

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Unveiling the World: Critical Dialogue and the Process of Conscientization With Dyslexic Students in Higher Education

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This Thesis has been completed as a requirement for a postgraduate research degree of the University of Winchester

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ABSTRACT

Unveiling the World: Critical Dialogue and the Process of Conscientization With Dyslexic Students in Higher Education

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Much of the current literature on dyslexia aims to observe and record the difficulties and challenges faced by individuals with dyslexia. This research invariably centres on exploring cognitive difficulties, educational challenges or social barriers. However, this approach, which concentrates on highlighting deficits and the challenges of being dyslexic, does little to change the lives of individuals with dyslexia and often serves to reinforce the discourse of failure. This thesis aims to challenge this narrative.

The focus of this thesis is a small-scale participatory action research project conducted with a group of dyslexic students (as co-researchers) in a UK university. The project draws upon the writings of teacher and educational theorist Paulo Freire. Freire theorizes the mechanisms that maintain the oppression of particular social groups. He advocates a process whereby the oppressed engage in critical dialogue with each other and with the world around them in order to illuminate the historical, social and political forces that have led to and maintain their oppression. Through a series of workshops, the co-researchers of this study critically discussed themes around dyslexia, education and literacy. Through these conversations, the group began to uncover areas for transformation, leading to them engaging in action. Freire argues that this praxis grows out of and cultivates a critical awakening where the oppressed begin to 'unveil the world' that has constructed their oppression. He refers to this process as 'conscientization', an ongoing dialectical critical engagement with the world and with others.

This study explored the development of conscientization, with the co-researchers, in order to further illuminate this process. Their engagement as active subjects and the continuing conversations that arose from this engagement, further elucidated the causes of oppression for dyslexic individuals. In recognising how these causes maintain and normalise an exclusionary education system, all co-researchers transformed how they perceived their dyslexia. In turn, this transformation in consciousness, resulted in many of them actively taking steps to change their world.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Freire, Conscientization

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'Insofar as I am a conscious presence in the world, I cannot hope to escape my ethical