understand that audiences care about meaningful communications. Q11-13 results evidence that design participants are aware of the significance of participatory audience approaches, stating that this has changed audience practices in branding.

The number of years experience a designer has, changes a designer's knowledge regarding influencing an audience. Results from Q15 revealed that as the design participants' years of experience in practice increased, so did their opinion that they had more knowledge, skills and expertise. Results from Q16 indicated that designers are confident about and can provide a compelling argument regarding using their position. This was within the context of influencing an audience meaningfully. The following phase will explore results from Q15 in more depth. This is to understand, in what ways as a designers experience level increases, it effects how they think about using their position in relation to audiences.

Participants were asked fifteen individual questions in the second section of the questionnaire. This revealed the importance of external influences that informed and impacted the participant designers' understanding, processes, and broader approaches when designing with the intent to influence particular audience groups in a range of diverse sectors. The rating scale key in section 2 – 2A, Questions 24 – 26 – closed questions, uses a scale and key from not important at all to very important and a mode key of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The number (n) of Brand Identity Design participants associated with all questions in this second section is 11. Key findings and themes from section two of this questionnaire are discussed on the next two pages.

**Designer's personal input is very important to their work in relation to audiences**

Findings from Q24-26 uncovered that client-provided information, the project brief, their own observations, and personally engaging with the audience group are very important to designers' work in relation to audiences. Notably, the latter was more important to designers when the project was of a longer than shorter duration. In addition, participants mentioned the use of personas and scenarios, their own lifelong experiences, and qualitative research reports as very important resources that were used to develop their understanding of audience groups.

Results from Q24-27 assisted this study by confirming that brand identity designers' are externally influenced in their work. Key to the reflexive practice focus of this research and the identified gaps is the finding that the designers involved in the survey use their personal perspectives, which is very important to informing and contributing to their professional practice. This result will be probed in more depth in the following phase to explore how designers think about and use themselves and their position in their work and how they confront and question this in relation to audience/s in their practice.

Question 31 uncovered results of some very important issues that could affect how the designer participants work in relation to engaging audiences. These included the use of default approaches; a lack of design training gained in education and training or investment in professional development in practice; the lack of engagement afforded to the designer at the start of the process, and; the requirement to deliver a project on which its success is judged only on client desires in which they make all design decisions.



Paramount to this study was that designer participants agreed that first, critical design reflection is inadequate when designing in relation to audiences. And, second that the use of default approaches to meet a project deadline and the engagement and consideration of an audience is an issue. A finding linked to this was that some designers emailed responses stating they were too busy to participate in the questionnaire. Client confidentiality was also explained as a reason for their non-participation. Notably, the questionnaire did not explicitly ask for a client's name. These non-participation discoveries will be taken into account in subsequent stages of research investigations.

**Further research to support designers' audience practices would be beneficial**

Results from Q34 revealed that participants felt that further research would be beneficial if this could support them in their practices in relation to audiences.

4.1.5.  
**Summary of  
Phase One –  
Inquire:  
questionnaire  
findings**

The results in this phase challenged my assumptions. Findings confirmed that participants are aware of the importance of audiences within their working processes and practice. They are also conscious of participatory audience approaches. However, results indicated that these participants did not believe there was a growing disconnect between brand identity design practices and themselves. This phase revealed that the design participants' personal input is very important to their work in relation to audiences, yet inadequate critical reflection was highlighted as an issue.

These findings suggest a discrepancy. Whilst designers acknowledge the importance of audiences in their work and state they see no disconnect, they lack critical reflection when designing which potentially includes when thinking about and imparting themselves and their perspectives into their work in relation to consumer audience experiences. Yet, as the literature review in this study has revealed, critical reflection is needed when practitioners use their position and perspectives in practice to facilitate an effective reflexive practice. Consequently, this signals that designers in practice could be neglecting to critically reflect upon how they are using themselves within their work and therefore indicates they are likely to be employing an ineffectual reflexive practice.

These results suggest alignment with literature review discoveries in this research, as discussed on page 86-87, that there is a lack of theoretical knowledge in Brand Identity Design associated with reflexive design practice and reflexive design practice resources, specifically principles. Additionally, this suggests inadequacies in designers' approaches connected to the ongoing audience paradigm shift (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002) uncovered in the literature review. Phase One indicates that further research is needed to probe these initial insights more deeply to substantiate the validity of my suggestions and claims.

Results illustrate an opportunity for this research to explore in more depth the designer's reflexive practice to understand how their positionality is being used in relation to their consumer audience experiences. This exploration is to clarify if and how they are critically reflecting on their positionality in this context. And to establish whether reflexive design practice and reflexive principles are being employed and how and to what extent. Alongside literature review insights, the key findings from Phase One are explored in more depth and built upon in this study's next data collection phase – Phase Two semi-structured interviews. This is presented in the next section, 4.2.

#### 4.2.

### **Phase Two – Insight, issues, and inform: semi-structured interviews**

Phase Two seeks to uncover deeper insights into designers' thinking and experiences regarding their thinking about and use of their position in relation to their consumer audience experience designing. These insights will focus on their reflexive practice linked to their last project and within the ideas generation stage of the design process cycle for the reasons outlined in Chapter 1 (page 27). Phase Two analysis used a thematic coding approach<sup>72</sup> in which the general purpose was to report participants' experiences, meaning and reality (Robson, 2011). Its purpose was to summarise coded data from which themes were generated to facilitate interpretations and constructs. This led to theory that provided an understanding of professional brand identity designer participants' reflexive practice and how they considered this in relation to consumer audience experiences. It revealed potential challenges and issues faced in this context. Findings uncovered what was and was not known and enabled judgements against the evaluations and reflections of the reflexive practice framework (Figure 14) to be made. The discoveries made in this phase supported in the development of my mapping of Phase Two interview findings onto this existing reflexive practice framework to aid the creation of a developed reflexive *design* practice framework (Figure 58). This supported in the content and creation of v.1 principles (Figure 59) for brand identity designers which were explored in the next Phase 3.

<sup>72</sup> In thematic coding, word or phrases and inter-correlations are the key methods of determining the related or non-related significance and importance of terms and concepts. This is via codes which are then labelled and accordingly grouped as a theme (Robson, 2011).

## 4.2.1.

**Data analysis**

The thematic analysis in this phase draws upon Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework approach and insights from Maguire and Delahunt (2017) and applies these in the context of this design research. 'Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within the data that say something about an issue' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:6). In Phase Two, this was to address the semi-structured interview method questions and data were analysed with this as the focus. This thematic analysis used a top-down, deductive approach, and all data were manually coded.

Phase Two did not use the method questions as the themes themselves. Instead, it developed themes at a semantic level, in which the study sought to uncover what the participants said or what was written in the transcribed interview. The analysis of semantic themes went beyond merely summarising, organising and describing what was said in the interview and the data from the sub-interview questions or themes to ensure the data had been analysed and interpreted (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). This makes explicit that the 'researcher plays an active role in thematic analysis in the analysis itself via identifying the themes/patterns that are significant and presenting these' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:7). Building upon Braun and Clarke's framework, as outlined in Appendix 13, a detailed explanation of the coding steps in my research is shown in Figure 51.

<b>Step 1. Becoming familiar with the data</b>
Reviewing interview observational protocols (Creswell, 2011). Transcribing the recorded interviews.
<b>Step 2. Generate initial codes (Figure 52)</b>
Starting to organise the interview data. Transferring codes from each data item to assemble the main initial codes into a coherent body of data. Documenting data extracts. Reflecting upon codes after each interview (data item) was transcribed before transcribing subsequent interviews. Final main initial codes are transferred into a digital context and collated in one place.
<b>Step 3. Search for themes</b>
What is a theme? What does it do? This research adopted Braun and Clarke's approach regarding what counts as a theme, in that 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions. It represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset.' (2006:10). Sorting and identifying themes. Analysing themes to reveal preliminary themes.
<b>Step 4. Review themes</b>
Reflecting, modifying, merging and developing themes using manually coded data and the themes in Microsoft Excel . Further reflecting, modifying, merging and developing the themes using only Microsoft Excel.
<b>Step 5. Define themes</b>
The final themes and final thematic map. In step 5, the findings of this research phase were presented in the final thematic map (Figure 53).
<b>Step 6. Write up</b>
Findings were written up with the narrative from Phase Two discussed in subsection 4.2.3.

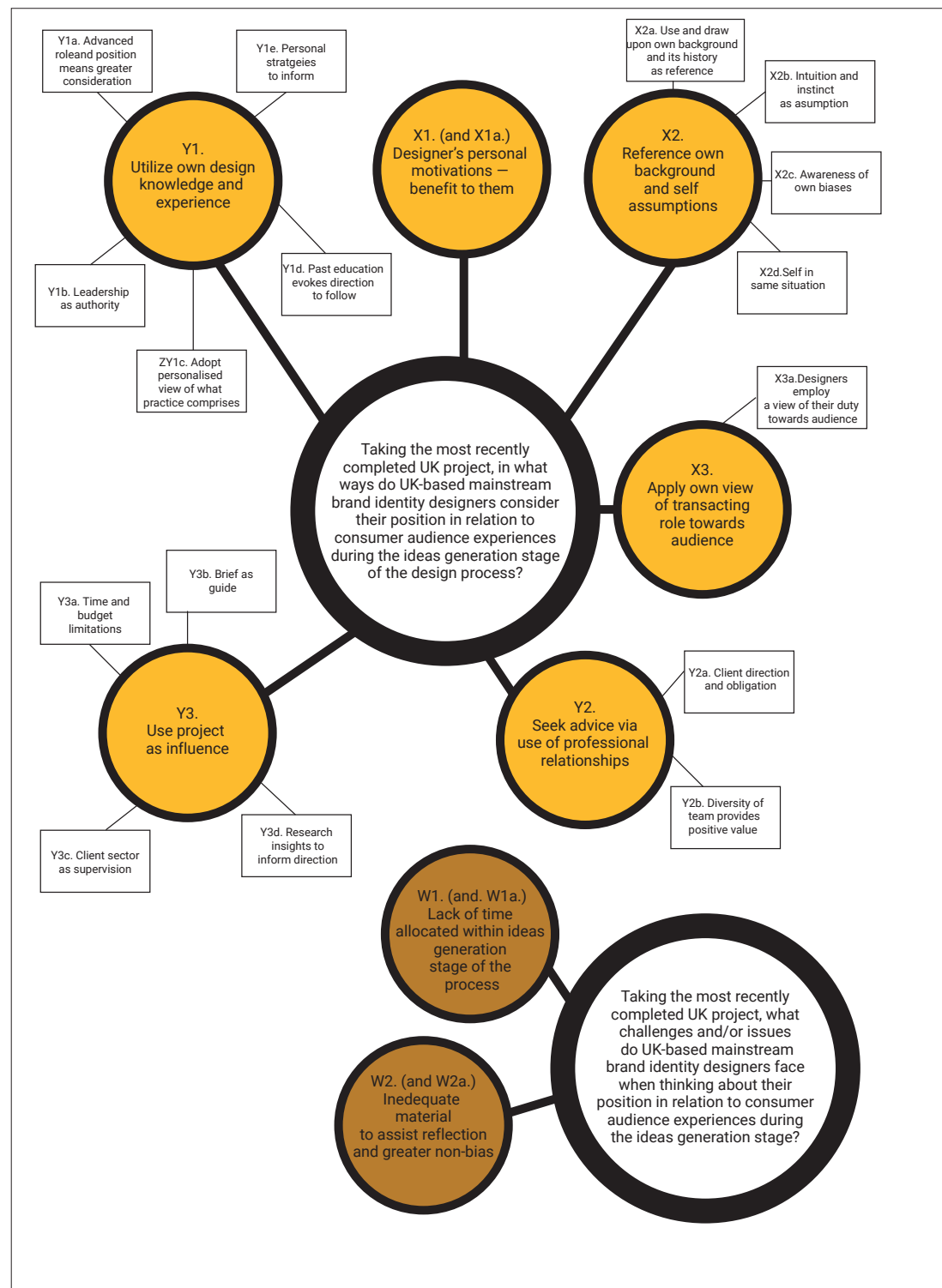
**Figure 51** Braun and Clarke's six step framework which shows my contribution to these steps to undertake Phase 2 thematic coding.



Figure 52 Semi-structured interviews thematic analysis visualisations, specifically Step 2 – Becoming familiar with the data, generation of initial codes.

Code no.	First stage codes	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
1	Consideration of position differs based on role and experience level					
2	As experience decrease you become more detached to things					
3	As my experience level has progressed I think much more about the end user/the audience than myself					
4	There is a correlation between owning the agency and being more concerned for/about the audience					
5	With less experience there was more of my own designer self validation and what I wanted to do rather than what was right for					
6	I draw upon my own experiences of the same/similar situations and use these to help me					
7	I use my intuition and instincts, I have a gut feel					
8	My low tech background means my approach is that all projects have to be human based					
9	I have my own motivations of what I want to do or get out of the project which impact upon how I consider my position					
10	My own background and past history is imparted into how I consider my position					
11	I refer to my families experiences when considering my own position					
12	The significance of location and where I grew up is important to how I consider my position					
13	My own view regarding what the role of practice effects how I consider my position					
13A	I consider my own position with a designer bubble/vacuum that exists within design					
14	What you learn in professional practice plays a part in how you consider your position					
15	As focus when I consider who needs to engage with the work					
16	I use my designer leadership to facilitate others and not put too much of myself into the project when considering my position					
17	As a leader I consider my own position to be used as the authority by my design team/other designers regarding what is right in					
18	I use my designer leadership to manage and ensure honesty of the other designers when considering themselves in relation to					
19	I view education as a factor when considering my own position					
20	We talk, discuss and debate if its right for the audience and this gets me to consider my position					
21	Time and budget limitations play a part when I consider my position					
22	Lack of time allocated to allowing the designer to consider their own position is an issue					
23	The speed and pace of the project is a limiting factor when considering my own position					
23A	The consideration of my position is effected by the size/scale the project and it's a new or existing brand					
24	The approach and process used changes how you consider audience					
25	I have a responsibility to create work that is innovative and distinctive and this is sometimes the leading concern and not what					
26	The gut feel and intuition is only what small agencies do					
27	The work environment that you are situated in is significant when considering your own position					
27A	Location impacts upon consideration of position – The designer London mindset needs deeper consideration about position in					
28	There are job role necessities that I have to take into account when considering my position					
29	The team I work with and collaboration with them is something that is important when considering my position					
30	The cultural diversity of the team I work with and their input helps me when considering my position					
30A	The age diversity of the team helps me to consider my position					
31	Changes in the size of the team I work with has an impact when considering my position					
32	The consideration of my position is affected by the knowledge gained over the duration of time I have worked in the studio					
33	I considered if part of my position to ensure that there was no offense caused to the audience					
34	When considering my own position I view that content is more important than the aesthetic					
35	It is key when considering ones position that a designers must have a varied varied background					
36	Designers own communication skills – I could only build up my own sense of the audience experience by getting close to them					
37	There are always my own biases involved when I consider my own position					
38	Designers role and the biases involved are a topic of public concern					
39	I try to avoid making assumptions when considering my own position					
40	Lack of money leads to more assumptions being made					
41	I am aware of my how I do or don't use my own consciousness in the work					
42	When considering my own position, I have to make quick assertions about what will work or not					
43	When considering my own position I use imbued sentiments (imagined judgments/thoughts)					
44	I try to put myself in the state of mind of the audience, get into their shoes					
45	I bring my own self and my judgements to the table when I consider my position					
46	I use a brief to judge the consideration of my own position					
47	I use my intelligence level as a way to consider my position					
48	I use my knowledge of visual cue as an advantage when considering my position					
49	A combination of different things are needed when considering my own position					
50	I view design as subjective					
51	It is better to not be a part of the audience as you can be detached and objective					
52	I always try to be neutral and detached from the audience when considering my position					
53	The response at a presentation has to be objective and evidence based					
54	I have to suppress my own beliefs when considering my position					
55	I use my own authorship when considering my own position as a way to make a positive difference					
56	Considering my own position in relation to culture is a lot about using common sense					
57	Knowledge of reflexivity – I've never heard of reflexivity					
58	When considering my own position I am aware that there are limitations regarding my own experience and knowledge					
59	I know that there is a risk and no certainty of the audience reaction when considering my position					
60	I consider my position all the time					
61	I get carried away with my own view when designing					

Figure 52 Semi-structured interviews thematic analysis visualisations, specifically Step 2 – Becoming familiar with the data, generation of initial codes.



**Figure 53** Final thematic map with defined themes. Letters and no.s of each main theme are to enable ease of referencing with findings / results and to aid with the reflexive design practice framework referencing in Figure 58.

#### 4.2.2. Participants' responses

Phase Two involved 8 brand identity designers working in professional practice. This included two designers at the pilot stage and six during actual interviews. All were working in agencies based in London, UK. The designers originated from different locations around the UK and Europe. All participants were asked the same nine individual semi-structured interview questions and were drawing from their most recently completed UK based project experiences. They were also informed by their diverse experience levels from 3 to 24 years within their profession and their previous and/or current experiences. All participants were engaged in roles ranging from Junior Designer to Creative Director. The gender identity of participants comprised four females and four males.



4.2.3. **Phase Two – Insight, issues, and inform: semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis findings and discussion**

The thematic analysis produced 624 data extracts. These were associated to varying extents with how designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences and the challenges or issues they faced in this context. Data extracts were significant by inclusion across the entire set and/or via the abundance of occurrences/high frequency in relation to all of the defined themes. These themes are discussed below.

**Question one themes**

Related to the first semi-structured interview question in Phase Two (Figure 54), the thematic analysis produced six main themes and 16 associated sub-themes (Figure 53).

**Semi-structured Interview question 1**

*Taking the most recently completed UK project, in what ways do UK-based professional brand identity designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

**Figure 54** Phase Two—semi-structured interview question one.

The six main themes were 'designers used their own personal motivations,' 'designers referenced their own background and self-assumptions,' 'designers applied their own view of the transacting role towards audience,' 'designers utilised their own design knowledge and experience,' 'designers sought advice via the use of their professional relationships,' and 'designers used the project itself as an influence.' Figure 55 presents significant participant quotes connected to the themes. My discussions of these themes follow this.

	Main theme	Sub themes	Data examples – participant quotes
Themes linked to question one asked in phase 2	Designers used their own motivations, i.e. thought about what the benefit to themselves was	no sub-themes	'I want to get something out of the project for myself and feel good' (Participant two).
	Designers referenced their own background and self-assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use and draw upon own background and its history as reference</li> <li>– Intuition and instinct as assumption</li> <li>– Awareness of own biases</li> <li>– Self in same situation</li> </ul>	<p>'You have a gut feel, don't you? but 'I accept that having a gut feel is not very professional' (Participant one).</p> <p>'I think what sets me apart from maybe my peers is, I guess, my social background, and I try and research audiences and who the end users of these things are going to be in terms of social hierarchy and trying to really understand who they are and why we're talking to them' (Participant three).</p> <p>'Well, I'm male, and half the audience I'm designing for is female, so obviously you've got to consider –that. Ethnicity's a thing. Age is a thing. I'm twice as old as a considerable number of the audience' (Participant five).</p> <p>I also place myself back to what I was like at that age. So I've been through all of those life stages, and there's a kind of perception that my generation is different to another generation, and, of course, on lots of levels, it is, but on a basic human level, it isn't, you know? You're blending your own memory of what it feels like to be in that mindset with the information you've been told about the audience' (Participant five).</p>
	Designers applied their own view of the transacting role towards audience	– Designers employ a view of their duty towards audience	<p>'I consider my own position as one of having a responsibility to the audience' (Participant four).</p> <p>'As design experts, I guess as we are, we understand what is pleasing to the human eye' (Participant two).</p>
	Designers utilised their own design knowledge and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Advanced role and position means greater consideration</li> <li>– Leadership as authority</li> <li>– Adopt personalised view of what practice comprises</li> <li>– Past education evokes direction to follow</li> <li>– Personal strategies to inform</li> </ul>	<p>'I think as an agency owner; you change again because you're serving the audience and clients, so you have to be much more aware of considering your position in relation to the audience' (Participant five).</p> <p>'I'm the ultimate sort of executive sponsor of the work and if I'm happy with it, we'll present it' (Participant five).</p> <p>As my education wasn't undertaken in the UK, I have a different approach towards considering my own position in relation to audience, and I have a big distrust of marketing approaches' (Participant four).</p> <p>'We do regular insight pieces just for ourselves with multiple sectors, so we'll research trends and sector activity' (Participant six).</p>

**Figure 55** Themes and participant quotes from semi-structured interview question one.

	Main theme	Sub themes	Data examples – participant quotes
Themes linked to question one asked in phase 2	Designers sought advice via the use of their professional relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Client direction and obligation</li> <li>– Diversity of team provides positive value</li> </ul>	<p><i>'I will get data back from whomever the client and, and what they feel is the right thing or what they think they see their current brand or how they feel they – the new brand should be' (Participant four).</i></p> <p><i>'I work with, yeah, people from different areas of the UK, different parts of Europe mainly in the team, and we just kind of always try and consider where each other have been from, how that might affect culturally our ingrained biases' (Participant three).</i></p>
	Designers used the project itself as an influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Brief as guide</li> <li>– Client sector as supervision</li> <li>– Research insights to inform direction</li> <li>– Time and budget limitations</li> </ul>	<p><i>'So, when we start the project, we'll sit down and write a very clear proposition about what it's about. So, it's about X, Y, Z. And then that's basically our North star. You know, our guiding light. Everything is judged against that' (Participant two).</i></p> <p><i>'We sometimes use assumptions we've made or learnings from previous projects, and we kind of apply that' (Participant three).</i></p> <p><i>'We obviously work at a very fast pace like everyone else does these days, and we're under a lot of time and budget, sometimes, pressures to get things done' (Participant two).</i></p>

**Figure 55** Themes and participant quotes from semi-structured interview question one.

**X1<sup>73</sup>.Theme – Designers used their own motivations, i.e. thought about what the benefit to themselves was**

Participants were focused on addressing their personal agendas and receiving something back in return when considering their position in relation to their work on a project. Cross (2011) claims that designers' personal motivations are important for ensuring non-systematic methods of creative thinking. This finding suggests that professional brand identity designers are employing creative thinking, but it may be in a way that prioritises benefits personal for, or to them, rather than focusing on creative thinking concerned with prioritising stakeholders' requirements.

<sup>73</sup> Letters and numerals for all main themes were adopted throughout this thematic analysis to aid research mapping onto the existing reflexive practice framework diagram.

**X2.Theme – Designers referenced their own background and self-assumptions**

Designers drew upon their social backgrounds, ethnicity, age, class, gender, knowledge gained in practice, location of where they had lived and currently live, self-assumptions and gut feeling/s.

Slade-Brooking (2016) explains that the creative process is reflective of a designer's personality, which can be highly logical, emotional or instinctive. Cross (2011) claims that intuition and subjectivity play a significant part in designers' thinking, which he links to abductive thinking and an exploratory approach. Findings suggest that in brand identity design, instinctiveness is the dominant personality trait. This insight implies that abductive thinking, which involves predictions and probability with incompleteness of information, dominates designer's thinking about, and how, they employ themselves in relation to their consumer audience experiences. Instinctiveness and abduction indicate designers are using guesswork. Rowe's (in Cross, 2011:21) observations of this exploratory process is a chancy, inefficient way to progress.

Furthermore, we may argue that if this is the only approach designers engage in, this is risky as criticality is needed for a genuine reflexive practice. (Thompson and Thompson, 2008; Cunliffe, 2004, 2009; van Toorn, 1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015). Results revealed that designers reminisce about themselves in identical/similar situations to their audience suggesting designers employ episodic memories<sup>74</sup> more than semantic or symbolic memories<sup>75</sup> (Lawson and Dorst, 2009). Episodic memories (Lawson and Dorst, 2009) raise questions surrounding whether participants are taking into account the present temporality when the project is undertaken and the implications of social and cultural relevance.

<sup>74</sup> Episodic memories are generally case specific and experiential.

<sup>75</sup> Semantic or symbolic memories includes rules and structures that guide individuals in speaking or simple arithmetic. Often this is linked to cramming for an examination.



### **X3. Theme – Designers applied their own view of the transacting role towards the audience**

Communication approaches play a significant role in how designers think about using themselves in their work. Two contrasting perspectives were identified: a two-way exchange approach and another in which the designer sees themselves as the expert regarding what the audience needs. This confirms that unidirectional top-down and passive audience approaches are still being used in practice. This is even though there is a need for designers to address an audience paradigm shift (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002) and the need for relational brand relationships aligned with their audiences.

Historically throughout the 20th century, 'designers' relationships with audiences were ones in which they made expert judgements about what people wanted and needed' (Davis and Hunt, 2017:10). Thematic findings identified this as something designers are still doing and illustrates inappropriate relational audience approaches are still being enacted by designers in brand identity design.

### **Y1.Theme – Designers utilised their own design knowledge and experience.**

A designer's prior knowledge and experience impact how they consider their position. Leaders were more confident in their thinking and influenced team members thinking about the consideration of their position. As designers become more experienced, they appear to become more aware of how they consider their thinking about their position. This insight corroborates Cross's (2011) view that as designers' expertise increases, their experience deepens. This indicates that designers with lesser experience, such as Graduates or Junior Designers, may be more likely to need to engage with reflexive practice than experienced designers.

### *Studio and educational contexts are influential*

The studio a designer works in, colleagues they work with, client obligations, age, position, and education impact how they consider themselves within their work.

### *A designer's design career is significant*

A designer's design career plays a part in how they consider themselves. Linked to this, Lawson and Dorst suggest that 'self-education is needed to stay abreast of an ever-developing design field' (2009:66). In contrast, Phase One findings indicated that designers were not engaging with self-education and Phase Two results demonstrate professional brand identity designers have little time for self-education. This suggests an obvious but notable insight that the studio a designer is employed within is likely to impact designer learning and knowledge development, and most important to this study, how they consider their positionality.

### **Y2. Theme – Designers seek advice via the use of professional relationships**

This theme reinforces the prior thematic finding that who designers are surrounded by, and where, are significant to how they think about and consider their position.

### *Client and colleague relationships make a difference*

Relationships and collaboration with colleagues and their diversity are used by designers as a way to think about differing perspectives and consider their position, so to are different studios and clients' judgement and direction. Notably, designers mostly rely on and trust client-provided audience information. These findings are consistent with Slade-Brooking's (2016) view that working in a team has benefits and Lawson and Dorst (2009) who state that expertise can exist collectively in teams. This theme suggests designers are drawing upon relationships with other individuals as a way to consider their position.

**Y3. Theme – Designers use the project as an influence**

This finding confirmed that the project and brief that designers are working on, the audience sector, and time and budget impact how designers consider their position. Participants stated that project pressures with time and budget led to them employing default approaches, shortcuts and working more quickly. They mentioned that they used such approaches when they had previous knowledge about the project sector. Designers discussed that research insights were used to validate and/or challenge their preconceptions, but often they felt these insights were incorrect. Findings demonstrate that brand identity designers' projects and briefs are not promoting designers' engagement with reflexive practice.

**Question two themes**

The second question asked in Phase Two (Figure 56) included two main themes (see W1-W2 in Figure 53) and no sub-themes.

**Semi-structured Interview question 2**

*Taking the most recently completed UK project, what challenges and/or issues do UK-based brand identity designers face when thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during their ideas generation stage?*

**Figure 56** Phase Two—semi-structured interview question two.

The two main themes were 'a lack of time allocated within ideas generation stage of the process was an issue' and 'there was inadequate material to assist designers reflection and greater non-bias'. Figure 57 presents some participant quotes connected to the themes. Following this is a discussion of these two themes.

	Main theme	Sub themes	Data examples – participant quotes
Themes linked to question two asked in phase 2	<b>A lack of time allocated within the ideas generation stage of the process was an issue</b>	no sub-themes	<p><i>'Time is a key factor in terms of sometimes clients don't want to pay for that investment of time, or they don't appreciate the value of how much that will inform the end result, so if that's the case then sometimes, we will always do it but we will not pull it together in a presentation sense, so we'll do it for ourselves so we have the information' (Participant six).</i></p> <p><i>'I'd like to think that it was inherent in my process but that I don't give it specific thought because of the time available' (Participant one).</i></p> <p><i>'It's always a difficult one, isn't it, because you're always time poor. I mean, for me, time is the most important commodity we have. I think decisiveness is a really important part of it when you're doing very complex projects, and you're time poor because you have to be confident that your decision is, in a sense, going to deliver' (Participant five).</i></p>
	<b>Inadequate material to assist reflection and greater non-bias</b>	no sub-themes	<p><i>'I don't think there's anything physically for me to draw upon to think about my own position, but I think I would always just ask myself lots of personal questions about who and what' (Participant six).</i></p> <p><i>'There's a lack of a framework, model or tools to challenge or guide my biases and assumptions' (Participant one).</i></p>

**Figure 57** Themes and participant quotes from semi-structured interview question two.

**W1. Theme – A lack of time allocated within the ideas generation stage of the process was an issue**

This theme revealed that time restrictions were an issue that limit designers' free time to reflect upon how they consider their position in relation to audiences. Time 'falls down the list' and is not given specific thought. According to Thompson and Thompson (2008), designers need to manage work pressures to create free time for reflexive practice. Findings indicate that brand identity designers are clearly not doing or cannot do so.

**W2. Theme – Inadequate material to assist reflection and greater non-bias**

A reflective resource or prompt that designers could apply does not currently exist in brand identity design practice. Subsequently, designers' are not drawing upon systematic principles, tools or approaches to challenge how they are thinking about and using their position in relation to their consumer audience experiences. This thematic finding clarifies further and strengthens prior Literature Review and Phase One questionnaire findings. Designers' are not routinely or explicitly critically reflecting on their positionality towards their consumer audience experiences or engaging with reflexive practice in this context. This adds to van Toorn's view that there is a lack of criticality and reflexive practice in communication design.

**4.2.4.****Summary of Phase Two – Insight, issues, and inform: semi-structured interviews**

This phase of the research addressed in what ways professional brand identity designers considered their thinking and position in relation to consumer audience experiences in practice. This was during the ideas generation stage of the design process on their last project – a project before these interviews took place and as part of a reflexive process. A further interlinked method question sought to understand what issues and challenges designers faced in this context. My analysis and reflections on the resulting themes and findings led to insights into how participants think about and use their positionality towards their consumer audience experiences and how they take action to review this linked to their own experiences.

Linked to the Phase two first interview question (Figure 54) thematic results in Figure 53, X1-X3 indicate that brand identity designers are led by personal motivations, background, self-assumptions, biases, and personal perspectives, with a lack of reflexive practice. Figure 53, Y1-Y4 results indicate designers are using the professional context of their practice, their design experience and knowledge to consider their position but are not explicitly demonstrating their engagement with a reflexive practice nor with reflexive practice resources. This includes reflexive principles to inform this design knowledge and experience. Linked to the Phase Two second interview question (Figure 56), thematic results shown in Figure 53, W1-W2, revealed that designers have insufficient reflexive design practice materials and inadequate time to implement reflexive design practice. Semi-structured interview findings, reflections and evaluations led to Phase Two summary propositions, as explained on pages 193-198.

**Designers' lack of critically reflective thinking about their positionality, which is needed for a reflexive practice, suggests an ineffectual reflexive practice and a poor quality practice**

Brand identity designers might be engaging with Schön's (1983) reflective practice, in which his theory emphasises the individual. Yet, in the context of their ideas generation stage on a project, designers give very little thoughtful concern to how they use themselves within broader social contexts and specifically in relation to their audiences experiences in their professional practice. This lack of concern limits attention given to the needed critical and emotional aspects of reflection (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). Themes reveal that designers draw upon their personalities when positioning themselves in relation to the consumer audience context, using intuition and assumptions. I propose that intuition and assumptions with incompleteness of information regarding positionality towards consumer audience experiences demonstrates designers' lack understanding and sensitivity towards their consumer audience experience contexts. Yet, Thompson and Thompson claim this is required to facilitate critical reflection and reflexivity (2008:55-76). It could be proposed that it is difficult for designers to do anything other than assume. However, building upon Thompson and Thompson's (2008) view, I propose that when designers do assume and it lacks a critical perspective, this produces a practice of poor quality and, as they explain 'in some cases, a dangerous practice' (2008:27). Results confirm van Toorn's (1997) claims that designers neglect to reflect critically upon the conditions upon which their actions emerge. This is risky because, as Rowe states, without criticality, the designer fails to see their inadequacies, and without criticality, a genuine reflexive practice cannot take place (Thompson and Thompson, 2008; Bolton, 2014).

Thematic findings corroborate Lawson and Dorst's proposition that critical reflection across projects, through which designers develop, has been neglected by designers themselves (2009:66). Designers are not systematically engaging with or demonstrating the operation of systematically engaging with reflexive design practice in their work when thinking about and using their positionality in relation to their consumer audience experiences. Reflexive practice, I would argue is therefore not integral or intrinsic to designers' professional practice role.

**Brand Identity Designers cannot be addressing a constructivist consumer audience paradigm shift**

As a result of theme findings which revealed a lack of systematic reflexive practice, brand identity designers are failing to respond to an ongoing audience paradigm shift (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002) that emerged in the 1990s. Even though van Toorn claimed in 2006, 2009 and 2015 that designers were operating in response to the market, I argue that they cannot have been, nor still are on a widespread scale in 2023. Linked to Mazé's (2016) argument regarding education, critical practice and the Industrial Age, I suggest that designers' experience and knowledge are bound up in Industrial Age concerns. These are centred on material production and consumption rather than considering the participation and inclusivity and diversity of others.

**Designers are enacting outdated modes of thinking and communication which reinforce patterns of inequality and disadvantage**

Historically throughout the 20th century, 'designers' relationships with audiences were ones in which they made expert judgements about what people wanted and needed' (Davis and Hunt, 2017:10). Thematic findings identified that designers are still doing this with a lack of critical reflection for how they are thinking about and doing so when using their judgements and positioning in relation to their consumer audience experiences. I argue that because of these insufficiencies of reflexive practice in this context designers are reinforcing inequality and disadvantage, as outlined by Thompson and Thompson (2008). I contend that brand identity designers are, therefore, not evidencing a reflexive design practice.

**Designers cannot be effectively designing the conditions of experience for others**

Davis and Hunt claim that there has been a 'shift in professional practice from designing objects to designing the conditions of experience' (2017:19). In light of prior propositions put forward in this Phase Two summary section, I propose that in their designing designers cannot be successfully dealing with this shift or the audience paradigm shift discussed on page 25. This is because there are deficiencies regarding how designer's are critically reflecting on the thinking and actions of their experiences when bringing these into their work in relation to consumer audience experiences. I contend that this is likely to be contributing to negatively impacting or affecting the designing of conditions for consumer audience experiences.

**Designers failure to demonstrate accountability for positionality and engage with reflexive practices contests their professionalism in practice**

Drawing upon all of the prior propositions discussed in section 4.2.4., designers are neglecting to demonstrate how they are taking accountability for their positionality in practice. This absence of not systematically employing or operating a reflexive practice in brand identity design signals a weakness in the professionalism of the brand identity designer and confirms a need for practice development in this context.

Thematic findings raise concerns regarding the credibility of how designers think about and use themselves within their designing activities. The validity of brand identity design processes and practices within which they operate is questionable. At the date of this thesis submission in 2023, it will be 14 years since Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre (2009) discussed the paradigm shift in branding literature. Research results signal that professional brand identity designers are failing to advance their positionality in their ideas generation process in response to this shift. Inappropriate relational audience approaches and outdated practice processes and modes of thinking are still enacted by brand identity designers. I propose that this identified weakness further suggests that the contemporaneity, professionalism and reflexive design practice of brand identity designers in their designing of brand identities for consumer audience experiences are thrown into doubt. Subsequently, if there are weaknesses in brand identity designers designing of brand identities, this suggests potential deficiencies in the standards of brand identity design as a profession.

**Designers lack reflexive practice knowledge but recognise a need and support for its accomplishment**

Brand identity designers lack awareness of and are failing to enact reflexive practice in their design processes and practice. However, they recognise a weakness linked to a lack of, first, time and second, reflective materials, to support them in being able to critically reflect upon themselves. Designers acknowledge a need for a personal reflective prompt to challenge or guide their biases and assumptions. According to Bolton, 'reflexivity requires support to facilitate change and learning' (2014:5), suggesting that if any change or new learnings are to occur, designers will need support to accomplish reflexive practice.

Until brand identity designers have sufficient reflexive design practice, its theory, resources and principles to support them in critically reflecting upon their positionality, I contend there will remain a shortcoming of effective relational, participatory and reflexive design practice in designing in relation to consumer audience experiences. This Phase substantiated literature review propositions, corroborating a need for reflexive principles and revealing a need for them to be positioned at a rudimentary level. This is because such principles do not currently exist, nor are they being employed or understood in existing brand identify designers' processes and practice. Consequently, and in keeping with the reflexive vision of this study, carefully planned, organised and structured reflexive design principles that can systematically guide designers in a time-effective manner in their designing will be explored in my research with designers.

Phase Two contributes to claims that greater human-centred theory and literature in communication design that is concerned with the relationship between designers and audiences/consumers is needed (Frascara, *et.al.*, 1997; Frascara, 2005, 2006; Akama, 2007; Krippendorff, 2006; Forlizzi and Lebbon, 2006; Crilly, Maier, and Clarkson, 2008 and Crilly *et.al.*, 2008).

My mapping of results from Phase Two onto the findings from the existing reflexive practice framework (Figure 14) provided a reflexive design practice framework (Figure 58). This latter framework offers insights into reflexive practice that have significance for professional brand identity designers and their practice and extends upon existing reflexive practice knowledge. This mapping of results revealed novel understandings about brand identity designers' behavioural characteristic descriptions connected with reflexive practice. It enabled reflections and evaluations aligned to designers' reflexive practice to be uncovered and insights into what might be needed and might support their reflexive practice in relation to their consumer audience experience designing.



**Detailed reflexive practice framework – with new brand identity research findings to support development of reflexive design practice**  
*X. Ways that designers use themselves, their own background and own self assumptions to consider their position.*  
*\* This design research finding extends upon existing findings \*\* New finding uncovered by this research that contributes to existing findings*

A1. Behaviour Cognitive	B1. Behaviour Affective	C1. Behaviour Values	A1/B1/C1 (all behaviours)
<b>A2. Main characteristic of cognitive behaviour corresponds with Thought/thinking</b>	<b>B2. Main characteristic of affective behaviour corresponds with Feelings/emotions</b>	<b>C2. Main characteristic of values behaviour corresponds with Awareness of actions</b>	<b>A7/B7/C7. Approaches and techniques to promote reflective and reflexive thinking</b> as existing in Fig 14
<b>A3. Characteristics of cognitive behaviour might include</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>B3. Characteristics of affective behaviour might include</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2a. Use and draw upon own background and its history as reference Understanding what the implications of own behavioural characteristics may evoke. For example, that feelings and emotions linked to age and gender may be different to others. ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2b. Intuition and instinct as assumption Using intuition and instinct can endorse non-qualified assumptions ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2c. Awareness of own biases Recognising that biases and associated beliefs need to be examined *Understanding that emotion is not necessarily biological and thus can be connected to social contexts – it can include factors such as gender and culture so it is essential to take into account differences in cultural expression and interpretation of emotions and different gender experiences of emotion. ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2d. Self in same situation Understanding the advantages or non-advantages of being the same gender identity as others. Awareness that (designer) practitioners of a different gender identity to that of others might greater self-awareness in this context.	<b>C3. Characteristics of values behaviour might include</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2a. Use and draw upon own background and its history as reference Recognising the advantages or disadvantages of taking into account ones own background and history as a reference, to ensure awareness of ones actions. ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2b. Intuition and instinct as assumption Requires awareness that intuition and instinct may promote prejudices. ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2c. Awareness of own biases Awareness that neglecting awareness of own biases can promote non-equitability. * A well-informed approach to issues of discrimination, which is often institutionalised via our working and personal lives at both structural and cultural levels (as described above) and emerges via the use of discriminatory forms of language. ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2d. Self in same situation (Designer) practitioners recognising that not being the same gender identity as others/audiences needs to be taken into account to negate discrimination which emerges via use of languages * Understanding the significance of the inclusion and participation of other people ** X3. Applied their own view of the transacting role towards audience: – X3a. Designers employ a view of their duty towards audience – Recognising the significance, inclusion and participation of other people/audience when (designer) practitioners employ their own view of what their duty towards audience should involve/include.	<b>A8/B8/C8. What is needed to maximise the personal reflexive space</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus * Self-awareness and questioning the impact that one is personally, having upon the situation, and vice versa, both via themselves and through feedback from others – X1. (and X1a) Used their own personal motivations i.e. thought about what the benefit to themselves were Designer practitioners need to recognise the significance of their own motivations and have awareness of what this does their reflexive space in relation to their audience experiences and ensure that their personal motivations do not dominate over a focus on giving equitable consideration to their audiences experiences. ** X2. Referenced their own background and self assumptions. – X2d. Self in same situation (Designer practitioners) need to be self-aware of their reflexivity within time parameters, i.e. not be reflexive about themselves in similar situations based on events/experiences that are not time specific to when an actual project/event/experience is currently undertaken. Reflexivity is needed within the parameters of the time that occurrences takes place, unless otherwise advised. ** X3. Applied their own view of the transacting role towards audience: – X3a. Designers employ a view of their duty towards audience Identification that the maturity of the agency that the (designer) practitioner works within or is employed at may impact upon practitioners perception regarding their duty to others/audience.
<b>A4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>B4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14e	<b>C4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>A9/B9/C9. Barriers to reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14
<b>A5. Questions that emerge from cognitive behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>B5. Questions that emerge from affective behaviour values</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>C5. Questions that emerge from behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14	
<b>A6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to cognitive behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>B6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to affective behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>B6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to values behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus * What are the values associated with my profession, i.e. codes of practice? / what do these mean to me in practice? / what are my personal values? What do these mean to me in practice? / are there conflicts between these two sets of values and how I practise? / X3. Applied their own view of the transacting role towards audience: – X3a. Designers employ a view of their duty towards audience What is the relationship between values associated with my profession and my personal values regarding my view of duty towards audience how do these impact upon my actions on others/ audience.	

**Figure 58** A reflexive design practice framework which includes findings from Phase Two which were mapped onto the existing detailed reflexive practice framework (Figure 14).

**Detailed reflexive practice framework – with new brand identity research findings to support development of reflexive design practice**  
*Y. Ways that designers use the professional context of their practice and W. Main areas concerned with issues and challenges that designers faced*  
*\* This design research finding extends upon existing findings \*\* New finding uncovered by this research that contributes to existing findings*

A1. Behaviour Cognitive	B1. Behaviour Affective	C1. Behaviour Values	A1/B1/C1 (all behaviours)
<b>A2. Main characteristic of cognitive behaviour corresponds with Thought/thinking</b>	<b>B2. Main characteristic of affective behaviour corresponds with Feelings/emotions</b>	<b>C2. Main characteristic of values behaviour corresponds with Awareness of actions</b>	<b>A7/B7/C7. Approaches and techniques to promote reflective and reflexive thinking</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus ** Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience: – Y1e. Personal strategies to inform Techniques that are unique to design practitioners which promote reflexive thinking include: – Narrative and storytelling of content – Resonance – Going outside of the studio environment to try to see things from others perspectives and meet people – Talking to and listening to different voice to find out diverse views – Visual pdf tool to prompt conversations – Travelling – Reading books and newspapers – Talking to people in the sector that they the practitioner is working within to inform discussions and subject understanding – Gaining insights via personal project work that uses interviews to gain knowledge about sector trends and activities –Discussions and debates to question if work is right for the audience – Projection of themselves into the audience space –Making comparisons about what the audience are like – First hand involvement with the audience themselves ** Y3. Use project as influence: – Y3b. Brief as Guide A Brief as a guide (for designer practitioners) ** Y3. Use project as influence: – Y3d. Research insights to inform direction Research insights to inform direction. – External techniques via client provided audience research and data – Personal techniques to gather audience research and data –Traditional research traditional – New research techniques – Research testing that incites conversations – Artificial intelligence research –Empathy maps – Personas – Workshops – Touchpoints – Case studies – Surveys including interviews and interview transcripts
<b>A3. Characteristics of cognitive behaviour might include</b> as existing Fig 14 plus * Looking at things in a new way to move beyond routine practices Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience: – Y1e. Personal strategies to inform (Designer practitioners) avoiding the use of generic communication when talking to diverse audiences and ensuring that they look at things in a new and non-generic way to move beyond formulaic solutions * Looking at things in a new way to move beyond routine practices Y3. Use project as influence: – Y3c. Client sector as Supervision (Designer) Practitioner understanding that having worked or currently working in the same arena/area/sector still requires re-evaluation and the need to look at things in new ways to move beyond routine practice	<b>B3. Characteristics of affective behaviour might include</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>C3. Characteristics of values behaviour might include</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus * Understanding the significance and inclusion and participation of other people Y2. Seek advice via use of professional relationships – Y2b. Diversity of team provides positive value – Recognising the significance of collaborating with people from a diverse range of backgrounds and asking what it might offer to ones own reflexivity in relation to audience/others * A well-informed approach to issues of discrimination, which is often institutionalised via our working and personal lives at both structural and cultural levels (as described above) and emerges via the use of discriminatory forms of language Y2. Seek advice via use of professional relationships – Y2b. Diversity of team provides positive value – Understanding that diversity of people can offer insights into a plethora of different forms of language	
<b>A4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>B4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>C4. Dominant space used to aid reflective and reflexive practice</b> as existing in Fig 14	
<b>A5. Questions that emerge from cognitive behaviour</b> as existing Figure 14	<b>B5. Questions that emerge from affective behaviour values</b> as existing in Fig 14	<b>C5. Questions that emerge from behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14 plus * Awareness for our own personal and professional actions, identity, values and feelings and having empathy for others Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience – Y1c. Adopt personalised view of what practice comprises What impact are you (designer practitioner) having by bringing your own personal view/s of what you believe your practice encompasses when you are considering your position in relation to audience experiences. Are you recognising the part that your own ideology may play within their role as industry practitioners when they are considering their position.	
<b>A6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to cognitive behaviour</b> as existing in Figure 14 plus * What do other people expect of me here? Is this consistent with my professional role and the specific duties of my job? and who else needs to be involved? Who do I need to communicate with? Y2. Seek advice via use of professional relationships: – Y2a. Client direction and obligation What effect is the direction of, and obligation to the client/s having upon my (designer practitioner) reflexivity in relation to audience ** Y2. Seek advice via use of professional relationships: Y2b. Diversity of team provides positive value – In what ways are/ have you collaborated with other people from diverse backgrounds? * As in do I have the information I need to act? If not, what do I need to do to find out and how? Y3. Use project as influence: – Y3b. Brief as Guide (Designer practitioners) Do I have a brief as a guide for the project? If not, how can I get one and who is involved in producing it?	<b>B6. Some reflective and reflexive questions aligned to affective behaviour</b> as existing in Fig 14		

**Figure 58** A reflexive design practice framework which includes findings from Phase Two which were mapped onto the existing detailed reflexive practice framework (Figure 14).

**Detailed reflexive practice framework – with new brand identity research findings to support development of reflexive design practice**  
*Y. Ways that designers use the professional context of their practice and W. Main areas concerned with issues and challenges that designers faced*  
*\* This design research finding extends upon existing findings \*\* New finding uncovered by this research that contributes to existing findings*

A1/B1/C1 (all behaviours)	A1/B1/C1 (all behaviours)
<p><b>A8/B8/C8. What is needed to maximise the personal reflexive space</b>                      as existing in Fig 14 plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* As in management of work pressures, which can support in creating free time and space for personal reflection</li> <li>Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y1b. Leadership as authority (Designer) Practitioners who are leaders need to recognise that designers (who are of an inferior level to them) can be focused on their reflexivity aligned to the leaders experiences rather than on considering their reflexivity in relation to audiences experiences. Leaders need to reflect upon to what extent this may effect the designers (who are of an inferior level to them) reflexivity towards their audiences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>* As in management of work pressures, which can support in creating free time and space for personal reflection</li> <li>Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y1b. Leadership as authority (Designer) Practitioners who are accountable to leaders (who are of an superior level to them) need to recognise how much they might be considering their own position in relation to their leaders experiences, rather than focusing on considering their own position in relation to their audience experiences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>** Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y1d. Past education evokes direction to follow</li> </ul>                             Consider education. Education that promotes designer reflexivity when considering their position in relation to their audience experiences. In addition early career development of designer practitioners reflexivity in relation to their audience experiences and how they might do this</li> <li>** Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y1a. Advanced role and position</li> </ul>                             Consider role and position. Greater reflexivity required by less experienced practitioners (design graduates and junior designers)</li> <li>** Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y1a. Advanced role and position</li> </ul>                             Consider role and position. Recognising that the degree of reflexivity may change with experience and knowledge level. Thus, what is and what is not needed to maximise your (design practitioners) personal reflective space at a particular point/time in your career aligned to your experience and knowledge level</li> </ul>	<p><b>A/B9/C9. Barriers to reflexive practice</b>                      as existing in Fig 14 plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Y3. Use project as influence:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y3a. Time and budget limitations</li> </ul>                             Time is one of the most important commodities required by (designer) practitioners to ensure effective reflexivity yet it is limited</li> <li>**Y3. Use project as influence:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y3a. Time and budget limitations</li> </ul>                             Budget limitations often lead to a lack of resources to assist (designer) practitioners in being able to engage effectively with reflexivity.</li> <li>**Y3. Use project as influence:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y3a. Time and budget limitations</li> </ul>                             A fixed workforce type environment more so than a flexible workforce has a more detrimental impact upon (designer) practitioners reflexivity</li> <li>** Y1. Utilized their own design knowledge and experience:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Y1d. Past education evokes direction to follow</li> </ul>                             Excluded from education. Education that omits to engage in learning and teaching that promotes designer reflexivity in relation to audience experiences and demonstrates how design students might do this.</li> <li>* Time constraints: incorporates reflection as part of the workload rather than separate from it                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– W1 (and W1a.) A lack of time allocated within ideas generation stage of the process was an issue</li> </ul>                             Time give to reflexivity in the ideas generation stage of the design process is limited and this need to be explicitly taken into account to ensure reflexivity does not become latent.</li> <li>** W1 (and W1a.) A lack of time allocated within ideas generation stage of the process was an issue</li> </ul> Designer as employee rather than designer as own employer effects time given to reflexivity. Time given to reflexivity in the ideas generation stage of the design process by a designer who is an employee working for someone else needs to be valued. A designer working for themselves allocates more time to the consideration of their position within this stage. <li>** W2 (and W2a.) There was inadequate material to assist reflection and greater non-bias. Inadequate reflexive material. A lack of adequate material to assist reflection and greater non-bias. A conscious reflection point and a tool to prompt (designer) practitioners</li>

**Figure 58** A reflexive design practice framework which includes findings from Phase Two which were mapped onto the existing detailed reflexive practice framework (Figure 14).

The reflexive *design* practice framework (Figure 58) assisted my research reflections and the development of the first iteration of v.1 reflexive brand identity design practice principles, their headings and content, (Figure 59). These principles were explored with designers in an online design workshop I facilitated in the next phase, 3. Phase Three investigates the potential of these principles as a way to support and improve the thinking, actions and conduct of brand identity designers aligned to their positionality in the ideas generation stage of their design process in practice in relation to their consumer audience experiences. Additionally, Phase Three findings identified some initial insights into how these early reflexive design principles may or may not be most effective, and why.

**Reflexive design practice principles v.1**

*Phase 2 semi-structured interviews thematic findings/results were mapped onto the pre-existing reflexive practice framework (Figure 14) which led to the charting of the reflexive design practice framework diagram (Figure 58). This which was then used to develop these initial v.1 principles, their headings and content information*

**1. Regulate personal motives**  
You must not allow your own personal motives associated with the project to dominate  
*Do not allow your own personal motivations of how the work will benefit you personally as a designer to dominate over your thinking when considering audiences experiences.*

**2. Recognise background and behavioural characteristics**  
Acknowledge the implications that the use of your own background, history as a reference and behavioural characteristics may have  
*Recognise the advantages and disadvantages of taking into account your own background and history and the need to understand and challenge the implications of your own behavioural characteristics which includes your feelings and emotions. This could for example be linked with your gender or age when considering audience experiences.*

**3. Query instincts and intuition**  
Question your instincts and intuition to avoid endorsing non-qualified assumptions and potentially promoting prejudice/s  
*Question your non-qualified and assumptive intuition and instincts. This might be associated with a gutfeel. Just because you may think or feel something about something in a particular way it does not always mean your audience will. Try to be objective (without being absolutist) as well as subjective, about your own instincts and intuition to avoid an approach that may promote prejudices.*

**4. Be perceptive to discrimination/s and biases**  
Have a well-informed approach to issues of discrimination and ensure you examine your use of languages and your own biases and ask why it/these might exist  
*Even if you are aware of your own self perceptions and biases, the use of these when considering your position and the way you think is not necessarily the way the audience thinks. You must examine your own perceptions, biases and associated beliefs to raise attention that neglecting to do so can promote non-equitability.*  
*You must also be mindful that you are not doing work for yourselves and must question how much of your own perceptions you are embodying in the work.*

**5. Have restraint mirroring self in same situation**  
Think carefully about assessing/putting yourself in the same or similar situation/s (i.e. gender identity/ies) to the audience/s experience as a way to qualify your perspective  
*When drawing upon either your own experiences or yourself in a similar or the same situation as the audience experience/s, criticality is needed to ensure that you have considered if/how your own experiences are significant to audiences experiences and if so and how.*

*This is also significant regarding your own time-specific experiences of yourself in a similar or the same situation as the audience experience/s. You need to ensure that you have considered if/how your own perceptions within this time/date period timeframe are significant to the existing time and if/how to audiences experiences within the parameters of the time that the actual project work is undertaken, unless otherwise advised. This is also the same for example regarding gender and age.*

*In addition, if you have not had the same experiences as the audience, you need to consider your position more deeply and critically recognise that not being for example, the same gender identity as audiences needs to be carefully taken into account. This is to ensure that you have considered if/how your own perceptions and use of languages (values) are significant to audiences experiences and if so, how, to aid in negating discrimination.*

**6. Scrutinize viewpoint of duty to audience**  
Audience/s and people/s are involved in the process, and as such their experiences need to be critically taken into account. Its also important to understand what impact a studio/agency might be having upon your own views regarding your what to your duty towards audience and your transacting role should encompass.  
*You need to understand the significance and inclusion and participation of other people when considering your position, regardless of what you perceive your working relationship or duty towards the audience and their experiences or definitions of an audience (i.e. consumer, customer, user) should be like or what type of design agency you work in/with, even if this is a mature agency (previous results indicate that if you do work in a more mature agency you should have greater opportunity to maximise the personal reflexive space.*

**7. Take into account limitations of own experience level**  
Your level of experience can impact upon your reflexive capability. Thus if you are a less experienced practitioner it is additionally crucial that you engage with reflexivity  
*All designers should consider their position in relation to audiences, but if you are a graduate or junior designer then it is even more important to consider your position in relation to audiences experiences, (as you have lesser experience)*  
*Note: Consequently, prior findings also indicate that as designers develop their knowledge and experience, reflexive principles specific to their position and role at a particular point/time in their career might be beneficial. Thus, a range of distinct reflexive principles might be advantageous to designers as they progress through the differing and increasing experience levels of design practice.*

Figure 59 Eighteen initial reflexive design practice principles.

**Reflexive design practice principles v.1**

**8. Prioritise the final audience/s experiences**  
Ensure your reflexivity, (and if a senior leader the reflexivity of your team) is focused upon the most important audience/s experiences  
*Ensure that if you are accountable to a senior/leader that you assess to what extent you are considering your own position in relation to your seniors/leaders experiences. This is to ensure that you are not led solely by your seniors/leaders experiences to the detriment of focusing on the consideration of your own position in relation to audience experiences.*  
*If you are a senior/leader of other designers ensure that even though they are often accountable to yourself, it is important that they are considering their position in relation to audience experiences and are predominantly focused upon considering your experiences whilst neglecting the consideration of their reflexivity in relation to audiences experiences.*

**9. Reflect upon influence of past education**  
Contemplate how, and to what extent your past education and your learning from/in this context might be informing your reflexivity  
*Reflect upon your past education, and how and what you learned now informs what you understand about the importance of considering your position in relation to audience experiences and why.*

**10. Continually look at things de novo (afresh; again)**  
Thoughtfully employ your own design strategies, knowledge and experience. For example, engage with techniques and approaches that promote reflexivity, but try to look at things in a new way to negate formulaic solutions and avoid routine practices  
*Use approaches and techniques that promote reflective and reflexive thinking. Avoid routine and formulaic solutions and ensure that you are always looking at things in a new way to move beyond routines and try to avoid the use of generic communications, even if having to adopt flexibility in work across different cultures and continents to appeal to a broad audience.*

**11. Comprehend that client relations can propel presumptions**  
Ensure your relationship and loyalty to your client does not inhibit or limit your reflexivity towards audience/s experiences  
*Be careful to not only use your relationship with the client to presume what will be right for the audience. Whilst client provided information and what the client requires in relation to their audience is important, the professional relationship and loyalty to a client has an effect on designers when considering their position in relation to audience. Therefore, you should not rely solely on this relationship and information supplied to make presumptions or trust only client direction or understanding of audience experiences to glean information even if you feel duty bound to do so.*  
*You (designers) should use your relationship with the client to prompt clients themselves to think more carefully about the audience, and to enable the opportunity for review for you to consider your position in relation to the audience from your own, as well as the clients perspective.*

**12. Collaborate with diverse people**  
Collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds to gain a wide range of perspectives to expand your understanding of cultural diversity and the use of appropriate forms of language/s  
*Take advantage where possible of what collaborating with diverse people, including a range of different people in your team can offer you when considering your own position. Also, gain insights into a plethora of different forms of language (positive and negative) to support understanding of cultural diversity, cultural nuances and that the inclusion and participation of other people promotes a well-informed approach to issues of discrimination. Age diversity of other team members is specifically beneficial to designers when considering their own position.*

**13. Prioritise reflexive time and budget**  
Allow a sufficient allocation of time (specifically in the ideas generation stage of the design process) and budget for your reflexivity, particularly if you are an employee (rather than an employer involved in this stage) and especially if you are part of a fixed rather than flexible workforce  
*Time constraints linked to a project can limit you in being able to be able to effectively consider your position, particularly within your ideas generation stage of a project. Hence, ensure a sufficient allocation of time is available/given to be enable you to consider your position during this stage.*  
*For example, consideration may be needed when planning this aspect of project time to ensure that reflexivity in this context does not become latent. If you are an employee of a company (rather than being an employee of your own company) this also requires greater consideration for the sufficient allocation of time.*  
*Budget imitations and a lack of resources can also be an issue and a barrier impeding you to effectively consider your position, hence where possible this should be taken into account in/during project planning.*  
*The type of work environment, and in particular that the fixed workforce impacts more detrimentally upon practitioners reflexivity than when in a flexible workforce scenario*

**14. Refer to a project brief for reference**  
Utilise and have a project brief as reference, and use it as a guide to assist engagement with reflexivity in the context of project requirements  
*A brief should be used as a reference and to help keep you on track when considering your position by assisting you to consider the appropriateness of your position in terms of addressing project requirement/s. This information can be used to prompt judgements regarding the consideration of your own position and qualify suitability aligned to audience/s experiences.*

Figure 59 Eighteen initial reflexive design practice principles.



### Reflexive design practice principles v.1

#### 15. Acknowledge that same sector projects require continuous re-evaluation

Reflexivity is needed even if you have previously worked in or have knowledge or experience of the same or a similar sector

*Even if you have prior experience, knowledge or understanding about the sector or a similar sector (i.e., the sector itself, its scale, process etc) aligned to a project that you are engaged to work on, you must engage with reflexivity and consider your own position to ensure that re-evaluation continuously occurs and so that you look at things in a new way to move beyond potentially routine practices.*

#### 16. Employ reliable audience research insights and techniques

Engage with relevant and reliable audience research insights and techniques to challenge pre-conceptions, facilitate reflections and support cognizant reflexivity

*Audience research insights are important in prompting you to consider your own position and inform your direction. They can challenge pre-conceptions and facilitate reflections of any possible differences in prior thinking and incite conversations and provide more in-depth understanding about the emotions and motivations of audiences. These insights might be comprised of external techniques via client provided audience research and data as well as the use of your own techniques to gather audience research and data. However, design practitioners need to be attentive to whether research insights, their source/s and content /s are accurate and are thus likely to be reliably effective or not in assisting their reflexivity.*

#### 17. Engage with credible reflexive sources to challenge biases

Credible reflexive materials and approaches must be utilized with to raise awareness of and challenge biases

*Reflexive approach/es and material/s must be engaged with to support you when considering your own position. These will for example, raise awareness of your own biases' and challenge your own self-perceptions and perspectives regarding assumptions.*

#### 18. Be attentive to impact of practice ideology

Have awareness for the impact that your own ideology might be having upon your reflexivity in relation to audience experiences

*Have awareness for the impact that bringing your own personal view/s of what you believe your practice encompasses might have upon your understanding when considering your position in relation to audience experience/s. Recognise the part that your own ideology may play within your role as industry practitioners when considering your position. Awareness of actions in which conflicts between professional codes of practice and one's own personal values must be questioned.*

### 4.3.

## Phase Three – Implement and intervene: synchronous online design workshops with design participants

Sufi *et al.* (2018) advise that measuring a workshop's impact requires planning, using knowledge, skills and applying techniques. Online workshop discoveries were uncovered through collaborative data. This data relied on knowledge taken from participant digital worksheets and what was discussed and written in real-time. Consequently it enabled me to report experiences, meaning and the reality of participants (Robson, 2011). Visual and verbal digital recordings of the workshop were used to support retrospective researcher inferences, and data was used to facilitate interpretations and enable constructs to be made. In Phase Three, design participants provided additional feedback and reflections about the reflexive design practice principles and their reflexive process after the workshop. This provided insights into designers' reflective reflexive processes.

Phase Three led to theory that provided an understanding of participants' experiences and responses regarding the reflexive design principles. Results indicated the effect and transformation the principles had upon participants thinking about and use of their position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of the design process. This included knowledge of the principles in ensuing a reflexive design practice but, more fundamentally, in also ensuing a reflexive design practice process. Additionally, Phase Three provided understanding related to the participant's usability of the principles. This led to the refinement and identification of the most significant principles to be applied and further examined in the next Phase, four. Phase Three also informed the development and considerations for my design practice which was employed to generate the first guide v.1 prototype for investigation by designers in their applied practice. This is also discussed in the next Phase, four of this research.

Figure 59 Eighteen initial reflexive design practice principles.

## 4.3.1.

**Data analysis**

The analysis approach in Phase Three used Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic coding approach. Analysis of the online workshop took place through the review of data materials, including Participants Miro visual whiteboards and transcription of the participants and my digital verbal online workshop Zoom recordings. Some completed participant Miro visual whiteboards and collated data materials from this phase are shown in Figures 61-62 and all are presented in the accompanying visual practice process book on pages 102-107. This data was then interpreted and reflected upon by me. Building upon Braun and Clarke's framework, as outlined in Appendix 14, a detailed explanation of the coding steps in my research is shown in Figure 60.

Further participant feedback on the thematic analysis findings was used to verify participant responses about the reflexive principles. This was to enhance robustness of Phase Three. Thus, Phase Three enabled additional feedback on the participant's reflections on the reflexive practice process after the Workshop itself to be uncovered. This additional feedback and findings correspond with the reflexive impetus of this study and are presented after the thematic analysis findings discussed in this section.

<p><b>Step 1. Becoming familiar with the data</b> (Figures 61)</p> <p>Online design workshop observational protocols (Creswell, 2011). Transcribing the recorded Zoom conversations and collating the Miro whiteboard written comments.</p>
<p><b>Step 2. Generate initial codes</b> (Figures 62 and 63)</p> <p>Starting to organise the Zoom and Miro data. Transferring codes from each data item to assemble the main initial codes into a coherent body of data. Documenting data extracts. Reflecting upon codes after each Zoom recording and Miro whiteboard (data item) was transcribed before transcribing subsequent recordings and whiteboard written comments. Final main initial codes are transferred into a digital context and collated in one place.</p>
<p><b>Step 3. Search for themes</b></p> <p>What is a theme? What does it do? This research adopted Braun and Clarke's approach regarding what counts as a theme, in that 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions. It represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset' (2006:10). Sorting and identifying themes. Analysing themes to reveal preliminary themes.</p>
<p><b>Step 4. Review themes</b> (Figure 64)</p> <p>Reflecting, modifying, merging and developing themes using manually coded data and the themes in Microsoft Excel. Further reflecting, modifying, merging and developing the themes using only Microsoft Excel.</p>
<p><b>Step 5. Define themes</b></p> <p>The final themes and final thematic map. In step 5, the findings of this research phase were presented in the final thematic map, see Figure 65 and written up in step 6, as discussed below.</p>
<p><b>Step 6. Write up</b></p> <p>Findings were written up with the narrative from this phase discussed below in subsection 4.3.3.</p>

**Figure 60** Braun and Clarke's six step framework which shows my contribution to these steps to undertake Phase 3 thematic coding.

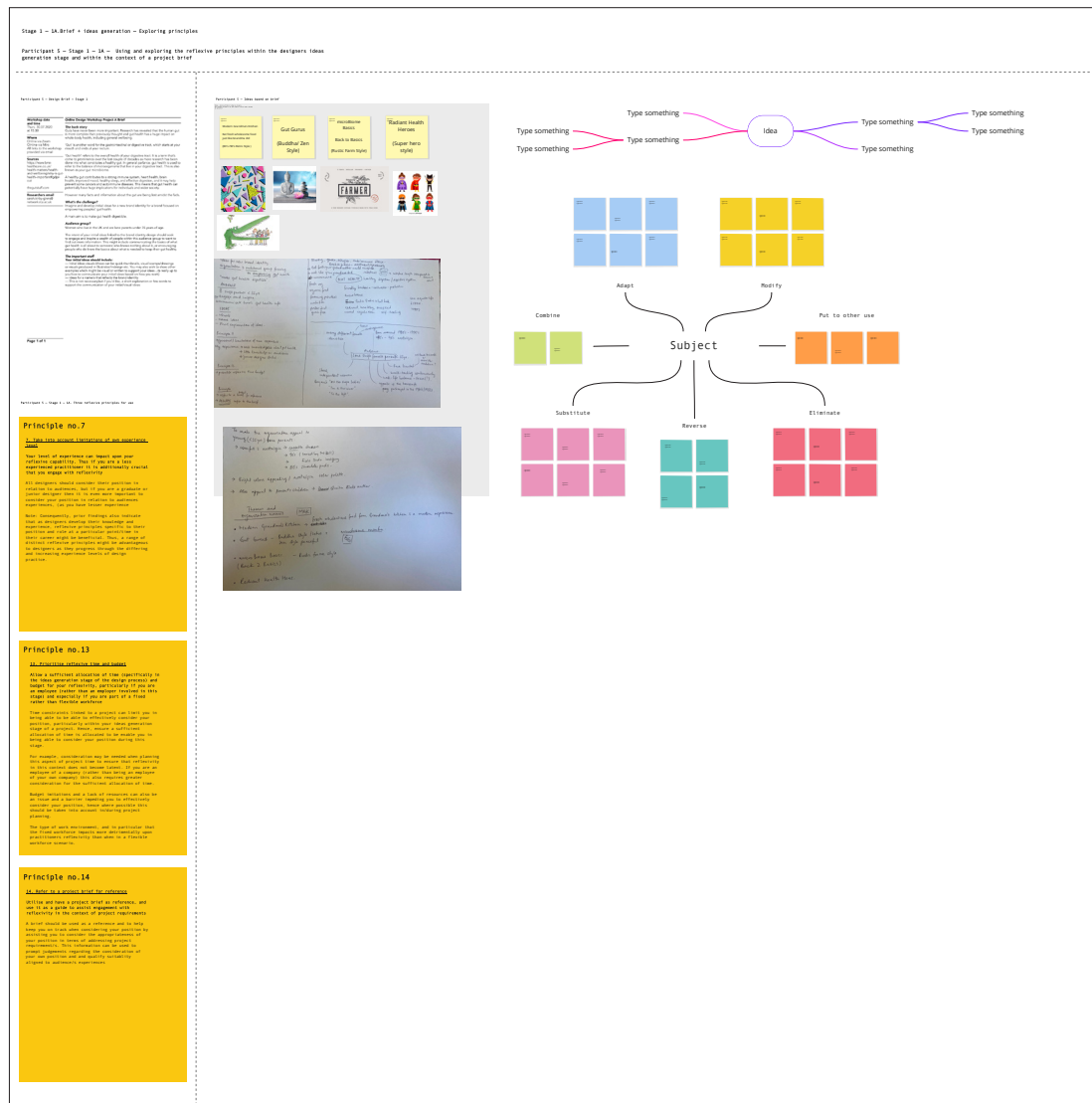


Figure 61 Online design workshop visualisations as a method of inquiry. Design participants' response to Miro exercise in stage 1B. Step 1 – Becoming familiar with the data.

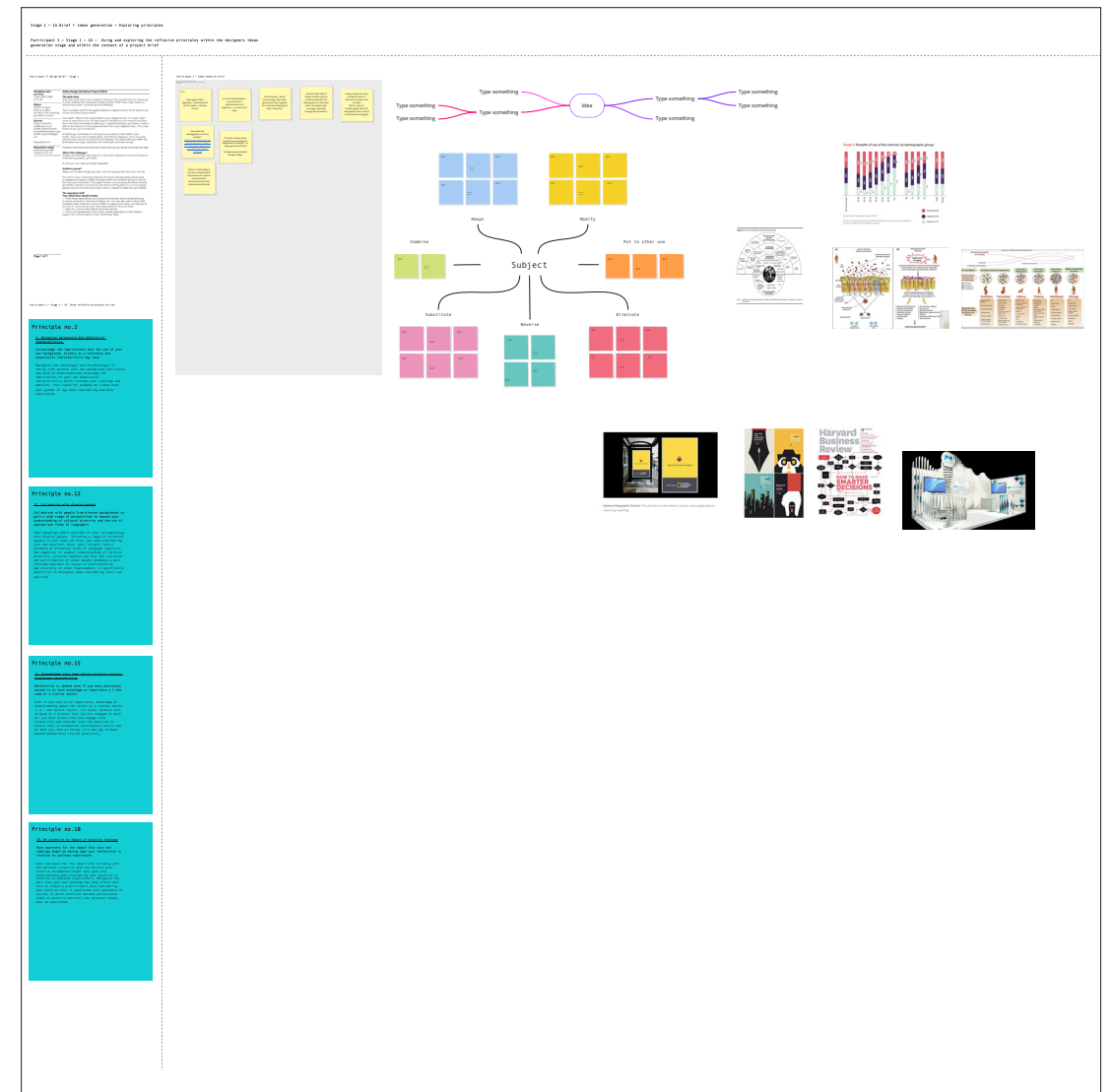


Figure 61 Online design workshop visualisations as a method of inquiry. Design participants' response to Miro exercise in stage 1B. Step 1 – Becoming familiar with the data.



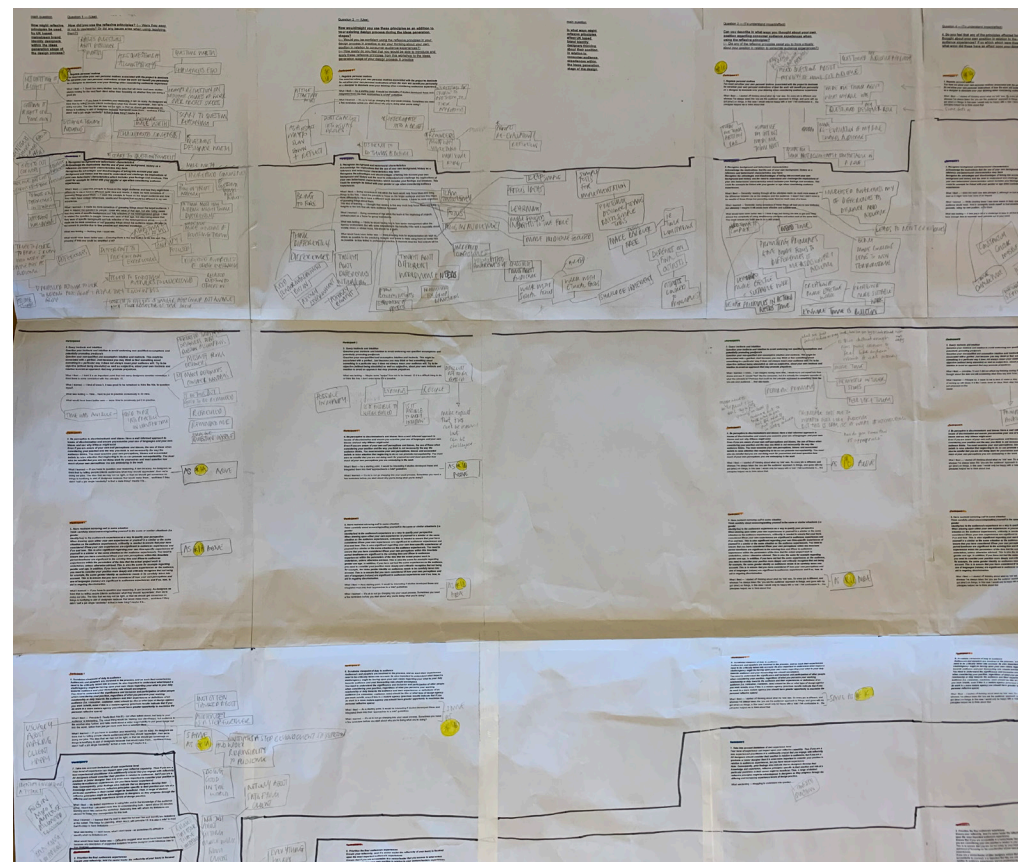
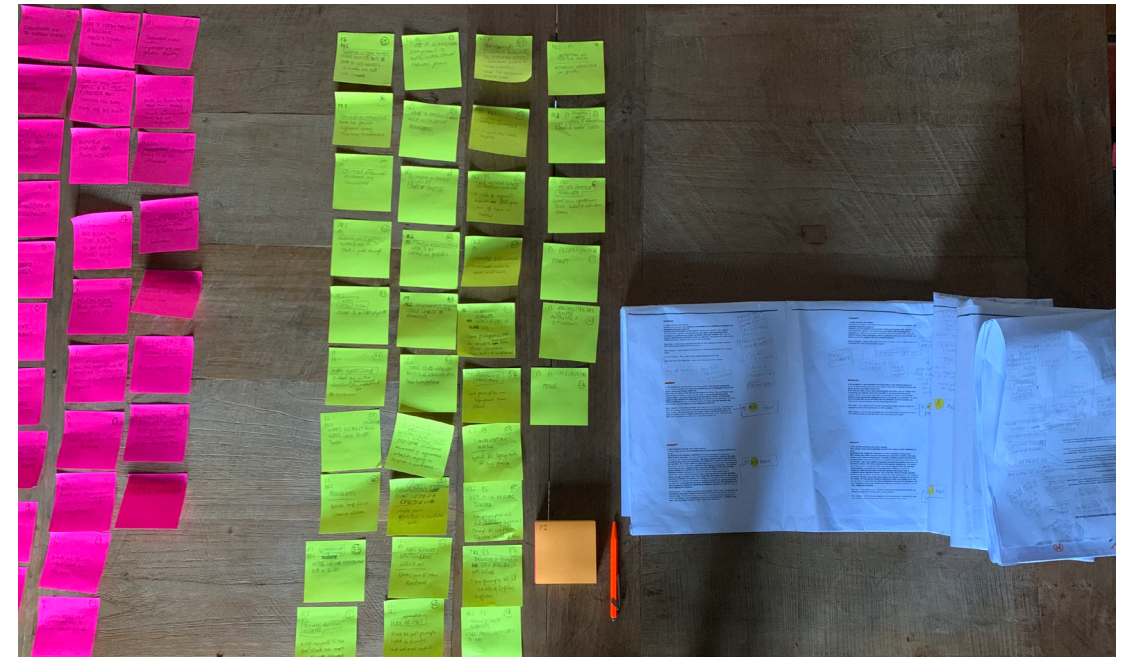


Figure 62 Online design workshop visualisations as a method of inquiry. Step 2 –Generate initial codes, initial coding of all data.



Figure 63 Step 2 –Generate initial codes, the initial coding of all workshop data. Image shows the scope of the data and coding.





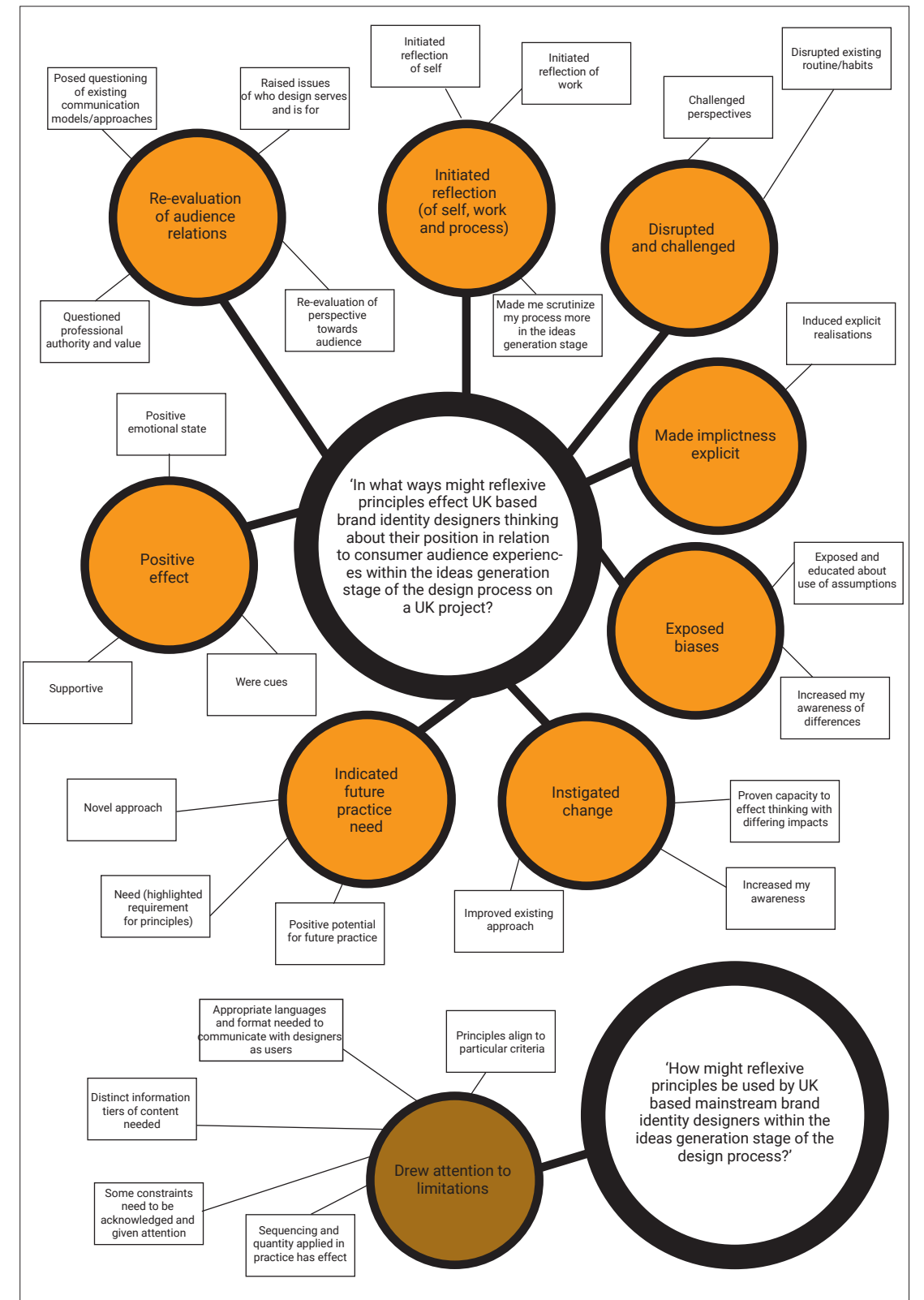
**Figure 63** Step 2 –Generate initial codes, the initial coding of all workshop data. Image shows the scope of the data and coding.

**Figure 63** Step 2 –Generate initial codes, the initial coding of all workshop data. Image shows the scope of the data and coding.





**Figure 64** Reflecting, modifying, merging and developing themes using manually coded data and the themes in Microsoft Excel. Step 4. Reviewing themes.



**Figure 65** Final thematic map with defined themes and sub-themes. Step 5 – Define themes.

### 4.3.2. Participants' responses

The workshop method involved 5 UK-based brand identity designer participants working in professional practice on UK-based projects. Six participants were initially recruited, but on the morning of the workshop, one participant emailed saying they could not attend due to unforeseen work commitments<sup>76</sup>. Four design participants were originally based in London studios, and one was based in the South-East of the UK. At the time of the workshop all of these designers were working online from home due to the Covid pandemic. Covid-19 and the participants' locations instigated the rationale for using an online platform approach and workshop to enable participants to fully engage in the research. Not all participants were originally from London but from different locations around the UK and Europe<sup>77</sup>. Participants' number of years of experience in practice ranged from 3-20+. All were at differing levels of role in their design careers ranging from Junior Designer to Creative Director/Creative Lead.

There were a total of 18 different principles investigated in this phase. The focus was on the principles collectively rather than individually. Not all principles were explored by each designer due to the time availability of the designers and avoidance of their fatigue. Each participant was given a number of these different principles in Stage 1A of the Workshop to use and test. Participants 1,3, and 6 were each given four different principles. Participants 2 and 5 were each given three different principles. This difference in the number of principles was because the former participants had more years of experience than the latter. I felt it appropriate that designers with more years of experience were given one additional principle each to explore to enable all of the principles to be investigated.

<sup>76</sup> The participants involved in the online design workshop are Participants 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6. Participant 4 was unable to attend.

<sup>77</sup> One London based designer had moved from their UK based home to their native home in the Czech Republic as during a Covid lockdown they were able work online on their UK based projects.

### 4.3.3. Phase Three – Implement and intervene: synchronous online design workshops thematic analysis findings and discussion

The results from the previous Phase Two revealed an opportunity and need for improvement to designers' reflexive practice. The aim of Phase Three was to establish how 18 reflexive design principles might affect designers' thinking about and use of their reflexive practice in relation to their consumer audience experience designing. Phase Three sought to reveal the potential of the principles in transforming designers' thinking in this context and which principles might be most effective or not, and why. The Phase Three thematic analysis enabled specific findings and justifications to be made. Participants' data extracts were significant by their inclusion across the entire set and/or via the abundance of occurrences/high frequency in relation to all of the defined themes. These themes are discussed below.

#### Question one themes

The first question in Phase Three is shown below in Figure 66.

<b>Synchronous online design workshop question 1</b>	<i>In what ways might reflexive principles effect UK based brand identity designers thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of the design process on a UK project?</i>
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**Figure 66** Phase Three – synchronous online design workshop question one.

The analysis uncovered eight main themes and 21 associated sub-themes regarding the ways the principles affected participant designers' thinking about their position (Figure 65). The eight themes were 'Instigated change,' 'Initiated reflection (of self, work and process),' 'Re-evaluation of audience relations,' 'Indicated future practice need,' 'Made implicitness explicit,' 'Disrupted and challenged,' 'Positive effect' and 'Exposed biases.' Figure 67 presents some participant quotes connected to the themes.

Themes linked to question one asked in phase 2	Main theme	Sub themes	Data examples – participant quotes
	<b>Instigated change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved existing approach</li> <li>– Increased my awareness</li> <li>– Proven capacity to effect thinking with differing impacts</li> </ul>	<p><i>'All the principles made me much more aware of the difference between me as the designer and the audience. It wasn't that I didn't know to be mindful of these things but promoting made them be much more of a focus' (Participant three).</i></p> <p><i>'The principles enhanced awareness of what I already know' (Participant two).</i></p>
	<b>Initiated reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Initiated reflection of self</li> <li>– Initiated reflection of work</li> <li>– Made me scrutinize my process more in the ideas generation stage</li> </ul>	<p><i>'The overall principles helped me to reflect a great deal more on the origin of my knowledge and references and to question their authenticity, appropriateness and relevance' (Participant six).</i></p> <p><i>'I learned that it's ok to not go charging into your usual process. Sometimes you need a few reminders before you start about why you're doing what you're doing' (Participant one).</i></p>
	<b>Re-evaluation of audience relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Posed questioning of existing communication models/approaches</li> <li>– Raised issues of who design serves and is for</li> <li>– Re-evaluation of perspective towards audience</li> <li>– Questioned professional authority and value</li> </ul>	<p><i>'It made me more conscious of guessing things about the audience and how they might think differently to me or have a different world view and need. It's easy to cut corners in practice due to time pressure and assumed knowledge' (Participant three).</i></p> <p><i>'I started off thinking about what my 'role' was. So every job is different, and whereas I've always taken the 'you are the audience' approach to things, and gone with my gut on things, in this case I would only be happy with a 'role' I felt comfortable in... the principles helped me to think about that' (Participant one).</i></p> <p><i>'Principle 12 made me think about who we are talking to and what is appropriate to resonate with them and how best to do this' (Participant three).</i></p> <p><i>'Principle six is not often talked about, but is interesting. The usual thing would be 'making your client happy', but audience is like another step further, and talks more about a wider responsibility to put 'good things' out into the world, rather than just get more work from a satisfied client' (Participant one).</i></p>
	<b>Made implicitness explicit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Induced explicit realisations</li> </ul>	<p><i>'Principle no. three made me make a step back during the process of coming up with ideas. It is like I wrote down an idea, then step back and analysed what I just proposed on the paper.' (Participant two)</i></p>
	<b>Disrupted and challenged</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Disrupted existing routine/habits</li> <li>– Challenged perspectives</li> </ul>	<p><i>'They made me look fresh at things, using different methodology, avoiding routine practices' (Participant two).</i></p> <p><i>'I'm aware that I would use a lot of resources and articles online as research, but because of the principles I scrutinized the sources of that information a little bit more than I would have done before' (Participant six).</i></p>

Figure 67 Themes and participants' quotes from the synchronous online design workshop question one.

Themes linked to question one asked in phase 2	Main theme	Sub themes	Data examples – participant quotes
	<b>Indicated future practice need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Positive potential for future practice</li> <li>– Need (highlighted requirement for principles)</li> <li>– Novel approach</li> </ul>	<p><i>'This is really important stuff, and hopefully, principles like this are going to be a staple in design in future. I think a lot of studios would be really interested in the results of this and in having a similar workshop as part of professional practice' (Participant one).</i></p> <p><i>'Interestingly, there's nothing I have found to date like this that is documented or written that's actually in a form that a studio can offer to designers to use or for other lead designers to just go. I need my other designers to think about this' (Participant three).</i></p> <p><i>'I think this would be equally important to be shared across the agency as a whole. As I think account directors and managers could use these to help formulate their brief before it comes through to the design team. It's important to all be aligned as a team and have the same guiding principles' (Participant six).</i></p> <p><i>'It definitely made me think about what I would do next and then consciously implement it next time' (Participant three).</i></p>
	<b>Positive effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Positive emotional state</li> <li>– Supportive</li> <li>– Were cues</li> </ul>	<p><i>'Principle 12 made me think about implementation of how to do this to encourage greater diversity' (Participant three).</i></p>
	<b>Exposed biases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Exposed and educated about use of assumptions</li> <li>– Increased my awareness of differences</li> </ul>	<p><i>'Reading through all the principles made me much more aware of the difference between me as the designer and the audience. It wasn't that I didn't know to be mindful of these things but promoting made them be much more of a focus' (Participant one).</i></p>

Figure 67 Themes and participants' quotes from the synchronous online design workshop question one.

**Theme – Instigated change**

100% of participants stated that the reflexive design practice principles positively impacted them. All described that using them instigated an awareness and a change in their thinking, improving their prior/existing approaches. The principles prompted designers to reflect not only during the workshop but also after using them in the workshop. Thus, indicating reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, on reflexive practice. This result draws correlations with aspects of Thompson and Thompson's (2008) view that reflective practice can only be reflexive if a practitioner engages in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.



**Theme – Initiated reflection (of self, work and process)**

Participants explained that the principles enhanced their judgement, increased their concentration and focus on a brief, developed their learning and acted as cues prompting them to reflect upon themselves within their work and made them scrutinise their process more. According to Bolton, 'reflexivity is a sophisticated human process' (2014:5) requiring support to facilitate change and learning. This theme identified that the reflexive design principles supported participants to reflect upon themselves, how they positioned themselves within their work and how they engaged with their process.

Moreover, participants' descriptions aligned to this theme revealed that the principles could provide a new theoretical-practical offering to what van Toorn (1997) proposes is needed - a way to encourage the designer to be critical, respond to a devoid of reflection regarding its social role, and challenge an entrenched ideology in practice. The principles can enable designer's to reflect critically upon the conditions under which their actions emerge. This is something which van Toorn claims designers fail to do. Results demonstrated that the principles initiated critical reflection of participants' work and process. Lawson and Dorst propose that designers develop through this way, but they claim this has been neglected by designers (2009).

**Theme – Re-evaluation of audience relations**

Schön discusses that the practitioner's relationship in any design discipline can be linked to a transactional situation, in which the stance toward inquiry is their attitude toward reality with which they deal (1983). Connected with this, participants explained that the principles made them think about actions associated with their communication behaviour/s and alerted them to their use of guesswork. The principles instigated contemplation of the designers existing communicative role and their positioning, enhancing their focus on audience and their responsibility and assumptions towards communication within practice. This contributes to addressing claims that effective collaborative brand relationships between producers and audiences in branding/brand identity design are needed (Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002). Participants explained that the principles made them question and re-think who design is for, who it serves and what its purpose is.

**Theme – Indicated future practice need**

Results established that participants felt a need for the reflexive design principles in practice, explaining that they had not engaged with anything like the principles before the workshop. Participants' stated that the principles could be situated earlier in the design process. They discussed the benefits the principles could have for other designers and their value for the whole team in studios/agencies. The principles were initially developed for designers' individual applications. Yet, this finding partly connects with Johnson's perspective that many companies work in a team structure during the early stages of designing a brand identity (2016). This finding evidences an opportunity for the reflexive design principles to be explored collaboratively beyond the individual designer.

**Theme – Made implicitness explicit**

According to Bolton, our values in practice are rarely analysed or questioned, yet this theme revealed that the principles made designers' implicit thinking explicit and more noticeable. This theme uncovered that the principles could contribute to addressing an element of van Toorn's reflexive practice outlook (1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015), in which he explains that explicitness is needed in the production relationship of the making of messages by the designer. This links with the notion that the principles can expose some aspects of tacit knowledge (Polyani, 2009), which Schön described practitioners engage with in practice. Reflecting on results from this theme suggests that the principles facilitated designers' awareness and actions.

**Theme – Disrupted and challenged**

According to Pollner, reflexivity is 'an unsettling, i.e. an insecurity regarding the basic assumptions, discourse and practices used in describing reality' (1991:370, cited in Cunliffe, 2004: 407). This corresponds with this theme as participants explained that the principles disrupted and challenged existing routines in their ideas generation stage and prompted them to take a step back, slow down, or look at things in a new way. The principles made participants question the reliability of sources they used and were provided with by others.

**Theme – Positive effect**

The principles positively affected all participants and made them think about and increased their awareness of how they use their position in several ways. Reflexivity helps in understanding how we constitute realities and identities in relational ways, and it can therefore extend knowledge related to collaboration and responsive ways of working (Cunliffe, 2004:407).

**Theme – Exposed biases...**

Participants commented that the principles exposed the use of their assumptions and increased their awareness of differences and biases. This result coincides with addressing Frascara, *et.al.* (1997) Frascara (2005, 2006), Akama (2007), Krippendorff (2006), Forlizzi and Lebbon (2006) Crilly, Maier, and Clarkson (2008) and Crilly *et.al.*'s. (2008) discussions. This is regarding examining designers' own experiences, beliefs, and motivations in designing, message construction and meaning and the use of their intent for what Crilly, Maier, and Clarkson (2008) term mediation. They state this needs to be given essential and careful attention. This theme reveals the principles can contribute a response to what van Toorn claims is designers' dominance of power, which he proposes limits the ways in which such designers might engage in a dialogic relationship with audiences and consumers (van Toorn, 1997, 2006, 2009, 2015).

**Question two theme**

The second question in Phase Three is shown below in Figure 68.

<b>Synchronous online design workshop question 2</b>	<i>How might reflexive principles be used by UK based brand identity designers within the ideas generation stage of the design process?</i>
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**Figure 68** Phase Three – synchronous online design workshop question two.

This Phase revealed one central theme 'drew attention to limitations' and five associated sub-themes, as shown in the thematic map – Figure 65. Some participant quotes connected to the themes from question two of the online workshop are shown in Figure 69.

	Main theme	Sub themes	Data examples – participant quotes
Themes linked to question two asked in phase 2	Drew attention to limitations	– Principles align to particular criteria	<i>'In the future consider dividing up the principles to designer's experience levels' (Participant five).</i>
		– Appropriate languages and format needed to communicate with designers as users	<i>'Perhaps it would benefit with a subhead for each paragraph to help direct the reader to read the piece more relevant to their position' (Participant six).</i>
		– Distinct information tiers of content needed	<i>'The principles all did slightly different things so using them together would be key. Some would be easier to implement in practice than others too' (Participant three).</i>
		– Sequencing and quantity applied in practice has effect	
		– Some constraints need to be acknowledged and given attention	

**Figure 69** Themes and participant quotes from the synchronous online design workshop question two.

**Theme – Drew attention to limitations**

This theme revealed that participants felt the principles needed refining. Their responses identified their limitations and detailed ways they perceived the principles could be developed, as discussed below. Results revealed that to avoid initial information overload and resolve issues with lack of time, there should be two distinct levels/tiers of information. This included one level of simplified quick reference information to offer an overview of the principle, and another more detailed level of principle information. Connected to this, participants explained that whilst the more in-depth explanations were helpful, it would be beneficial to have some examples of how the principles correlate with project outcomes in practice.

Participants explained that the sequencing of the principles needed amendments and that the overarching number of principles could be reduced whilst still providing sub-principles.

The findings above led to the refinement of content, quantity and the information structuring of principles. Consequently, the original 18 principles were categorised and aligned according to their content and propositions within eight overarching principles. This refinement provided designers with distinct information tiers of principles by way of a condensed and simplified form, whilst offering them the opportunity to engage with the more expansive set of 18 principles if required. Additionally, research regarding principles associated with Design in other areas, including Design Council<sup>78</sup> and Government Design<sup>79</sup>, indicates that the number of principles available for use ranges from four to ten. Whilst there are eight overarching principles, this phase identified that the eighteen principles explored in the online design workshop were all significant and have something to offer brand identity design practitioners. Hence, all will be included in the reflexive design guide.

The findings uncovered the need to review and re-write some of the wording of the principles to ensure clarity in communication. The principles were grouped into four usability areas connected to the broader ideas generation stage of the design process. The first group referred to the principles for use throughout the entire duration of the ideas generation stage. The second for use in the pre-briefing stage of the process. The third for use after getting the brief, and finally, for use in pre-ideas generation stages.

Responses highlighted that the principles align with particular design practice criteria, which would need to be considered if they were to be utilised in practice. These criteria are that some of the principles first, require the involvement of others in a team for them to be fully effective for use by designers; second, some were easier to implement than others; third, would correlate to specific projects; fourth, need more time than others to apply; fifth, would have more significance and/or effectiveness for particular

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/what-framework-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond>.

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-design-principles>.

experience level/s of designers<sup>80</sup> and were more relevant to some designers than others<sup>81</sup> and; sixth, that the diversity of the audience themselves might have an impact on their use. In addition, responses revealed that the principles needed to be amended so that designers could use them from both individual user and an individual engaged in a collective task/entity perspectives. Results also demonstrated that some of the content and the overall way it might be developed in terms of format/s and visual language/s, as well as a digital context for designers as users, needed careful thought. In keeping with the reflexive intentions of this study, this theme and associated participants' feedback was taken forward into my design of the guide v.1 prototype.

<sup>80</sup> This was considered and proposed for use as part of the workshop, as all participants were given different principles to use in the workshop, which were selected and aligned to their experience level.

<sup>81</sup> Participants didn't allude to exactly what they meant by this.

**4.3.4. Reflections and further feedback from participant designers on the thematic analysis results after the synchronous online design workshop**

As discussed in the introduction to this section, Phase Three extends initial design participants' responses to the reflexive principles beyond those of the actual workshop. In alignment with the reflexive focus of this research, this increased feedback supported me in further reflecting and evaluating. The additional questions asked participants to comment on the thematic map and findings in this phase and the most salient responses include those presented in Figure 70. Other participant quotes are shown in Appendix 15.

This further participant feedback and reflections, along with thematic findings reflections discussed above from Phase Three, led to knowledge that contributed to the conclusions and development of the theory as presented in the next section.

Some reflections and further feedback from participant designers on the thematic results after the Phase 3 workshop	
<i>'I personally felt as though this is something that will one day form a part of the design process in the same way as a clearly written brief does. Every designer understands that a solution to a design problem is only as good as the brief, and I think that this will extend in future to 'a designer will only be able to approach a brief correctly, when they have taken reflexive principles into consideration' (Participant one).</i>	<i>'From looking at the findings, I noticed there are more general points (i.e. Disrupted and challenged) and more specific points (i.e. Re-evaluation of audience relations) whether that's helpful, thinking about the guide as an outcome for designers to distinguish between those further?' (Participant three).</i>
<i>'Basically, all the findings in yellow I agree with however I find it difficult to understand what 'Made implicitness explicit' means' (Participant two).</i>	<i>'I've thought a lot about the workshop since we did it and the issues it raised. The process definitely improved my existing approach, mainly as it made me consider my motivations for choosing a certain solution to the design problem over others' (Participant one).</i>

**Figure 70** Further feedback from participant designers on the thematic analysis results after the online design workshop.

**4.3.5. Summary of Phase Three – Implement and intervene: synchronous online design workshop**

Phase Two results confirmed an opportunity and need to improve designers' reflexive practice at a rudimentary level. The aim of Phase Three was to explore and establish the effect and reveal the potential of eighteen initial reflexive design practice principles upon designers thinking about and use of their positionality in relation to their consumer audience experience. Consequently, revealing knowledge about their indicative capacity in a practical design scenario. The focus was on shaping and organising the principles collectively rather than individually.

Phase Three uncovered that design participants stated that each of the eighteen principles was beneficial and positively affected and changed their thinking to varying degrees. These principles led to first the contestation of designers' practice beyond an individual level. Thus, supporting the designer to move beyond reflective practice, extending what Crouch and Pearce (2013) claim is a limitation of Schön's reflective practice. And, second, understanding that they can assist in initiating the professional brand identity designer in enacting a reflexive design practice and shift their relational positioning.

In summary, findings revealed a two-fold contribution that the reflexive design practice principles can: first, initiate designers to think critically about how they used themselves and considered their position in practice and; second, through designers' engagement and application with them in the online workshop, ensue a critical reflexive design practice process. Furthermore, the workshop method enhanced the understanding of designers' abilities.

Phase Three builds upon Mazé's (2009) three distinct but interrelated forms of critical practice. It extends upon research knowledge into the practitioner's roles in the evolution of branding, which Moore and Reid, claim is limited (2008:420 cited in Bostos and Levy 2012:34). Furthermore, these findings signal that the principles can offer a way to contribute and expand upon Schön's conception of reflective practice. They can enable the design practitioner to contest their practice beyond an individual level. This is by prompting them to challenge their assumptions and perspectives, initiating them to question and contemplate the consequences of their actions and judgements aligned to the wider social conventions specifically consumer audience experiences within the parameters of their practice. The principles facilitated a critically reflective and reflexive practice in and on action and subsequently assisted designers in re-evaluating their thinking about and use of their positionality. Consequently, leading to an extension and improvement of the designer's prior knowledge processes.

#### 4.3.6.

### **Refinement of reflexive design practice principles informed by Phase Three findings and reflections**

Discoveries from Phase Three assisted insights and knowledge for further research regarding the understanding of how and in what ways the principles could be developed. This was so they could be imparted into a reflexive design practice guide as a v.1 prototype. This phase informed the structural and grammatical refinement of the reflexive design practice from eighteen into eight overarching first-tier and 18 second-tier principles, as shown in Figure 71. Additionally, results informed my reflections on how these reflexive design practice principles needed to be developed using my design visualisation practice.



**Reflexive design practice principles v.2**

*Phase 3 workshop thematic findings/results led to the refinement and reduction in number of overarching principles as well as restructuring of the eighteen initial principles*

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**Principle 1. Collaborate**  
Diligently seek to involve and gain understanding from and with relevant people

**1a. Comprehend that client relations can propel presumptions**  
Ensure your relationship and loyalty to your client does not inhibit or limit your reflexivity towards audience/s experiences

*What the client requires and client provided information regarding audience is important, but be careful to not solely use your relationship with the client to presume what will be right for the audience. The professional relationship/loyalty to a client can have an effect on designers when considering their position in relation to audience. Therefore, you should not trust or rely only upon client direction/information to glean knowledge about audience experiences, even if you feel duty bound to do so. You can prompt clients themselves to think more carefully about the audience which concurrently affords everyone involved an opportunity to review the consideration of their position in relation to audience experiences.*

**1b. Collaborate with diverse people**  
Collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds to gain a wide range of perspectives to expand your understanding of cultural diversity and the use of appropriate forms of language/s

*Where possible, take advantage of what collaborating with diverse people, including a range of different people in your team can offer you when considering your own position in relation to audience experiences. Also, gain insights into a plethora of different forms of language (positive and negative) to support understanding of cultural diversity, cultural nuances and that the inclusion and participation of other people promotes a well informed approach to issues of discrimination. Age diversity of other team members can also be beneficial to designers when considering their own position in relation to audiences.*

**Principle 2. Be wary of own inclinations and interrogate them**  
Confront your own intuition and biases

**2a. Query instincts and intuition**  
Question your instincts and intuition to avoid endorsing non-qualified assumptions and potentially promoting prejudice/s

*Question your non-qualified and assumptive intuition and instincts. This might be associated with a gut-feeling. Just because you may think or feel something about something in a particular way it does not always mean your audience will. Be reflective about your own instincts and intuition to avoid an approach that may promote prejudices.*

**2b. Be perceptive to discrimination/s and biases**  
Have a well-informed approach to issues of discrimination and ensure you examine your use of languages and your own biases and ask why it/these might exist.

*Even if you are aware of your own self perceptions and biases, the use of these when considering your position and the way you think is not necessarily the way the audience thinks. You must examine your own perceptions, biases and associated beliefs to raise attention that neglecting to do so can promote non-equitability. You must also be mindful that you are not doing work for yourselves and must question how much of your own perceptions you are embodying in the work.*

**2c. Continually look at things de novo (afresh; again)**  
Thoughtfully employ your own design strategies, knowledge and experience. For example, engage with techniques and approaches that promote reflexivity, but try to look at things in a new way to negate formulaic solutions and avoid routine practices

*Use approaches and techniques that promote reflective and reflexive thinking. Avoid formulaic solutions and ensure that you are always looking at things in a new way to move beyond routines. Be attentive towards the potential impact of adopting a generic communication approach when work is intended to communicate across different cultures and continents to appeal to a broad audience/s.*

**Principle 3. Question applicability of communication perspectives**  
Select appropriate communication models

**3a. Scrutinize viewpoint of duty to audience**  
Audience/s are involved in communication processes, and as such their experiences need to be critically taken into account. Its also important to understand what impact a studio/agency might be having upon your own views regarding your what to your duty towards audience and your transacting role should encompass.

*You need to understand the significance, inclusion and participation of audience/s when considering your position. This is regardless of what you perceive your working relationship or duty towards the audience and their experiences should be, or your definitions of an audience (i.e. consumer, customer, user) should include, or what type of design agency you work in/with, even if this is an established mature agency. (Prior research indicates that if you do work in a more mature agency you should have greater opportunity to maximise the personal reflexive space.)*

**3b. Prioritise the final audience/s experiences**  
Ensure your reflexivity, (and if a senior leader the reflexivity of your team) is focused upon the most important audience/s experiences

*Ensure that if you are accountable to a senior/leader that you assess to what extent you are considering the influence of your seniors/leaders experiences in relation to audiences experiences alongside your own. This is to ensure that you are not led solely by a seniors/leaders experiences to the detriment of focusing upon the consideration of your own position in relation to audience experiences. If you are a senior/leader of other designers, it is important to ensure that even though they are often*

**Figure 71** The refined eight overarching first-tier principles and 18-second-tier principles.

**Reflexive design practice principles v.2**

*accountable to yourself, they are considering their position in relation to audience experiences. This is so they are not predominantly focused upon considering your experiences whilst neglecting the consideration of their reflexivity in relation to audiences experiences.*

**3c. Be attentive to impact of practice ideology**  
Have awareness for the impact that your own ideology might be having upon your reflexivity in relation to audience experiences

*If you bring your own personal view/s of what you believe your practice encompasses into your work, have an awareness for the impact that this might have upon your understanding when considering your position in relation to audience experience/s. Recognise that your own ideology of, or about practice, may contribute to your role as an industry practitioner when considering your position in this context. This is associated with having an awareness of actions, in which conflicts between professional codes of practice and one's own personal values should be questioned and vice versa.*

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**Principle 4. Utilise credible sources**  
Ask questions of origin and relevance of sources that are implemented

**4a. Employ reliable audience research insights and techniques**  
Engage with relevant and reliable audience research insights and techniques to challenge pre-conceptions, facilitate reflections and support cognizant reflexivity

*Audience research insights are important in prompting you to consider your own position and inform your direction. Effective insights can provide more in-depth understanding about audiences experiences, challenge pre-conceptions, facilitate reflections and incite conversations about audiences. Such research insights might be comprised of external techniques via client provided audience research and data, as well as via the use of your own techniques to gather audience research and data. However, you need to be attentive as to whether all research insights, their source/s and content /s are accurate, and thus whether they are likely to be reliably effective or not in assisting your reflexivity.*

**4b. Engage with credible reflexive sources to challenge biases**  
Credible reflexive materials and approaches must be utilized with to raise awareness of and challenge biases

*Reflexive approach/es and material/s should be engaged with to support you when considering your own position in relation to audiences experiences. These will for example, raise awareness of your own biases and challenge your own self-perceptions and perspectives regarding assumptions.*

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**Principle 5. Value reflexivity**  
Ensure precedence for ones own reflexivity

**5a. Prioritise reflexive time and budget**  
Allow a sufficient allocation of time and budget for your reflexivity, particularly if you are an employee of a company

*and part of a fixed rather than flexible workforce.*

*Time and budget constraints linked to a project can limit you in being able to effectively consider your position, particularly within your ideas generation stage of a project. Hence, when costing/planning a project, ensure a sufficient allocation of time, budget and resources are available/provided for reflexivity during the ideas generation stage to ensure that it does not become latent. If you are an employee of a company (rather than being an employee of your own company) this also requires greater consideration to ensue sufficient allocation of time. The type of work environment, and in particular that the fixed workforce impacts more detrimentally upon practitioners reflexivity than when in a flexible workforce scenario.*

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**Principle 6. Govern self-awareness**  
Recognise influence of ones own self

**6a. Regulate personal motives**  
You must not allow your own personal motives associated with the project to dominate

*Do not allow your own personal motivations of how the work will benefit you personally as a designer dominate over your thinking when considering audiences experiences.*

**6b. Recognise background and behavioural characteristics**  
Acknowledge the implications that the use of your own background, history as a reference and behavioural characteristics may have

*Recognise the advantages and disadvantages of taking into account your own background and history, and acknowledge the need to understand and challenge the implications of your own behavioural characteristics. This includes your feelings and emotions, and could for example, be linked with your gender or age when considering audience experiences.*

**6c. Have restraint mirroring self in same situation**  
Think carefully about assessing/putting yourself in the same or similar situation/s (i.e. gender identity/ies) to the audience/s experience as a way to qualify your perspective

*When drawing upon your own experiences in a similar/ same situation as the audience, you need to carefully consider if, and how, your own experiences might be significant or not to audiences experiences. This also applies to time-specific experiences of yourself in a similar or the same situation as the audience. For example, you should ensure that you have considered if, and how, your own perceptions related to a date/time frame may or may not be significant to audience/s experience/s within the time frame or period that the project is undertaken. This is also the same regarding gender identity and age to ensure that the use of languages (values) are significant to audiences experiences and if so, how. This is to aid in negating discrimination.*

**Figure 71** The refined eight overarching first-tier principles and 18-second-tier principles.

Reflexive design practice principles v.2

Principle 7.

Review experience and knowledge

Acknowledge the capability of ones experience and knowledge

7a. Take into account limitations of own experience level

Your level of experience can impact upon your reflexive capability. Thus if you are a less experienced practitioner it is additionally crucial that you engage with reflexivity

All designers should consider their position in relation to audiences, but if you are a in a junior role (i.e., an intern, graduate or junior designer) then it is even more important that you consider your position in relation to audiences experiences, due to having lesser design experience.

7b. Deliberate the influence of past education

Contemplate how, and to what extent your past education and your learning from/in this context might be informing your reflexivity

Reflect upon your past education and review how and what you learned might now inform what you understand about how you consider (and the importance of) your position in relation to audience experiences and why.

Principle 8.

Reevaluate the brief

Continuously scrutintse the brief

8a. Refer to a project brief for reference

Utilise and have a project brief as reference, and use it as a guide to assist engagement with reflexivity in the context of project requirements

A brief should be used as a reference and to help keep you on track when considering your position by assisting you to consider the appropriateness of your position in terms of addressing project requirement/s. This information can be used to prompt judgements regarding the consideration of your own position and qualify suitability aligned to audience/s experiences.

8b. Acknowledge that same sector projects require continuous re-evaluation

Reflexivity is needed even if you have previously worked in or have knowledge or experience of the same or a similar sector

Even if you have prior experience, knowledge or understanding about the sector or a similar sector (i.e., the sector itself, its scale, processes, etc.) aligned to a project that you are engaged to work on, you should engage with reflexivity and consider your own position in relation to audiences experiences aligned to the project you are engaged within. This is to ensure that re-evaluation continuously occurs, so that you look at things in a new way to move beyond potentially routine practices.

4.4.

Phase Four – Impact: Communicating the reflexive design practice principles and further verifying their use and efficacy in applied practice

As a result of the findings of Phase Three, a reflexive design practice guide v.1 prototype (Figures 43-45 and 72) was developed. This was so that further investigation and testing by designers of this prototype in their applied practice in a situated learning space (Lave and Wenger, 1991, in Lawson and Dorst, 2009) could take place. This reflexive design practice guide v.1 prototype is presented in the visual practice process book on pages 126-130 and was explored in Phase Four, the final phase of this research, as discussed on pages 235-242.

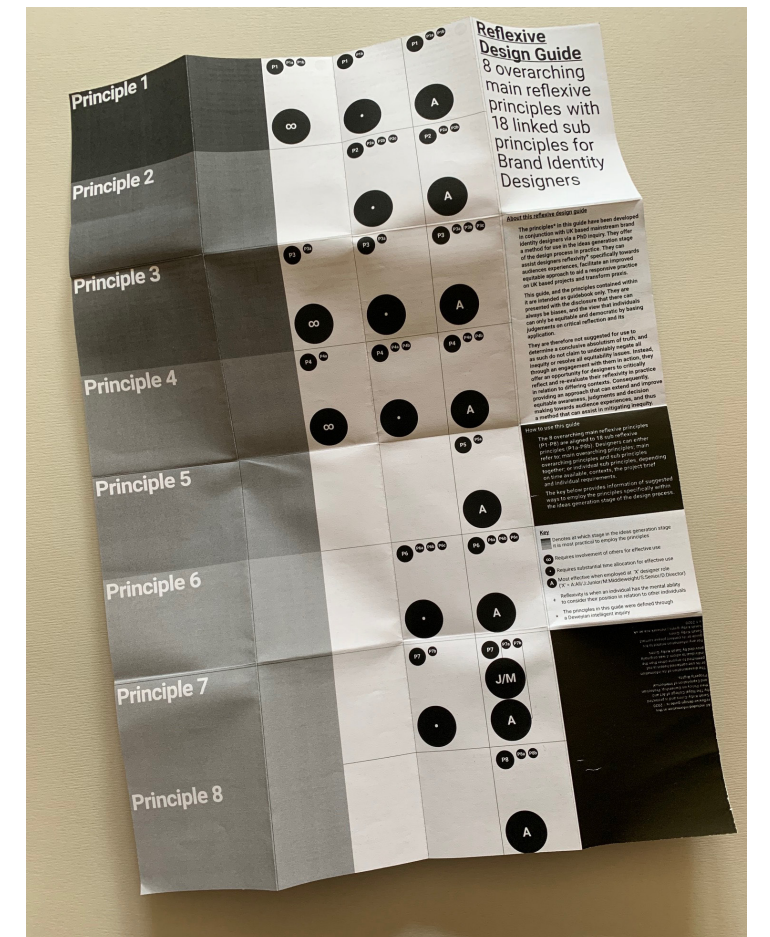
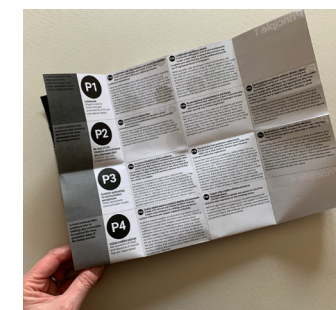


Figure 72 Printed prototype v.1 of the reflexive design guide.

Figure 71 The refined eight overarching first-tier principles and 18-second-tier principles.

Phase Four communicated the reflexive design practice principles via their design and presentation in a reflexive design guide. This guide (Figures 43-45 and 72) was explored and tested by professional brand identity designers as a physical v.1 prototype in their applied practice. The aim was to evaluate and verify their efficacy and impact in contributing to the designer's reflexive design process and practice in applied practice and thus as a preliminary design method. Comments, feedback and reflections from professional brand identity designers were provided regarding the impact of the refined reflexive design principles and guide when employed on a new UK-based project within the ideas generation stage of their process in their own applied practice.

Phase Four findings informed my understanding and reflections of improvements needed to develop the final reflexive design practice principles and associated guide offered as part of this research.

#### 4.4.1.

### Participants' responses

This phase involved three UK-based professional brand identity designer participants<sup>82</sup>. Two individuals had been involved in the prior Phase Three of this research<sup>83</sup>, and one had been involved in all phases.

<sup>82</sup> Five participants were invited but one participants emailed to advise that they couldn't respond to the questions due to extensive workloads and one participants couldn't because they were ill with Covid-19.

<sup>83</sup> To note is that as the participants were involved in prior stages of the research, including semi-structured interviews and the online design workshop, they had knowledge of some of the prior initial reflexive design principles, but not all.



4.4.2.  
**Phase Four – Impact: Communicating the reflexive design practice principles and further verifying their use and efficacy in applied practice findings – comments, feedback and reflections from designers and researcher reflections**

The professional brand identity designer participant’s responses to seven questions that were asked, as shown in Figure 46, are discussed below. The significant discovery in Phase Four was that the reflexive design practice principles and guide were confirmed as useful and as positively affecting all participant designers thinking in their applied practice. Results corroborated prior findings that the principles can initiate engagement with and enact a reflexive practice and process. This was by prompting designers to critically reflect upon and re-evaluate their thinking and actions regarding their thinking about and use of their positionality. These exploratory insights indicate that the reflexive design practice principles imparted into a guide can offer professional brand identity designers a preliminary new design practice method. Another key discovery in this phase was that participants’ feedback on the v.1 prototype revealed that further developments were needed to the principles and guide to improve their employability in applied practice. This feedback is shown in Figures 73-77 and is discussed below.

Participants’ comments revealed that the principles and guide increased their awareness of and focus on reflexive practice, initiating participants to adopt a critical mindset. They provoked new learning, propelling designers to think in new ways about things they had not considered before, initiating a different approach to their design process. This included changing current thinking about relationships, project collaboration, future working processes, how they considered teamwork, the relevance and involvement of other individuals in their team and their own appropriateness for working on a project and, the alignment of their role with their clients.

Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the v.1 guide in their applied practice	
<i>'I would use the principles again, and I feel that reflexive principles will play an increasing role in the creative process. However, I feel that in its present form, the guide could be <b>difficult to share due to the density of the information. With a more 'user focussed' design, format and layout, the guide would certainly be more 'endorsable' and ultimately usable' (Participant one).</b></i>	<i>'I would use the principles again, and I think this is good for bringing awareness to projects and should be useful in many projects. Yes, I would <b>recommend a developed version of this guide</b> to others, and also to be included as part of professional practice and learning' (Participant two).</i>

**Figure 73** Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the guide v.1 prototype in their applied practice.

Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the v.1 guide in their applied practice	
<i>'Using the principles does <b>kick start the process in a different way'</b> (Participant one).</i>	<i>'The guide is a great resource to re-familiarize yourself with, especially at the early stages of undertaking a new project. It focuses the mind on the subject of reflexivity in a way that allows you to be critical and mindful of many related aspects throughout the process, and I think this would be helpful to a range of practitioners and levels within the agency-based design process. From the project outset, <b>the principles allowed a step-by-step tool for further reflection</b>, the staged guidance was useful to quickly review before the project started, and check-in style approach at each stage of the process. It was relatively quick to consult throughout. It helped us consider the right team to bring into the process' (Participant three).</i>

**Figure 74** Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the guide v.1 prototype in their applied practice.

Results revealed that the guide could be used relatively quickly as a resource. This finding was significant in light of prior discoveries made in Chapter 2 and previous research findings in Phases 2 and 3 in this chapter. These initial findings identified that a key reason for designer participants’ inability to embrace reflexive practice was due to time limitations. Additionally, the principles and guide were discussed by participants as having the potential to benefit various designers with differing levels of expertise and experience, suggesting their versatility.

Principles that were described as initiating greater designer reflexive practice towards audiences than others were principles P1, P1a, P3, P5, P6a-c, P7b, and P8b. Participants explained, as highlighted in Figure 75, that these principles provoked them to; give more thought to content not previously given enough consideration in standard design processes; give increased awareness for principle content and what to apply in practice; think about things that hadn’t been thought about before; not fall

into assumed traps about oneself in relation to others; re-evaluate mirroring themselves in relation to working with and; thinking about diversity and their relationship towards different groups of people; not make assumptions, including not making assumptions about what an audience will positively react to; not only use just gut instincts when working on similar projects from the same sector; think about the potential of the principles in a range of positions with different agencies; think about how their Western educational experience perspective is used to approach projects; question the speed of the design process and; think about how they can make the principle content more a part of their process.

Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the v.1 guide in their applied practice	
<p>'In my own experience, P3 is the most interesting - the area of 'duty to the audience', and a transacting role is <b>something not given enough consideration in many standard design processes</b>' (Participant one).</p>	<p>'Some of the principles were already part of working practices (P4), and those practices are well defined within the agency. So it was <b>more the assumption-based double-checking and re-evaluation to stop the project decisions from going to autopilot without being conscious of the decisions that were being made</b>. P1a was especially helpful as <b>we tend to make assumptions when working on similar projects and sectors often</b>. So we tend to go on <b>gut instinct, assuming we know what audiences will react positively to</b>. I think this would be especially <b>helpful to a range of positions within agencies, such as higher levels and CD level, as well as lead designer level</b>. I found P6a-c and P7b very useful, as we often work with diverse audience groups, so <b>being aware of not falling into traps surround mirroring oneself was useful</b> to think about during the process. Also, in our agency, even though we think we are diverse, <b>we all come to these projects from generally a Western European view of the past educational experience</b>' (Participant three).</p>

**Figure 75** Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the guide v.1 prototype in their applied practice.

One participant suggested reducing the number of principles to five golden<sup>84</sup> principles and linking questions with the principles at the different stages with the intent to increase ownership of the principle content. As there were only eight overarching principles, and these were all indicated as having some relevance in feedback from four other participants in the prior phase of the research, it was decided not to reduce the number of principles. Key questions were added, which can link to each stage as the designer moves through their process using the principles and guide.

Participants stated that some of the guide information and content was difficult to understand due to its complexity and needed simplification, as described in Figures 76-77.

Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the v.1 guide in their applied practice	
<p>'The content and information was easy to understand but might <b>benefit from a short, general description of the purpose of the reflexive approach</b>. Although the information and content is clearly stated, I feel there is <b>still scope to simplify</b> and make the overall piece less 'wordy'. This could be done by <b>breaking up the information</b> into 'top level' statement, and sub-copy 'further information' for example. I think a <b>'checklist'</b> could also be a good idea' (Participant one).</p>	<p>'It took a couple of reads of it to get my head around. I think it was more due to the <b>dense amount of information in a compact format</b>. The information itself was able to be followed and understood, although depending on who this would be aimed towards ultimately and their level of experience, then maybe creating a slightly less dense outcome with a bit more structure in case people get lost. If they were <b>coming to this for the first time without prior knowledge</b> of the project, that might be needed' (Participant three).</p>
<p>'I was going back to headlines to apply the principles but <b>wasn't able to use the long stretches of copy in sub-principles</b> as it was just too much to get my head around <b>when working on a project at the same time</b>' (Participant two).</p>	<p>'The addition of an <b>A4 version might be useful</b> if the final outcome is intended to be printed at home. If the final outcome is going to be of a professionally printed object, then that is less of a consideration' (Participant three).</p>

**Figure 76** Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the guide v.1 prototype in their applied practice.

<sup>84</sup>Golden principles imply the notion of defined rules which does not align with the Deweyan Pragmatic perspective of this research and is not something this study sought to offer.



Participants feedback suggestions included reducing the word count and revisiting the use of language, particularly related to the second-tier principles. I considered this when the principles and guide v.1 prototype (Figure 72) was developed and before the participants were given access to this prototype. This was by considering first and second-level principles to define a clearer content hierarchy. Findings however emphasised that further revisions were needed. Participants commented that the distinction between first and second-tier level copy needed to be more precise to ensure these are as accessible, i.e. user-friendly as possible, and so that they can be understood promptly in practice to ensure time effectiveness. This copy distinction was outlined as particularly important for designers using the guide and principles for the first time and for designers who may not have prior knowledge about reflexive practice.

Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the v.1 guide in their applied practice	
'I would certainly consider <b>using colour rather than levels of grey</b> than can be confusing - as principle 1 is a single shade of grey, 2&3, and 4&5 are 2, and 6,7,8 are 3, this could be unclear' (Participant one).	'My first impression was that it is a <b>mock-up that will have later colours for each principles</b> perhaps. I would expect that it will <b>help me to understand</b> to whole guide better. It looks like you were trying to keep it simple. Somehow I was <b>trying to find connection between each page</b> , precisely columns. For example, if the last column one ach page relates to the last column on the other page, but then I found that the last column of the page with circles contains P1-P7 and for instance P4a' (Participant two).
'If it is ever published as a <b>book</b> rather then a leaflet, what about some very <b>simple infographics/ illustration</b> to introduce the point on each principle and sub-principle?' (Participant two).	'I wonder whether on developing this design object further that there could be <b>more visual signposting and spacing added</b> . Or that the information is shorter and <b>links to perhaps an online version</b> that has more expanded details. At the moment it feels quite heavy on the content and it might put some designers off' (Participant three).

**Figure 77** Comments, feedback and reflections from designers after they employed the guide v.1 prototype in their applied practice.

#### 4.4.3. Summary of Phase Four – Impact: Communicating the reflexive design practice principles and further verifying their use and efficacy in applied practice

Phase Four findings led to further content and design amendments to the principles and guide. This included: providing designers with a checklist and making the hierarchy of information clearer. Visual design amendments were undertaken based on participants' feedback regarding scale, format and colour associated with the guide. This was to ease designers' understanding of information and content. Amendments included using my visual design practice to revise the composition to increase white space and the redesign of the hierarchy and structure of groupings of information. These compositional and hierarchy changes subsequently led to a redesign of the layout, which linked to feedback to change the size and format of the guide from A3 to A4 page size. Whilst one participant suggested providing icons for each principle, I decided to leave the primary principle navigation as numerals because no other participants commented on this. Furthermore, my design view is that numerals aid greater sequential understanding when navigating the guide than visual icons as information. There were visual symbols in the key criteria information, so further icon inclusion was avoided to reduce any information overload confusion. Feedback regarding the need for greater visual signposting was addressed using colour and geometric shapes rather than symbols to develop the legend/ key. Participants comments stated that it might be useful for designers to have a digital format of the principles linked to the printed guide format. I developed a corresponding reflexive design practice guide digital pdf and digital app prototype. The need for a digital format emerged from this research, and was not part of the original intentions of this study. Due to this and the time limitations available as part of this PhD, the digital version and app prototype was unable to be explored and requires further testing in an applied practice context.

Participants explained that this research has significance and they asked to see to see the outcomes of this study. This request provided valuable feedback aligned with this study's purpose and overarching ambitions. Findings, reflections and evaluations from Phase Four informed the development and refinement of the principles and guide v.1 prototype within this PhD. This amended final reflexive design practice guide and a corresponding digital guide and some digital app screens are displayed in Figures 78-80. These are all shown in their entirety in the visual practice process book on pages 131-143. The final reflexive design practice principles and guide is offered as one of the contributions to knowledge in this research, a new preliminary design method, which can initiate a reflexive design practice and process. A more detailed explanation as to why and the research conclusions are presented in more detail in the next and final Chapter 5.

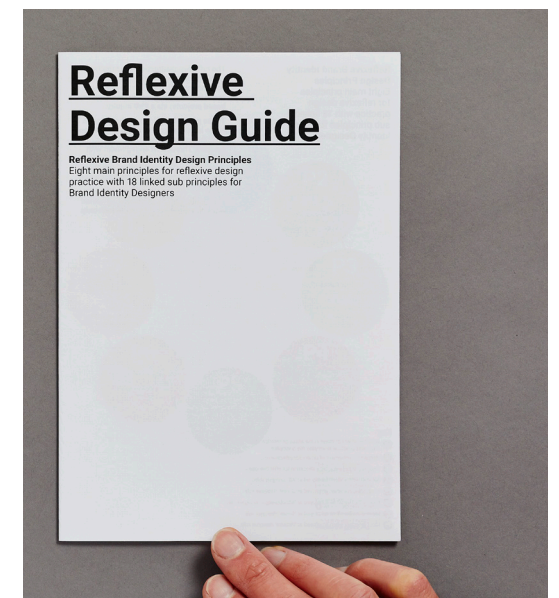
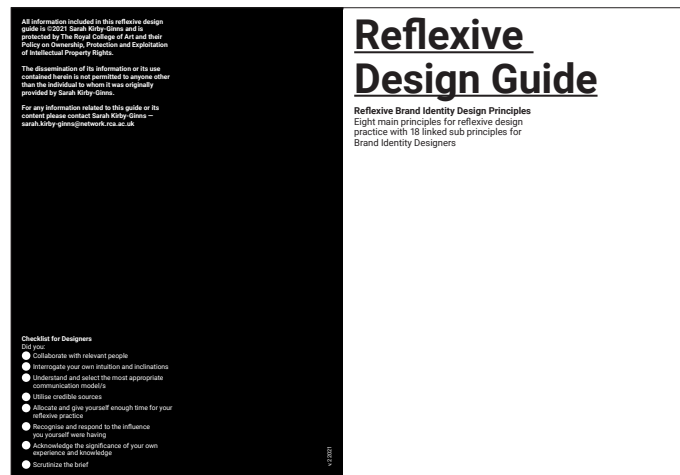


Figure 78 The final reflexive guide and principles in Indesign format.

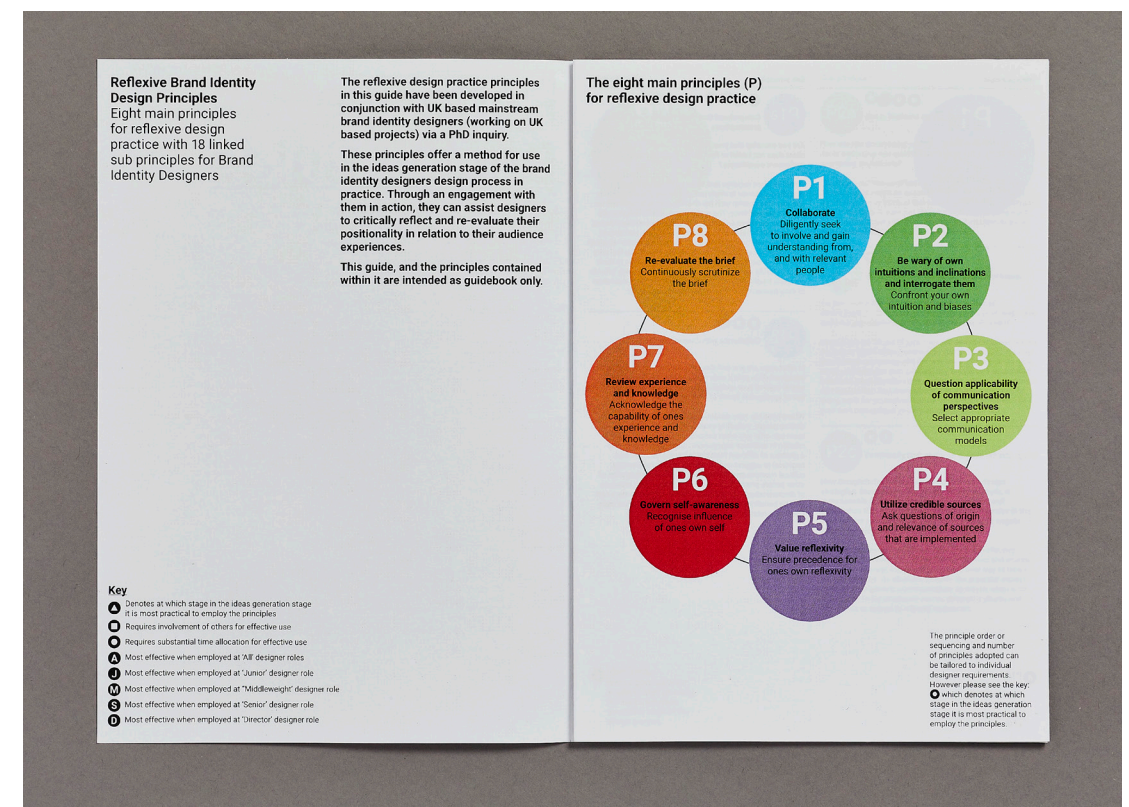


Figure 79 The final printed reflexive guide and principles in physical format.



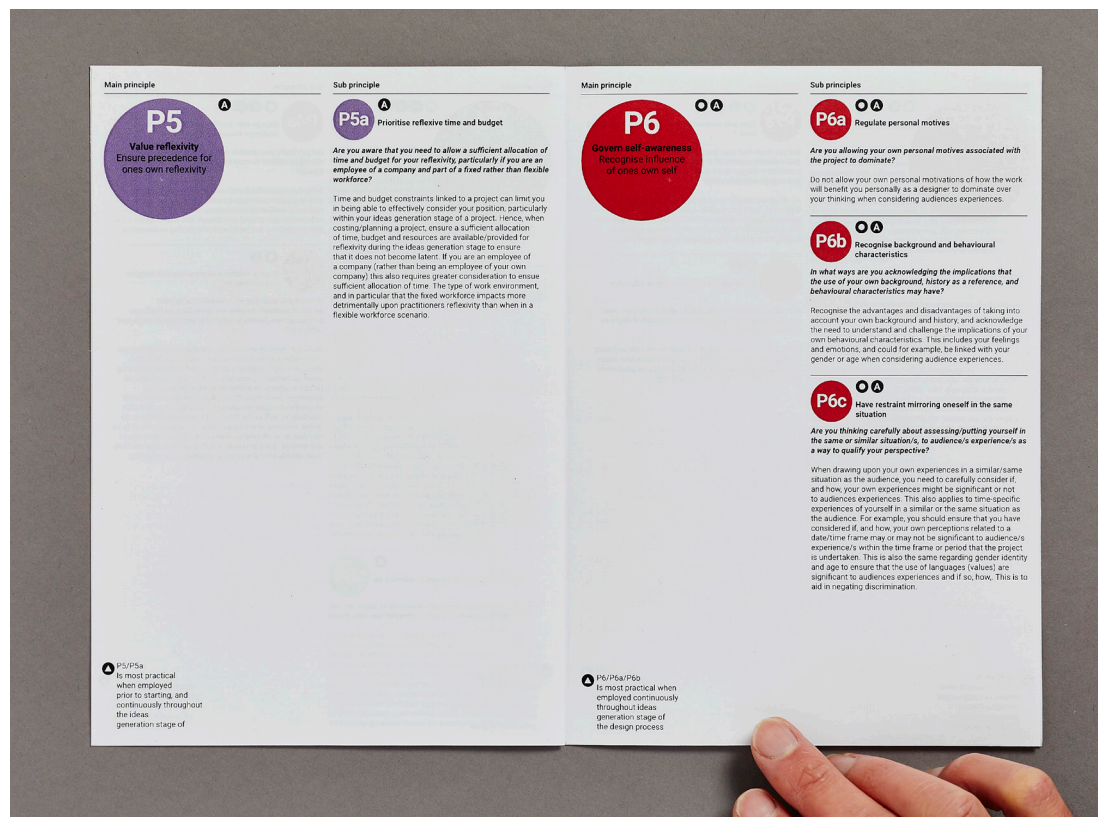


Figure 79 The final printed reflexive guide and principles in physical format.



Figure 80 The reflexive guide and principles in digital app format.

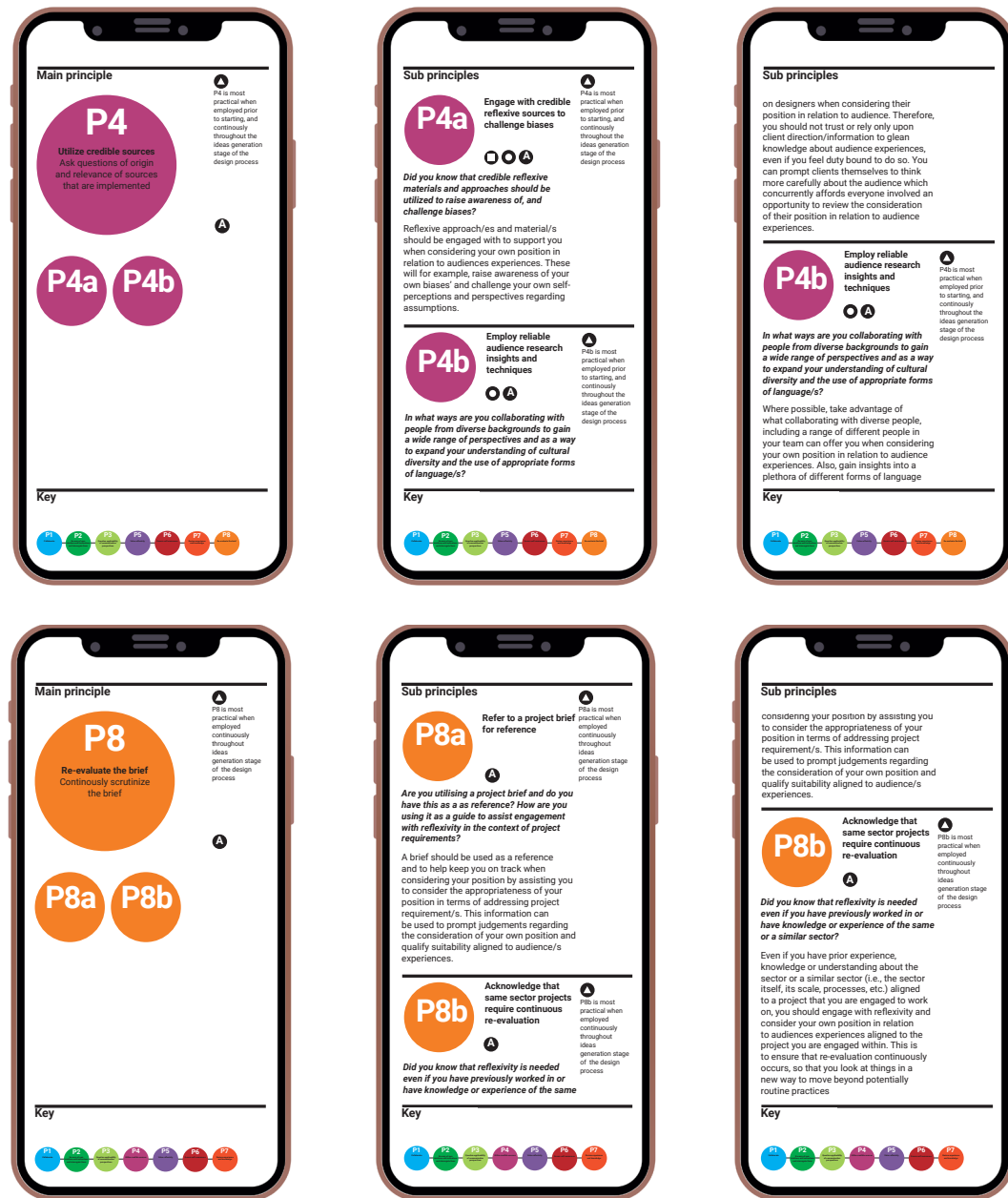


Figure 80 The reflexive guide and principles in digital app format.

## Conclusion

# Chapter 5

## 5.0. Introduction

Chapter Five offers a summary of the research investigations. It presents an overview of research aims and a synopsis of key findings. These are linked to the three method questions developed to address the overarching research question, as shown below (Figure 81). Following this, conclusions and contributions to knowledge are discussed. Finally, this study's limitations and recommendations for future research are proposed.

### Overarching research question

How might brand identity designers move towards an improved reflexive practice in the design of consumer audience experiences?

**Figure 81** The overarching research question.

## 5.1. Overview of research aims and findings

My research sought to investigate and develop professional brand identity designers' thinking about and use of their positionality towards their consumer audience experiences in the ideas generation stage of their design process. I intended to explore and provide in-depth knowledge of how designers might embrace reflexive practice and advance their relational thinking about and positioning of themselves when undertaking their consumer audience experience designing. This was to assist them in a move towards an improved reflexive design practice.

This study reviewed what reflexive practice knowledge existed in Brand Identity Design and what approaches in this context were available to and employed by its designers, including in communication design. The research drew and built upon reflexive practice in other areas. This highlighted that reflexive practice is needed by any practitioner to prompt a re-evaluation of how they use their position towards others and initiate reflection in-depth on an individual's perspectives (Bolton, 2014) and; avoid reinforcing inequality and disadvantage on others (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). This review led to me developing a reflexive practice framework (Figure 14) which documents behavioural characteristics needed for a reflexive practice. The mapping of findings from Phase Two's semi-structured interview thematic findings onto this reflexive practice framework supported the charting of a reflexive design practice framework table (Figure 58). This enabled understandings of what was and wasn't taking place in brand identity design practice connected to reflexive practice to be presented. This table revealed what may and may not be needed to support brand identity design practitioners and informed the creation of eighteen initial reflexive design practice principles. These principles were explored individually in Phase Three and combined in Phase Four into a reflexive design practice guide as a prototype. This was to evaluate their impact as an intervention on designers' thinking about and use of their positioning, including in their applied practice.



The aims of this study were three-fold. First, to understand professional brand identity designers' opinions about their role in relation to audiences. Second, to uncover in-depth knowledge of these designers' existing reflexive practices. And third, to understand how reflexive design practice principles imparted into a guide might be embraced by designers. This was to uncover the potential of the principles and guide in advancing how these designers are thinking about and using their positionality towards their consumer audience experiences when designing. This included in their applied practice – revealing how they might offer any improvement/s and their efficacy as a preliminary design practice method to assist a reflexive design practice.

### 5.1.1. Summary of research investigation

The overarching research question is shown below in Figure 82 was explored and answered through four phases of this research. These phases involved three methods questions developed to address this primary question as presented in Figures 83-85.

<b>Overarching research question</b>	How might brand identity designers move towards an improved reflexive practice in the design of consumer audience experiences?
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**Figure 82** The overarching research question.

<b>Questionnaire question</b>	<i>What are professional brand identity designers (based in the UK) attitudes, influences and views in relation to audiences?</i>
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**Figure 83** Phase One – questionnaire question.

In response to the questionnaire question in Figure 83, professional brand identity designers' opinions were that their personal perspectives are very important to informing and contributing to their professional practice when designing for the audience. Understanding audiences and audience information are significant to their design processes, even though designers did not believe there was a growing disconnect between brand identity design practices and audiences.

Designers stated several issues that they believed were negatively affecting how they work in relation to audiences. These included the use of default approaches, client-driven judgements, and a lack of; design training in education; designers' engagement with audience at the start of the process, and; most significantly inadequate critical reflection.

A key area of interest from these findings was the data that designers' personal perspectives and input were important but that inadequate critical reflection was an issue that affected them in their work in relation to their audiences. This finding points to designers using personal input in their position in relation to their consumer audience experiences without sufficient questioning, challenging and critique of their involvement, biases and assumptions. As critical reflection is needed for reflexive practice this suggested designers were not likely not enacting reflexive practice. This confirmed an opportunity for further investigation regarding designers' reflexive practice.

**Semi-structured  
Interview questions**

*Taking the most recently completed UK project, in what ways do UK-based professional brand identity designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

And, interlinked to the question above:

*What challenges and/or issues do UK-based professional brand identity designers face when thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the ideas generation of their most recent UK project?*

**Figure 84** Phase Two – semi-structured interview questions.

Findings from the semi-structured interview first question (Figure 84) exposed brand identity designers' use of personal motivations, their background, self-assumptions and biases, their design knowledge and experience – including professional relationships and the project itself, and their perspectives of communication, as informing how they are thinking about and using their position in relation to their consumer audience experiences. These findings expanded upon Phase One results demonstrating that designers were using their input and perspectives in their work but with a lack of critical reflection for how they were doing so linked to the consumer audience experience. However, criticality is needed for effective reflexive practice (Thompson and Thompson, 2008; Cunliffe, 2004).

Findings from the interlinked semi-structured interview question (Figure 84), identified that brand identity designers face issues related to time and a lack of resources, materials, and tools to aid them in explicitly enacting reflexive practice in their design processes. This substantiated prior research findings and established that designers had insufficient understanding of, or engagement with, reflexive practice principles, even at a rudimentary level. The entirety of Phase Two results substantiated Phase One Questionnaire results and indicated that designers are not engaging with a systematic reflexive practice to guide their existing design processes or practice approaches in their consumer audience experience designing.

This signalled that considering the discussed paradigm shift (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002) if reflexive practice was not being systematically employed by professional brand identity designers or in operation in their consumer audience experience designing, they are reinforcing patterns of inequality and disadvantage (Thompson and Thompson, 2008). It is argued these designers are engaging with inadequate and outdated modes of thinking and communication. I contend that brand identity designers' professionalism is contested by their failure to demonstrate accountability for their positionality and engagement with reflexive practice. Thus, they are failing to demonstrate a reflexive design practice. Designers did however recognise that there was a lack of reflexive practice and supported the need for this knowledge in their work. This was explored in the third method questions.

**Synchronous online design workshop questions**

*In what ways might reflexive principles affect UK based brand identity designers thinking about their position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of the design process on a UK project?*

And, interlinked to the question above:

*How might reflexive principles be used by UK based brand identity designers within the ideas generation stage of the design process?*

**Figure 85** Phase Three, synchronous online design workshop questions.

Results from the online design workshop first question (Figure 85) revealed that individually each of the eighteen reflexive design practice principles affected and changed the design participants thinking and actions regarding how they positioned and considered themselves. The principles activated designers to; question what they were doing and how they were acting in their relationship towards their consumer audience experiences; reflect on themselves, their work and their processes; re-evaluate their positionality in relation to their consumer audience relations and; make their implicitness explicit. The principles disrupted and challenged designers, prompting greater awareness of issues and exposing their biases. Participants claimed that the principles were needed in future practice.

The principles prompted designers to scrutinise their position and consider the consequences of their actions and judgement, initiating them to question and think more deeply and critically about how they were thinking about and using themselves and their position in their practice process. Designers recognised the effect this examination had upon them and were initiated to take action upon their own beliefs, judgements and process, leading to an extension of existing practice approaches. Findings from the interlinked workshop question (Figure 85) identified that brand identity designers reported that when using the principles, they had some limitations and needed developments to address structural, grammatical, sequencing and design issues.

5.1.2.

### **Reflexive design practice principles and guide – a preliminary new design practice method for brand identity design practitioners**

Results from the online design workshop were reflected and acted upon to inform the development of an initial reflexive design practice guide v.1 prototype for designers. This included eight main and eighteen sub-principles. Participant designers explored this guide v.1 prototype in their applied practice. Further feedback from participants corroborated earlier workshop findings and revealed that the reflexive design practice principles developed through this PhD investigation can, when applied in practice, assist designers in bringing into operation a reflexive design practice in action. This can simultaneously prompt designers to critically reflect in and on their reflexive design practice through its application within their design process. Thus, evidencing that the principles and guide can change and offer an improvement to designers thinking about and operation of their relational positionality within their design processes. Hence, assisting them in responding to the ongoing audience paradigm shift and advancing their participatory consumer audience experience approaches. Participants made visual and further content recommendations regarding the guide v.1 prototype, which were taken forwards into the development of a final reflexive design practice guide (Figure 78-79) and accompanying digital app (Figure 80).

The reflexive design practice principles and guide provide insights that they can contribute an addition to the reflexive practice strategies and techniques in Figure 11. This is by stimulating critically reflexive practice and offering reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action perspectives that assists designers to challenge themselves and re-evaluate their role as a cultural intermediary (Smith and Maguire, 2014). The principles and guide prompt designers to confront and reassess their hegemony when the direct collaborative involvement of the audience and their ability to speak for themselves is lacking. They can initiate designers to revise and modify prior thinking of how they employ and position themselves in their practice, and aid them in questioning and critically reflecting on how they use their agency, biases, assumptions and judgements within their profession. They contribute a preliminary new design method which acts as a catalyst to extend current ways designers consider, think about, and use their positionality in their consumer audience experience designing. Furthermore, this method can offer new learnings in applied practice and facilitate praxis by providing a way for designers to understand their agency (Crouch and Pearce, 2013) and the consequences of this agency.

In summary, and addressing the overarching research question in this thesis, the reflexive design practice principles and guide can support professional brand identity designers to take action towards an improved reflexive design practice within the operations of their professional processes and practice. This is because the principles and guide offers a way for them to undertake the activity of deliberation and critically reflect on their judgements and behaviours leading to a re-evaluation and improvement on their conduct. This advancement is essential to ensuring the brand identity designer's processes and practice do not reinforce patterns of inequality and disadvantage and remain relevant to audiences, noting the ongoing audience paradigm shift. It is also needed to support clients' needs in addressing audiences' requirements. It is contended that this development aids the growth of designer's self-development, commitment and allegiance to the professionalism of their role in Brand Identity and Communication Design.

## 5.2.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

This research offers theoretical and practical knowledge for its operation and application in practice to contribute to professional brand identity design. The study provides new understanding for Design Research and Scholars interested in reflexive practice and further advances understanding about an epistemology of practice. This is in several ways, including first offering an advanced understanding about professional brand identity designer's reflexive practice, its operation and employment and designer's reflexive design practice process knowledge. Second, by contributing eight overarching and eighteen sub-reflexive brand identity design practice principles imparted into a reflexive design practice guide. This was validated through this empirical research as being able to develop professional designers' critical reflective thinking about and use of their positionality in relation to their consumer audience experiences.

Furthermore, these principles and guide can prompt a critically reflective reflexive design process in the ideas generation stage of designers' design process in this context. Subsequently, a preliminary new design practice method is presented that as a result of a reflexive practice and process can improve the designer's relational positioning of themselves and in taking action towards a reflexive design practice, facilitating an equitable approach aligned to their consumer audience experience designing in applied practice. The final contribution is by way of its methodology, which by integrating my design visualisation practice into a mixed methods quantitative and qualitative approach expands upon the design visualisation work of Drucker.

My practice is fundamental to this research and is interweaved with theory. My practice enabled me to first unravel, analyse and critically reflect on other theories conveyed in literature as well as insights as they materialised throughout this research. This supported me in the reflection, evaluation and construction of my reflexive practice theoretical perspective; Second, collect, document and present the findings and theory of other designers' reflexive design practice; Third, develop reflexive design practice communications and prototypes for testing by other designers to inform reflexive design practice theory and; Fourth, and as a consequence of all of the prior ways above, communicate my methodology which inherently includes reflexive practice knowledge. In summary, I use my design visualisation practice as a way for me to critically reflect on reflexive practice, develop understanding of and improve other designers' reflexive practice and to communicate (whilst critically reflecting upon) my process of reflexive design practice research. Furthermore, how my practice contributes to the culmination of reflexive design practice in this research is explained on page 262.

### 5.3. **Limitations of this study**

The limitations of this research included the time constraints of completing the study in a part-time capacity whilst in employment and a focus on the practice of individual designer's. Furthermore, whilst the semi-structured interviews and the online design workshop were carried out with designers who were originally born and grew up in diverse locations in the UK or Europe, the study was heavily focused on practitioners based in the South East of England and particularly London. Consequently, data findings are collectively representative of participants' knowledge from an individual perspective and from the above locations.

Whilst data collection from the online workshop and exploring the research in applied practice provided rich data insights for analysis, the sample sizes of participants were relatively small. Additionally, the exploration of the reflexive design principles and guide was limited to questions framed within the context of the designer's last UK-based project. Furthermore, whilst each designer was working on different size projects within different studios, ranging from 2 to 84 UK-based employees, the principles and guide were not explored on a variety of other projects by each participant, or by a range of designers working in the same design team. As a researcher, I also was not able to be present at the time of the event when designers explored the use of the guide in their practice. This was due to client and studio confidentiality, and as such limits knowledge opportunities in the immediate moment of designing to be understood or presented.

### 5.4. **Recommendations / further research opportunities**

Any PhD is framed within specific parameters, and whilst the aims, objectives and questions in this study have been addressed, future research opportunities were identified linked to research findings and conclusions which extended beyond the scope of this research. These include, first suggestions that further testing of the principle design guide as preliminary design method with designers based in a variety of local, regional, national and global locations is needed. Second, this research focused on UK-based designers and the interviews, workshop, and applied practice testing were heavily focused on the South East of the UK. Therefore there is scope to explore the reflexive design practice method with individuals from more expansive geographic locations where the application of reflexive design practice principles may have differing effects. Third, there is an opportunity for individual designers in the same design team to explore the principles to understand how they might impact an entire team. Whilst this research offers knowledge into the effect of the reflexive design practice principles in an individual designer context, further research could be undertaken to explore how the principles might have a different impact upon each individual within collaborative teamwork scenarios and on the team collectively. Fourth, further exploration of how the reflexive design practice principles might impact a final project outcome and project successes could be tested, for example, using comparative studies with the same or similar brand identity projects or clients. Fifth, these principles could be explored to understand how they might have different effects on designers when employed within different media contexts on a project, i.e. digital and print comparisons. This study sought to test the principles within the context of a designer's individual design project. It did not impose restrictions or seek to collate data aligned with the media context within which they were used. Sixth, how the principles might have differing effects on a designer over time-specific periods when employed as part of a longitudinal study in applied practice or when transitioning from education to applied practice. Within the time limitations of this PhD, my research investigated the ways in which the principles affected designers after their application on one design project, but use over different time periods may have yielded different results.



These recommendations indicate that this area of investigation is a rich domain for further research and would offer insights to question and confront the declarations presented in this PhD. This is something that I intend to explore in the future. A particular interest is aligned to investigations of reflexive design practice, and the reflexive design principles to Design Education aligned to my role as a Senior Design Lecturer. This is regarding the role they might contribute to; the Design of Design Education Curricula; the learning and teaching of a design student's current education, and the student's future career within professional practice.

## 5.5. Research conclusion

This PhD research has given me the time to explore in depth, through the relationship of my practice intertwined with theory and vice versa, how other designers and I do, and might, critically 'look from' and make improvements to processes and practices when we are 'looking at' others, specifically consumer audience experiences.

Using my design practice interwoven with reflexive practice, design and Deweyan theory, my investigation explores how designers might move towards an improved reflexive design practice. In my research, I build upon reflexive practice (Cunliffe, 2004, 2009; Bolton, 2014; Thompson and Thompson, 2008; Fook and Gardner, 2007; van Toorn, 1997, 1998, 2006, 2009, 2015), Dewey's ethical pragmatism (Dewey 1905, 1941; Kadlec, 2006, 2007; Dewey in Dixon, 2020a, 2020b; Dixon, McHattie, and Broadley, 2022) a mixed methods methodology (Creswell and Clark 2011; Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010) and design to do and as a method of inquiry (DiSalvo, 2022) and design visualisation (Drucker, 2020).

In this thesis, I have argued that reflexive design practice principles and a design guide were embraced and are able to support professional brand identity designers to challenge and re-evaluate prior thinking about and the use of their positionality within their role. The principles and guide can support applied practice learning and praxis (Crouch and Pearce, 2013:40) and assist a progression in design research. The principles and guide can facilitate a reflexive design practice in and on action and contribute a preliminary new design practice method. This can support professional brand identity designers to take action to improve their relational and participatory positioning.

My study examined and made improvements to designers positioning in their designing in relation to consumer audience experiences. I contend that when applied in brand identity design practice alongside Dewey's ethical pragmatism, reflexive practice can become a driver for taking action towards a relational and reflexive design practice. Consequently, I propose that my research advances and strengthens existing understandings of the knowledge connection between these practices as well as reinforcing the value of reflexive practice techniques and approaches, by demonstrating the theoretical and practical potential of design in extending upon existing theory.

The principles and guide can offer a way for designers to respond to the market imperative of the ongoing paradigm shift (Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre, 2009; Olins, 2003, 2008, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Wheeler, 2009; Slade Brooking, 2016; Davis and Baldwin, 2006; Kathman, 2002) whilst concurrently enabling them to challenge their hegemonic positionality. This includes from Western and non-pluralist perspectives.

This research demonstrates reflexive design practice throughout the research in a number of ways. First, via my role as a reflexive designer practitioner researcher. Second, the designer participants were asked to engage with reflexive design practice in their practice. And third, the process I have created, which includes the reflexive design practice principles imparted into a reflexive design practice guide offers a preliminary new design practice method for a reflexive practice.

As a result of this research, my design practice and critically reflective and reflexive practice capabilities have been developed and changed. This PhD has advanced my writing, analytical, and critically reflective skills. It has initiated new learning related to research and design research and expanded my knowledge of design practice. Collectively this has informed my design practice within this research and my brand identity design and design work outside this thesis. This research has mobilised me to re-evaluate where I situate myself as a designer practitioner, changing my brand identity design practice, design visualisation practice and design practice ideology. This is in a professional context and an educational learning and teaching environment as a Senior Lecturer. The research has enlightened my perspectives and worldview when engaging with other people and impacted upon my own biases and reflexive practice in my research, design processes and design and teaching practice. The study has enabled me to collaborate and participate with other designers, researchers and academics whilst allowing me to simultaneously learn from and with them.

In a time when there is an awareness and need in design to address participation, inclusivity, diversity, biases and democracy, this research has shown a way for brand identity designers to use their positionality as a way to respond to this and move towards an improved reflexive practice in the design of consumer audience experiences.

# Appendix

# Appendix 1

## Audience Experience Approaches

The nineteen audience experience approaches used by/available to the brand identity designer are:

### 1. Flip chart and pen

Stand with a flip chart and pen and ask a room full of people what do you value the most? Although experience denotes that this may not be the most productive route (Johnson, 2016:114).

### 2. Interviews

'One of the best ways to assess where an organisation could, or should, go next is to ideally interview consumers in key target markets' (Johnson, 2016:49). The purpose of the interview is to find out how much outsiders know about both the mechanics of the company, what their views are about its strengths, weaknesses and impact on the outside world, and what image, attitudes and overall perception they may have about the organisation (Olins, 2008:76).

2a. Case study Interviews (Slade-Brooking, 2017)

Allow for in-depth delving into a persons life and also family life (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

2b. Consumer observations and interviews (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

Point-of purchase observations and interviews reveal who is buying what and why (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

2c. On the street interviews (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

2d. Telephone interviews (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

### 3. Questionnaires (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

3a. Online survey sites (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

### 4. SWOT analysis

A technique that can be used to evaluate a product or service (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

### 5. Personal research

Many designers undertake personal inspirational research (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

### 6. Social Media (Facebook, twitter) (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

7. Literature, books, magazines (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

8. Photography (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

9. Keeping your eyes open (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

10. Online data bases (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

11. Psychographics including:

11a. Psychographic profiling (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

11b. Demographic cross cultural consumer characterisation i.e Young and Rubicam (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

11c. Maslows hierarchy of needs (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

Communicates the basic needs of people from which Johnson (2016) states you can build a brand.

12. Individual consumer profiling (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

13. Focus groups (Johnson, 2016) (Olins, 2014, calls these forecasting techniques).

Explores perceptions, opinions and beliefs of a group of people towards an idea that are selected according to demographics or buying habits. (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

13a. Un-Focus groups

Explores perceptions, opinions and beliefs of a group of people, chosen at random, towards an idea (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

13b. Email focus groups (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

14. Internet groups (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

15. Competitor brand analysis (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

16. Brand scenarios/ Scenario planning (Olins, 2014, calls these forecasting techniques).

17. Customer journeys (Johnson, 2016).

Customer journeys, map out scenarios of particular users and how they may engage with a brand via a number of different situations or contexts.

17a. Touchpoint analysis (Slade-Brooking, 2017).

A customers contact and emotions evoked by the brand, the consumer experience with the brand.

18. Personas (Johnson, 2016).

'Its amazing how many companies and organizations don't really know who their customers are and how to reach them — they have often been so obsessed with themselves, and what they do, that they forgot to turn the frame around and look at it from the outside in. In some markets this involves identifying clear customer archetypes or creating consumer 'personas''(Johnson, 2016:46). The concept of personas prompt designers into attempting to place themselves into the role of audience or user situations.

Grudin and Pruitt (2003) indicate that personas are useful in designing for user experience and Akama (2007) and Davies (2012) claims that personas prompt the designer to question their assumptions.

**19. Consumer-profile boards** (Slade-Brooking, 2017)

Uses images to capture a visual outline of the type of person the brand is targeting.

The audience experience approaches presented above are described as, firstly for use to gain understanding before any designing has actually been started and secondly for use at the end stages of the design process itself – after the actual designing has already taken place.

## Appendix 2 Researcher Hegemony and Reflections

The research methods used challenged hegemonic practices and hierarchies between me and participant designers. This was because they allowed for the participation and collaboration and collective insights and contributions of other designers, beyond those solely of me as a designer researcher. As such this provided the inclusion of a range of diverse voices in this research, allowing for critique and disproving of researcher assumptions. By gaining other designers feedback this initiated my reflections, and re-evaluations of my own frames of reference and biases. It expanded the democratization of my own knowledge about the area of study and my reflexivity as the research progressed.

I was aware and developed greater awareness throughout the duration of the PhD of how my hegemony as a PhD student holding a position of power could potentially be viewed by the designer participants or participants in a study. The research methods supported in counteracting this, as they didn't require my direct involvement in the collaborating or collection of data response activities. When asking questions and in the research discussions, I was aware of the potential ideational power, i.e. are you thinking what I'm thinking? that I might have upon those involved in the research. When using the methods in the data collection activities to elicit data they supported me in avoiding getting involved in a discussion about my views on or about the research in relation to participants responses, which supported in not allowing me to create, lead or prompt participants to change their responses, and concurrently challenged my influence and power. Furthermore, I was also aware of the potential ideational power that participants themselves may have upon other participants. In the online workshop, the potential influence of participants to create, lead or change other participants responses in the discussions, was carefully monitored by me and I intervened in the instances where this did occur. Additionally, intermittently throughout the workshop method my role as a designer researcher was made clear to participants within the group. Furthermore, in the online workshop multiple approaches to communicating ideas were explored and adopted and no participants were placed in a disadvantageous position. For example, if participants were not comfortable speaking aloud or disclosing their faces, backgrounds or names if they did not wish

to do so in the group scenario. This is because all participants were advised that they could hide their face on camera, use a pseudonym identity and use the chat function in Miro and Zoom if they did not want to speak out loud.

To also support my researcher reflections, reflective activities and/or further feedback connected to my design visualisations practice were provided at each methods phase. This included:

- At the start of this research, prior to the literature review research, design visualizations of my own practice knowledge and these reflections from over 18 years in mainstream brand identity design practice were reflected upon.
- At the start of this research, a design visualization timeline that communicated literature associated with the initial stages of the research enabled reflective correlations to be made by me regarding subject areas and time/point in history related to the subjects to support understanding of its potential documentation in this thesis.
- In February 2013, I attended and participated in a SKIP week-long event at Central Saint Martins with other design researchers. This included me presenting my research work in progress, including my design visualisations to design research students and design research and supervisory staff including individuals from The Royal College of Art, UAL, Kingston for feedback.
- In April 2013 I presented my research work in progress, which included my design visualisations to other RCA research students and RCA supervisors for feedback. I also attended annual APR exams to present and discuss my work in progress which included me presenting and gaining and feedback on my practice from RCA tutors and supervisors.
- In July 2013, I attended and participated in a SKIP four day residential Summer School at Kingston University. This include me presenting my research, which included my design visualisations for feedback and engaging in discourse related to Inclusive and Socially Responsive Design with other design researchers and research staff/supervisors.
- In Aug 2013, I presented research work in progress, which included my design and reflexive visualisation, to research active staff and students at Buckinghamshire New University for feedback.

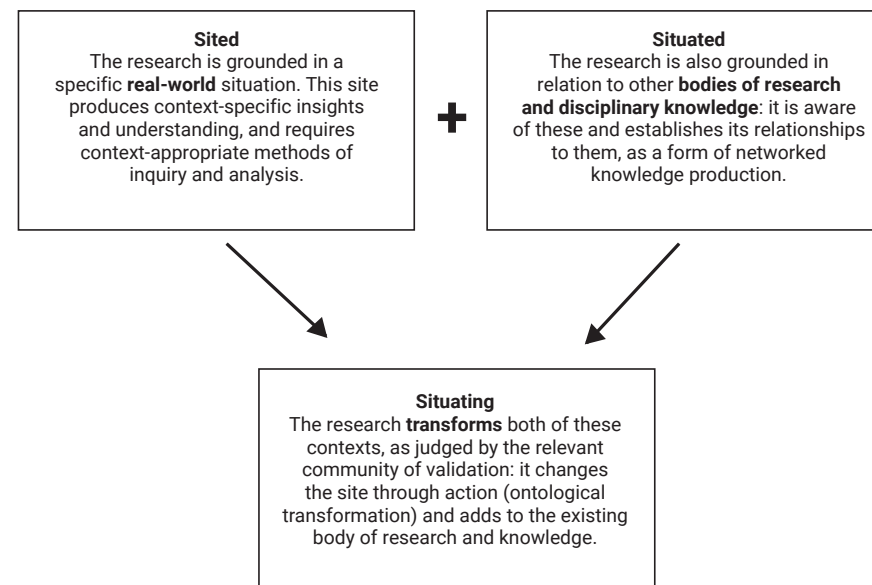
- I exhibited content from descriptive analysis reflections and findings of the questionnaire method, which employed my design visualisations that were presented in a 332pp design visualization book. This was exhibited, alongside large-scale posters of some of the visual content from this book at a Royal College of Art Work in Progress 'Intentions' public exhibition, at Westworks in London between the 5th December-12 December 2017. This was to gain feedback from the public and other designers who work in the field of my research (i.e., communication design)
- I was a panel member at a one-day Research Symposium—Fields of Communication Nature · Culture · Technology at the School of Communication, Royal College of Art on 30 October 2018, which focused on the diversity and interconnectivity of communication in postgraduate study. I discussed my research and answered questions from the audience which included other art and design researchers and designers
- I presented at an online (due to Covid) Art and Design Research Conference at the University of Nottingham on the 18th July 2020. My presentation, titled 'An exploration of designers reflexive practice during the ideas generation stage of brand identity design' discussed the design visualisations in the context of the semi-structured interviews thematic analysis. At the end of the presentation other art and design researchers were invited to give feedback and comment on the presentation to support my researcher reflections.

Whilst this research views that there can always be researcher bias, careful attempts were made to mitigate this as much as possible. This was via the explicit documentation of data, reflection of it and an explanation of my positionality that contributed to the interpretation of the research. Comments and feedback from other researchers, including supervisors and design participants including via pilot studies and review of results, to provide feedback after analysis, also supported transparent and explicit data extraction and selection processes throughout this research. A back and forth process of checking and verifying carefully recorded participant data against findings was used. This attentive documentation of data provides an audit trail from data analysis to the findings to show how data was extracted and selected. Participant quotes were cross referenced against researcher selections, as well as being documented to illustrate how conclusions were reached.



# Appendix 3 The Triple S Framework

My adaption of Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey's (2022:2)  
Triple S framework



Drawing on the Triple S framework (Kaszynska, Kimbell and Bailey, 2022:2), this research is practice research because it is:

– Sited: the research focuses on the (reflexive) processes and practice of professional brand identity designers and engages directly with them to explore this practice, including in their own applied practice, as this is crucial in being able to address the issue connected to the research problem, its questions and theoretical perspective. The research recognises them as key knowledge holders in the site of practice because of their experiences.

– Situated: the research draws on a wider body of knowledge about reflexive practice and brand and identity and communication design within a community of inquiry and is engaged with other relevant academic research

And

– Situating: the research transforms the site and bodies of knowledge as it produces new concepts in the form of design as a method, design visualisations in a visual practice process book and reflexive design principles in a guide informed by reflexive design. It produces knowledge accepted by communities of validation involved in brand identity design, such as designers and has practical significance for this area. It contributes knowledge for practitioners by communicating how the research can make a change to their designer's practices, contributing to practitioner activity. It contributes knowledge accepted by the relevant community of validation in academia via this PhD investigation and the dissemination of the research at various stages throughout this study.

# Appendix 4

## Questionnaire Questions and Sampling Selection

### Phase One – questionnaire

In section 2 of this study, 6 Open questions were asked in the survey, that focused on a flexible design approach in the context of the methods employed in data collection, systematic analysis and interpretation. Fundamentally qualitative, this element of the questionnaire and its flexible approach did not seek at the outset to establish connections or relationships, (other than through its formation of questions). Instead this aspect of the of analysis of the study evolved through an enquiry of question asking, embracing a flexible attitude, and interpretation of data, whilst being mindful of researcher bias. (Robson, 2011)

### Sampling selection – Phase One

This study was interested in the responses of UK Designers' who worked in brand identity design/on brand identity design projects. As the focus was on professional practice, the first phase was to identify Design Studios who would employ designers' representative of the sample population. The study was intentionally scaled to focus on UK practices and the context of audiences located in this area and for that reason it was important to engage designers' in this country, rather than in Europe or Internationally at this stage of the study.

*Design Studios were selected based on the following criteria:*

- Award success: Recognition of work in National and International awards
- Client nomination: rated by clients for their work
- Turnover and profit of the agency
- National recognition: Renowned in industry for leading practices in Graphic and Brand Design (this was not the focus, although several of the agencies who had gained award success were located in this category)
- Branding tutors in education who were also practitioners in industry.

The second stage of the sampling selection was to specifically identify the Brand and Graphic Design agencies who fulfilled the criteria. In several instances agencies were engaged in both practices. In addition, tutors in education who were also practitioners, were selected from those who attended a symposium at the Royal College of Art in the Winter of 2013.

*The references included:*

– Award success: Recognition of work in National and International awards.

Design Week Top 50 Creative survey.

Design Week Award Winners 2012/2013.

D&AD Brand Award winners 2013.

D&AD Graphic Design Award winners 2013.

– Client nomination:

Top 100, rated by clients, The Drum 2013.

– Turnover and profit of the agency

Top 100 Brand Agencies by turnover 2013.

– Branding tutors (and practitioners in Industry)

Individuals whom attended a one day symposium at the Royal College of Art in December 2013 which explored the future of Graphic Design.

The final sampling selection phase was to specifically identify individuals who held positions in each of the selected Design practices'. This involved research to establish individual email addresses. The objective was to gain a combination of emails to enable diverse responses from one studio and where possible an equality in the returned responses of male and females as well as a variety of design roles and experience levels. In instances where the names of individuals could not be found, an email was sent to the company generic email address and a request to forward onto the relevant Graphic / Brand Designers' employed in that studio.

## **Appendix 5 Phase One: Questionnaire Pilot Study Revisions**

The trial run verbal responses and the participants' responses to the traditional printed questionnaire survey magnified several issues regarding the complexity of the questionnaire and its questions and although these had been reflected upon prior to the pilot study 1, its undertaking highlighted the specific amendments that needed to be made. The changes included reducing the length of, and scrutinizing the questions, amending the reference frame of questions and the covering letter and improving digital file access for participants.

## **Appendix 6 Phase Two: Semi-Structured Interviews Pilot Study Revisions**

The pilot interviews magnified several issues and although these had been reflected upon prior to the pilot study, its undertaking highlighted the specific amendments that needed to be made. The changes included rethinking participants employer/work interview locations due to participant honesty in answers and them being able to talk candidly. Amends were made to some questions, including the removal of double barreled words to reduce complexity. And, careful thought was given to interview duration and participant fatigue. The pilot interviews enabled me as a researcher, who had never undertaken an interview at a research level before to experience and learn some of the important interview behaviours including removing researcher biases such as non/verbal agreements/disagreements with participants that could lead responses. In the main interviews I followed Robson's (2011:282) advice regarding interviewer behaviour.

# Appendix 7

## Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview Questions
<b>Section 1 – Existing thinking about audience experiences and reflexive practice</b>
<b>Aim 1 – To understand the ways in which UK based designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences</b>
Q1. On your most recently completed UK project, please can you describe how you considered your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of your design process? The Consumer audience experience is something that the group who purchases a commodity or service and make use of economic goods have personally observed, encountered, undergone or lived through. (identifies if designers are reflexive and how) <i>If an answer is not described at Q1 Go to Q2a</i>
Q2a. Please can you tell me about why you didn't consider your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences on this project? Go to Q8
<b>Aim 2 – To reveal what the areas of focus are and why when UK based designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences specifically during the idea generation stage of the design process</b>
<i>If an answer is described at Q1 go to Q2b.</i> Q2b. In the last question you said that you did/used XX when you considered your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences. Can you please tell me why you did/used XX? (identifies why designers use/do what they do to be reflexive - why these areas of focus and significance of reflexivity)
Q3. Are there any key audience criteria that you use to aid you when designing and if so, what are these criteria? <i>Probe: Can you tell me more about why you use these criteria to help you?</i> (identifies what criteria designers use when focusing upon audiences and why these are/is area/s of focus)
<b>Aim 3 – To establish to what extent UK based designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences during the idea generation stage of the design process.</b>
Q4. Please can you tell me about any specific techniques, approaches, people, or places that helped you to consider your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences within the ideas generation stage of your design process on your most recently completed project. <i>Probe: If yes, can you tell me more about how this helped? (identifies existing approaches used and people /places involved – reflective space and how it helped)</i>
Q5. Please can you tell me the duration of your most recently completed project and how much time you feel you spent in considering your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences in the ideas generation stage? <i>Probe: How much of a factor do you feel time is when considering your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences in the ideas generation stage?</i> (identifies if project duration has any correlation with the use of designers reflexivity)
Q6. On your most recently completed project and when you were generating initial ideas do you feel that there were any differences between your own position and consumer audience experiences? <i>Probe: Can you please tell me more about what they were and how you dealt with this situation?</i> <i>Probe: Can you explain how you considered these differences with reference to the subject area/s of the brief?</i> (identifies how aware designers are about their own reflexivity and stereotyping)
Cool down – simple questions to diffuse any tension that may have built up
<b>Section 2 – Challenges or issues faced when thinking about audience experiences</b>
<b>Aim 4 – Identify any challenges and issues designers may have faced when considering their position (being reflexive) in relation to consumer audience experiences</b>
<b>Aim 5 – Recognise what is needed to develop new reflexive principles for brand identity designers and the level at which these might be most suitably positioned within the next stage</b>
Q7. When thinking about your own position in relation to consumer audience experience can you describe any challenges or issues you faced in your most recently completed project? <i>Probe: if so, what were these?</i> <i>Probe: What do you feel might help you in the future to overcome these challenges/issues and how?</i>
<b>Section 3 – Background and Overview</b>
Q8. Job title, years experience, consumer audience group, gender identity, and ideas on this project during the ideas generation stage on most recently completed project
Q9. Category of branding (i.e. corporate branding, social design branding, retail branding, education branding, city/place branding)

# Appendix 8

## Design Workshop – Preparatory Participant Task

Prior to the workshop two emails were sent to participants. The first was to formally request their participation and invite them to the workshop to demonstrate professionalism and clarify objectives. The second email, sent ten days prior to the workshop was to confirm their participation and provide information about Miro software; online etiquette considerations; a written project brief (which included a subject topic, an audience group and; one preparatory task – collection of research on the assigned audience group for use in the workshop). According to Hamilton 'assigning a preparatory task is key ingredient to a successful workshop' (2016:26). This was sent to build curiosity about the workshop and let designers know how important their inclusion was to the session.

# Appendix 9

## Online Design Workshop – Planning, Structure, Design and Delivery

Total online design workshop duration 2hrs 20 mins (2.50 hrs including breaks).

### **Introduction (approx. 15 minutes duration not including 15 minute break – Use of Zoom and Miro)**

Welcome, verbal and visual recording started, objective and outline of workshop behaviours and all participants provided with a full brief. (Group A brief and Group B brief, based on the two different audiences). Participants introduce themselves and give overview of what they have brought to the session based on the prior preparatory task.

### **Break (approx. 15 minutes duration)**

Participants to read brief and document any questions.

### **Stage 1 (1A +1B) – Intervening and documenting the use and impact of the reflexive principles (approx. 60 minutes duration in total – Use of Zoom and Miro – 60% of workshop duration)**

#### **1A. Main Workshop activities**

*Using and exploring the reflexive principles within the designers ideas generation stage and within the context of a project brief (30 minutes)*

1A. On returning from a break, as above, all participants (via Zoom) were asked if they had any questions regarding the brief. Within the stage, my role was as facilitator and to provide clear information, clarify questions and to aid participants interactions. All participants were provided with visual template whiteboards in Miro and with three or four of the 18 reflexive design principles. Each participant had an individual link to their Miro whiteboard which only they and myself could access. Each participants principles were colour coded to assist in linking participants to their principles and to aid analysis later in this research. During this stage, which included the exploration and application of

creative thinking, participants were asked (in response to a project brief and an audience that they had selected prior to the actual undertaking of the online workshop) to document as many initial ideas as they could in the time available. This was by using written notes, words, visual mapping, sketching or in any way that they felt was relevant in supporting them in being able to communicate their ideas. This exercise could be undertaken directly onto the Miro whiteboard itself or using non-digital pen/s and paper etc. and uploading content to their provided Miro whiteboard using an easy accessible file link. At the same time and alongside developing these initial ideas participants were asked to use/reference and implement their assigned reflexive principles. As participants generated ideas, used and implemented the reflexive principles they were asked to make brief notes about their thoughts and feelings about using the principles. They were advised that these notes and comments would be expanded upon to provide feedback responses regarding the principles in the next phase, as below.

### **1B. Documenting the use and impact of the reflexive principles within the designers ideas generation stage and within the context of a project brief (30 minutes – Use of Zoom and Miro)**

1B. In this stage, participants were asked to complete and document their feedback to six main questions as shown below into the Miro whiteboard. These questions aligned with the main research question in this phase.

A. What duration of time did you spend on audience group research prior to this workshop?

#### **(To understand usability)**

1. How did you use the reflexive principles?

(Were they easy or not to use/apply? Or did any issues arise when using /applying them?)

2. How would/might you use these principles as an addition to your existing design process during the ideas generation stages?



(Would you be confident using the reflexive principles in your design process in practice to aid your thinking about your own position in relation to consumer audience experiences?)  
 (How easily do you feel that you would be able to introduce and apply these reflexive principles from this workshop to the ideas generation stage of your design process in practice?)

**(To understand impact/effect)**

3. Can you describe in what ways you thought about your own position regarding consumer audience experiences when using the reflexive principles?

(Did any of the reflexive principles assist you to think critically about your position in relation to consumer audience experiences?)

4. Do you feel that any of the principles effected how you thought about your own position in relation to the consumer audience experiences? If so which were these and to in what ways did these have an effect upon your thinking?

5. Were there any reflexive principles that were more significant to you than others?

**(Revisions/Future recommendations)**

6. Would you suggest any recommendations or revisions regarding the reflexive principles?

(Can you suggest one opportunity that you believe that each principle might have for future practice?)

(Can you suggest one concern that you believe that each principle might have for future practice?)

Participants were asked to document their response/s to these questions (no.s.1-12, as above) aligned with what they liked, learned, lacked, and longed for. This was to assist in gaining rich data insights into the use and impact of the reflexive principles upon their thinking within the workshop.

Each participant was given a total of 70 minutes for stage 1A + 1B. All participants undertook this activity at the same time within their own private Miro online workspaces/ whiteboards, but they could collaborate, chat and discuss what they were doing with other participants (not dissimilar to a design agency setting) or mute themselves if they wished to do so using Zoom.

**Break (approx. 15 minutes duration)**

**Stage 2 – Discussing and identifying the ways in these principles might have impacted upon designers thinking in this context and identifying in what ways and future directions (Approx 60 minute duration in total – Use of Zoom and Miro – 40% of workshop duration)**

This stage involved approximately 40% of the workshop time. It was used to probe and distil the data uncovered from stage 1 and was embarked upon by asking design participants over an approximate duration of a further 60 minutes to discuss, present back and share their responses (visually and verbally) and including from their Miro whiteboards from stage 1B. My role was as participant and facilitator observer. This discussion was via a collaborative group face to face recorded video/chat discussion in Zoom which I facilitated Each participants whiteboard from this stage was saved as a pdf document (to further support/ supplement data analysis in this phase as presented in the following chapter).

**Workshop ending (approx. 5 minutes duration)**

Thanked everyone. Advise how and when to obtain data findings from this stage and my completed research project /thesis.

## Appendix 10 Email 1 Sent to Participants in Phase Four, Guide v.1 Prototype in Applied Practice

Hello

I hope you are well?

I am on the very final phase of my PhD research and I'm really grateful for your collaboration, and all the feedback and comments you have provided so far regarding my study.

As you mentioned you were happy to be involved and be contacted again, I am hoping to gain your feedback to several questions (these don't have to be extensive if you are busy, and might just be a sentence etc.) based on your use of the reflexive design guide and principles specifically within the ideas generation stage of one of your projects in practice.

If you agree to being involved as above, I am hoping to have the feedback/ from all designers returned by Monday 14 December 2020. If this date is an issue, please could you let me know, as I know feedback and response dates may have to differ depending on individual designer's projects etc. Hence, I am happy to wait for your responses, but would just need an approximate idea of when you think this might be.

All responses will contribute to final feedback and reflections of my research, and will be anonymised, kept secure (in terms of data) and follow The Royal College of Art research ethics as outlined on your prior consent form.

Once I receive a response to this email, I can send over the reflexive guide as ap for you to use, along with the questions.

Please feel free to drop me an email (as above) if you have any questions.

Best

Sarah

## Appendix 11 Email 2 Sent to Participants in Phase Four, Guide v.1 Prototype in Applied Practice

Hello

Thanks so much for agreeing to be involved the final phase of my research. I attach the reflexive design guide and principles for your use within the ideas generation stage of one of your projects in practice and include below the questions for your feedback/ comments in response to this. This guide has also been sent to other designers in industry for feedback.

The reflexive guide is attached as a PDF file. It can be used in this digital format, although has been designed so that its intended practical use will be a printed 2pp B&V, A3 (full size) to A5 map fold format (please the attached drawings of the folding and format of the printed the guide should you wish to print it double sided A3 and use at A5 format rather than onscreen.)

**See the questions asked in main thesis on page 115**

It would be brilliant to gain your **feedback to the questions above** (responses don't have to be extensive if you are busy, and might just be a sentence etc. for each one), but please can you send any feedback this to me via my email ([sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk)) **ideally by Monday 14 December 2020.**

As mentioned before, all responses to the questions above will contribute to final feedback and reflections of my research, and will be anonymised, kept secure (in terms of data) and follow The Royal College of Art research ethics as outlined on your prior consent form. Also, as the findings haven't yet been published, nor has my PhD, please could you keep the content and information within of this reflexive guide and its principles confidential and not share this information with anyone at this stage. At this stage all of the content and information is protected by the Royal College of Art and their Policy on Ownership, Protection and Exploitation of Intellectual Property Rights.


I'm so grateful for your involvement and I look forward to receiving your feedback, and please feel free to drop me an email (as above) if you have any questions.

Please also let me know if you would like to receive a pdf copy of my full PhD thesis when it is published (which includes your anonymized responses based on your participation within my research)

Best

Sarah

# Appendix 12 Research Ethics – Consent Forms and Emails Sent to Participants



Supervisor: Professor Teal Triggs / [teal.triggs@rca.ac.uk](mailto:teal.triggs@rca.ac.uk) / +44 (0)20 7590 4306

*Graphic Design as socially responsive practice for change*  
**Survey Information Sheet**

Dear Potential Participant,  
*I am a research student in the Visual Communication Department. As part of my studies, I am conducting a research project entitled *Graphic Design as socially responsive practice for change*. You are invited to take part in this research project which locates Social Design thinking within a professional graphic design context to examine the juncture between political and social relations, specifically in branding. My current research objective is to explore and make explicit graphic designers' knowledge, attitudes and what influences their intent at the front end of brand practice towards effecting the judgment and changing the behaviour of the people they aim to engage and in evaluating these empirical findings discover what is known. You are invited to participate in this research.*

If you consent to participate, this will involve:

- Pilot study participation of an anonymous questionnaire survey which will take approximately 1 hour of your time.
- Returning the survey to Sarah Kirby-Ginns in person
- The pilot study will involve me recording and documenting your verbal comments and visual observation of your progression through the questionnaire survey to test potential problems such as ambiguous wording and unclear instructions including the clarity of the questions any potential ambiguity in sentence constructions, wordings and rating. This pilot study is prior to a large scale questionnaire survey that will be sent to a diverse and larger group of design professionals.

Participants for this pilot survey were selected randomly from colleagues and ex-students who are all design professionals at various stages in their career working in graphic design branding either on a full time or freelance basis.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time and there will be no disadvantage if you decide not to complete the survey. All information collected will be confidential. All information gathered from the survey will be stored securely and once the information has been analysed all questionnaires will be destroyed. At no time will any individual be identified in any reports resulting from this study.

If you have any concerns or would like to know the outcome of this project, please contact my supervisor Prof. Teal Triggs at the above address.

Thank you for your interest.

*Sarah Kirby-Ginns*

**Complaints Clause:**  
**This project follows the guidelines laid out by the Research Ethics Code of the Royal College of Art.**

**If you should have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which this research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, if an independent person is preferred, addressed to the Research Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Art at the above address.**

Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2EU, UK. T: +44 (0)20 7590 4214 E: [research@rca.ac.uk](mailto:research@rca.ac.uk) [www.rca.ac.uk](http://www.rca.ac.uk)

*Two page participant project information and consent form  
emailed to participants in advance of the questionnaire survey*



For further information  
Supervisor: Professor Teal Triggs / [teal.triggs@rca.ac.uk](mailto:teal.triggs@rca.ac.uk) / +44 (0)20 7590 4306  
07.08.13

*Graphic Design as socially responsive practice for change*  
**Survey Consent Form**

I ..... have read the information on the research project *Graphic Design as socially responsive practice for change* which is to be conducted by Sarah Kirby-Ginns from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to:

- ✓ Complete an anonymous pilot study questionnaire survey which will take approximately 1 hour
- ✓ Return the survey to Sarah Kirby-Ginns in person
- ✓ Give personal information if required
- ✓ Being observed both verbally and visually and participating with other designers

I understand that all information gathered from the survey will be stored securely, my opinions will be accurately represented. Any images in which I can be clearly identified will be used in the public domain only with my consent.

Print Name: .....

Signature .....

Date: 07.08.13 .....

This project will be conducted in compliance with the Research Ethics Code of the Royal College of Art.

Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2EU, UK. T: +44 (0)20 7590 4214 E: [research@rca.ac.uk](mailto:research@rca.ac.uk) [www.rca.ac.uk](http://www.rca.ac.uk)

Hello

I am a research student at the Royal College of Art in the Visual Communication Department alongside working in industry as a practising designer and an academic role as a Senior Lecturer in Graphic Design. I'd like to ask you to contribute to my research in which I am exploring the role of the designer in graphic and brand design in relation to audiences. It would be great if you are willing to participate as your feedback would be extremely valuable.

If you are happy to be involved it will involve downloading and completing the enclosed pdf questionnaire to a desktop or laptop, unfortunately its not possible to complete on an iPad or iPhone. Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes of your time and its important that your answers are as honest as possible. Your feedback will remain completely anonymous/confidential and follows specific research ethics guidelines.

The completed form can be emailed back to me directly via email to [sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk)

I'd also appreciate it if you are able to email the questionnaire on to other Graphic / Brand designers working within your studio whom I may have omitted to send it on to.

Please also let me know if you would like to see the results of the survey. I am possibly going to hold an exhibition / event showing the findings to which all people whom have contributed will be invited.

Further information regarding how to complete the questionnaire is contained on page 1 of the enclosed pdf. Thanks for your time and I look forward to your response. If you have questions please feel free to email me.

Kind Regards

Sarah Kirby-Ginns

-----

[sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk)



#### Participant Project Information & Consent Form

(One signed copy of this form should be retained by the Participant and one copy by the Project Researcher)

With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: Reflexive Communication Design for mainstream Brand Identity Designers

For further information  
Supervisor: Professor Teal Triggs ([soc-research@rca.ac.uk](mailto:soc-research@rca.ac.uk))

08.01.2020

Dear potential participant

*I am a PhD research student* in the School of Communication at the Royal College of Art. As part of my studies, *I am* conducting a research project entitled With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: Reflexive Communication Design for mainstream Brand Identity Designers. You are invited to take part in this research project which explores the ways in which designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences, what challenges exist within this area, and the opportunity to understand how their reflexivity might be developed in this context.

If you consent to participate, this will involve:  
*A Semi-structured interview (individually with me the researcher) for approx. 45 minutes. Your name was identified via a search of brand identity designers on LinkedIn.*

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time up to the point of publication and there will be no disadvantage if you decide not to complete the study. All information collected will be confidential. All information gathered will be stored securely and once the information has been analysed all individual information will be destroyed.

Images or quotes, which may allow you to be identified will only be used with your express permission (\*see additional signature required to confirm this at bottom of this form). If you have any concerns or would like to know the outcome of this project, please contact my supervisor Professor Teal Triggs at the above address.

Thank you for your interest.

Research Office Royal College of Art Kensington Gore London SW7 2EU  
t +44 (0)20 7590 4126 f +44 (0)20 7590 4542 [research@rca.ac.uk](mailto:research@rca.ac.uk) [www.rca.ac.uk/research](http://www.rca.ac.uk/research)

*Two page participant project information and consent form  
emailed to participants in advance of the semi-structured  
interviews*

I (please print) ..... have read the information above and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the project up to the point of publication, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented. Any data in which I can be clearly identified will be used in the public domain only with my consent.

Participant Signature.....

Researcher Signature *SARAH KIRBY-GINNS*

Date: .....

\*In addition to the above, I (please print) .....have read the above information and agree for images or quotes, which may allow me to be identified to be used in this research.

Participant Signature.....

Date: .....

**Complaints Procedure:**

This project follows the guidelines laid out by the Royal College of Art Research Ethics Policy.

If you have any questions, please speak with the researcher. If you have any concerns or a complaint about the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the RCA Research Ethics Committee by emailing [ethics@rca.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@rca.ac.uk) or by sending a letter addressed to:

The Research Ethics Committee  
 Royal College of Art  
 Kensington Gore  
 London  
 SW7 2EU



**Participant Project Information & Consent Form**

(One signed copy of this form should be retained by the Participant and one copy by the Project Researcher)

With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: exploring mainstream Brand Identity Designers reflexivity and developing a new reflexive approach to facilitate an equitable and responsive practice

For further information  
 Supervisor: Professor Teal Triggs ([teal.triggs@rca.ac.uk](mailto:teal.triggs@rca.ac.uk))

15.07.2020

Dear Participant,

*I am a PhD research student in the School of Communication at the Royal College of Art. As part of my studies, I am conducting a research project entitled 'With the Participatory Consumer Audience in mind: exploring mainstream Brand Identity Designers reflexivity and developing a new reflexive approach to facilitate an equitable and responsive practice.' You are invited to take part in this research project which explores the ways in which designers consider their position in relation to consumer audience experiences, what challenges exist within this area, and is investigating the opportunity to explore how their reflexivity might be developed in this context.*

If you consent to participate, this will involve:  
*An online design workshop (individually with me the researcher) in Miro (all links and information regarding using Miro will be provided prior to the workshops) for approx. 2hrs 20mins. This workshop will involve some individual and potential collaborative discussions with other designers and the researcher as facilitator. In order to create a safe space for people to share within the workshop environment it is important that people respect the confidential nature of what is shared by others and not discuss it outside the workshop. Your name was identified via your prior participation with a prior phase in this PhD research.*

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time up to the point of publication and there will be no disadvantage if you decide not to complete the study. All information collected by the researcher will be confidential. All information gathered by the researcher will be stored securely and once the information has been analysed all individual information will be destroyed. At the outset of the workshops I will provide private means for you to contact me via email ([sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.kirby-ginns@network.rca.ac.uk)) or private chat (on Miro) if you need my support regarding any concerns, feeling overwhelmed, wishing to abstain from exercises or wish to leave the workshop. Images or quotes, which may allow you to be identified will only be used with your express permission. (\*see additional signature required to confirm this at bottom of this form). If you have any concerns or would like to know the outcome of this project, please contact my supervisor Professor Teal Triggs at the above address.

Research Office | Royal College of Art | Kensington Gore | London SW7 2EU  
 t +44 (0)20 7590 4126 | f +44 (0)20 7590 4542 | [research@rca.ac.uk](mailto:research@rca.ac.uk) | [www.rca.ac.uk/research](http://www.rca.ac.uk/research)

The participant consent form emailed to participants in advance of the online design workshop.



# Appendix 13

## Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Step Approach Semi-structured Interviews

### – Step 1. Becoming familiar with the data

As a researcher, I became familiarised with each data item and each of the six interview recordings were sequentially transcribed verbatim in the order that they were undertaken (from Dec 2019 to Feb 2020).

Additionally, all interview protocol sheets were reviewed. Each transcript was carefully read and brief notes were made on each one to get an overall awareness of data and some early ideas before more formal initial coding began, which is discussed below.

### – Step 2. Generate initial codes

Step 2 involved initial coding, which, 'reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning' (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017:3355). On each transcript segments of text, were coded that indicated some relevance to or about the questions in this phase. Not every piece of transcribed text was coded. Line by line coding was not undertaken as this was not an inductive analysis, but deductive analysis (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

As I did not have a pre-defined set of codes, open coding was used and codes were developed and modified as the coding process was undertaken. (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

Initial codes were highlighted and manually coded by hand in the right hand margin of each transcript. Post-it notes were used to document each of the main codes and data extracts (of which there were over six hundred and twenty) thus staying close to what each participant had said. All secondary post it notes data extracts were retained in individual envelopes that related to the main initial code that they were originally assigned to and included participant no.s. This ensured that if they were needed in subsequent steps of the thematic analysis they could be easily referenced and referred to.

This approach supported a thorough and reflexive interpretive analysis in which more codes emerged after each individual transcript was initially coded. Drawing upon the approach of Maguire and Delahunt (2017) after each transcription had been coded, the codes were compared with the previously transcribed interviews and codes reflected upon. This enabled any necessary modifications to occur before subsequent transcripts were initially coded, and enabled new codes to be generated, and others to be modified or combined leading to more defined codes. The one hundred and sixty two final main initial codes, along with which participant no corresponded with the code (i.e. participant 1, participant 2) were then transferred into a Microsoft Excel document. This enabled the complete data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to be collated to be situated in one place and viewed comprehensively. This informed step 3 as outlined below.

### – Step 3. Search for themes

Taking the prior identified main initial codes from the post it notes, Step 3 was focused on searching and sorting these into themes. This step carefully kept in mind the method questions asked in this phase of the PhD and reflected upon what the themes revealed in relation to this.

In this step Analysis was undertaken by examining all of the main initial codes and identifying those which connected or fitted together. This established preliminary themes, which were predominately descriptive, for example, 'they described patterns in the data relevant to the research questions' (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017:3356).

Preliminary themes were recorded in table format in Microsoft Excel for documentation.

This phase accepted that there is no specific rule as to how many instances there are of the theme across the data set to denote it as a theme, (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The search for themes took into account the theme as being present across the entire data set, rather than from an individual data item, and consistency in the analysis.

This step assisted researcher reflections regarding the relationships between codes, themes, and different levels of themes (i.e. sub-themes) which were further refined in the next step as outlined below.

– **Step 4. Review themes**

During this stage, the themes from the previous step were reflected upon, modified and developed and all of themes in relation to the coded data were read and post-it initial codes and data extracts re-read.

These post it notes had already been labelled and placed into envelopes that were arranged via their original main initial codes as discussed in step 2. The envelopes were then sorted into piles using the preliminary themes identified and discussed in step 3.

According to (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) themes should be coherent and distinct from each other. This step identified firstly, whether in the context of the themes, all the corresponding data including the individual data extracts related to each theme did definitely support the theme, secondly it determined whether it formed a coherent pattern or if there was a need to re-evaluate and create a new theme or disregard the theme from analysis, thirdly to ensure the individual themes in relation to the data set had validity and that the thematic table accurately reflected the meanings and frequency of occurrences from the complete data set and fourthly to code any data that may have been missed in prior steps.

At this stage analysis along with interpretation took place and any insignificant data was removed.

In addition, it was felt that some themes needed to be merged, as at the preliminary themes stage there were 20 themes, some of which needed review and refinement and re-naming. Some of which led to new main overarching themes that better articulated the data and sub-themes located within that main overarching theme.

Step 4 led to the development of the main overarching themes and sub-themes, and overall, a reduction in themes through analysis and interpretation. This step assisted in providing knowledge and a story about the data, via the definitive emergence of different themes but also gave an indication of how they worked together. Following this, the final refinement of the themes took place, which is discussed below in Step 5.

– **Step 5. Define themes**

Step 5 was the refinement stage involved reviewing each of the final themes and organising the data extracts into a coherent manner that provided a narrative, documenting what was interesting about the data extract and what each theme was communicating. This enabled me to provide a detailed written analysis of the data within the individual themes and how the sub-themes were connected. This step provided documentation of findings and results of this phase of the research, and identified the overarching essence of each of the final themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

**Step 6. Write up**

Findings were written up with an analytical narrative.

# Appendix 14

## Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Step Approach online design workshop

### Step 1. Becoming familiar with the data

To start, each of the participants responses to the online workshop questions from Miro were collated and transferred into one excel file. Each of their responses aligned to the principles they used and the questions asked as outlined in Chapter 3 – Methods Phase Three. Following this the online Zoom workshop recording/discussion was transcribed verbatim. Both elements of data were then printed out onto paper, in preparation for initial coding by hand as discussed below.

### Step 2. Generate initial codes

For each element of data collected (Miro workshop questions and zoom recording) the segments of text were manually coded that indicated some relevance to or about the method questions in this phase.

Post it notes were used to document each of the main initial codes. A further post it note, was used to document a data extract of what the participant had said that corresponded to the code. This process engaged with the participant online workshop transferred data and the zoom recording/discussion

As the Miro data and Zoom discussion transcription was sequentially coded by hand, some new codes were generated and some were modified or combined, initiating a move beyond the mere identification and development of initial codes on previous transcripts to more defined codes.

At the end of this step of coding, the main initial codes on the post it notes were reviewed for a final time and where necessary the codes were modified or combined if appropriate.

The one hundred and six final main initial codes, were then transferred into a Microsoft Excel. Step 2 informed and led to the next stage as outlined on the next page.

### Step 3. Search for themes

Taking the prior identified main initial codes from the post it notes, this step was focused on searching and sorting these into themes. This step carefully kept in mind the method questions asked in this phase of the PhD and reflected upon what the themes revealed in relation to this.

These preliminary themes were recorded in table format in Microsoft Excel for documentation, with a selection of some of these as shown in are shown the accompanying visual practice process book on page 115.

### Step 4. Review themes

During this stage, the themes from the previous step were reflected upon, modified and developed and all of themes in relation to the coded data were read. All of the collated data extracts from each participant were placed in envelopes which were labelled according to their original initial codes (discussed in step 2). These were then sorted into preliminary theme piles (discussed in step 3)

At this stage analysis along with interpretation took place and any insignificant data was removed. In addition, it was felt that some themes needed to be merged, as at the preliminary themes stage there were 26 themes in which some needed review and refinement. Step 4 led to the development of the main overarching themes and sub-themes, some of which, as discussed above were originally preliminary themes.

This step (see accompanying visual practice process book on pages 116-117) assisted in providing knowledge and a story about the data, via the definitive emergence of different themes and gave an indication of how they worked together. Following this, the final refinement of the themes took place, which is discussed below in Step 5.

**Step 5. Define themes**

This step identified the overarching essence of each of the final themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which was undertaken in Excel and is shown in the accompanying visual practice process book on page 119, and in the visual thematic map shown below in this thesis on page 178.

**Step 6. Write up**

Findings were written up with an analytical narrative.

## Appendix 15 Online Design Workshop – Additional Participant Quotes

Some reflections and further feedback from participant designers on the thematic results after the Phase 3 workshop	
<i>'I can see myself in most of the yellow circles when I did the workshop having the principle in front of me' (Participant two).</i>	<i>'It was good to have the principles on hand, I believe it will have a positive impact on my work once I have your guide on my desk' (Participant two).</i>
<i>'From testing out certain principles in the research phase, I found some specific principles more relevant than others, and I imagine that would also be the case for certain briefs' (Participant three).</i>	<i>'It had, overall, a positive effect. Rather than negatively making me question my approach in considering solutions, it forced me to think in new, surprising ways' (Participant one).</i>
<i>'The principles made me reconsider my own biases when generating ideas. It has challenged my routines and made me re-evaluate my approach towards the audience and its experience. (Participant two).</i>	<i>'I found that generally considering this mindset during the ideas generation stage of a project a positive action, that would lead to more awareness of the issue. I think the long-term impact of this type of thinking would change the way designers approach their process' (Participant three).</i>
<i>'Most significantly, I would say that the principles initiated self-reflection of my own position within the ideas generating and pushed my to leave my bubble and step into the audiences' bubble in order to generate better ideas for a project' (Participant two).</i>	<i>'This definitely improved my existing approach'.</i>

# Glossary

## **Brand Identity Design**

'How an organisation looks, how it feels and how it wants others to feel about it' (Johnson, 2016:14). It is both verbal and visual (Johnson, 2014) and is a sub-specialised branch of design positioned within Communication Design, a specialised branch of design within the field of Design (Buchanan, 2001).

## **Consumer audience**

A distinct audience group in branding (Olins, 2008). This group purchases a commodity or service and makes use of economic goods.

## **Consumer audience experience**

Something that the group who purchases a commodity or service and makes use of economic goods have personally observed, encountered, undergone or lived through.

## **Constructivist**

Acknowledges that reality is understood through multiple realities.

## **Principle**

Sets of ideas, preferences and areas of interest which have an influence on individual processes and which govern an individual's thought (adapted from Lawson, 2006).

## **Design Principle**

Sets of ideas, preferences and areas of interest which have an influence on individual design processes and which govern a designer's thought (Lawson, 2005).

## **Ethical Design Practice**

Design practice that gives importance to critical reflection on experiences and actions specifically concerning participation, diversity, biases, and assumptions to enable (ongoing) adaptations to human judgement and behaviour and support improvements to responsive and inclusive decision making in design practice.

## **Method**

Techniques or procedures used that are selected according to what information is wanted to be uncovered, from whom, where and why (Crotty, 1998:6) and which involves a particular way of doing something (Cambridge Dictionary).



**Positionality**

A individual's social identities, background, experiences and contexts that shapes and influences how they use their thinking, perspectives, beliefs and interpretations towards others.

**Professional brand identity designers**

Practitioners who are employed to or work on projects situated within the mainstream commercial activities of brand identity design and who are disciplined individuals and have to be prepared to apply their knowledge and understanding to a high level. This is in response to professional standards (AIGA, 2022) in which they have to demonstrate respect for the profession, for colleagues, for clients, for audiences or consumers, and for society as a whole.

**Relationality**

Careful thought and importance given to connections, relationships, relations and participation between individuals and groups.

**Reflective Practice**

The careful thinking and consideration of some subject matter, idea, or purpose which does not contest the practice of the practitioner beyond an individual level to question the broader social conventions within the parameters of practice. Limits attention given to the critical and emotional aspects of reflection (Thompson and Thompson, 2008).

**Critically Reflective Practice**

A practitioner's exercising or involvement of careful thinking, consideration or questioning and judgment and judicious evaluation of some subject matter/s, idea/s, or purpose/s. A process of self-examination and self-awareness that involves the practitioner considering multiple perspectives, which question the broader social convention/s and context/s within the parameters of practice beyond an individual level, but which is situated solely in the context of the practitioner's own practice. Whilst the practitioner considers a process of self-awareness in the context of their own practice, this focus is not upon doing so specifically, nor concurrently, in relation to the interaction/s with other individuals/stakeholders connected with that practice.

**Reflexivity**

When an individual critically reflects upon their own perspectives, values and assumptions and all aspects of themselves and recognises and acts upon how their underlying actions might influence the way they create knowledge and act in relation to other individuals.

**Reflexive Practice**

An individual's examination of their actions and practices which involves a critically reflective focused, in-depth reflection of their perspectives, values and assumptions (Bolton, 2014, xxiii). Reflexive practice is the process of the practitioner taking into account their own position, having self-awareness and considering potential biases in the practice. The intent is on the practitioner being aware of how their own background, experiences, and perspectives may influence and have implications on the practice and concurrently on relation/s and interaction/s with other individuals/stakeholders connected with that practice. It offers a way of ensuring that the practitioner's own biases do not unduly influence the practice. The focus is to improve the practitioner's actions and practices in the context of themselves towards other individuals. Within the boundaries of this research, the individual is the designer, and other individuals are their consumer audience.

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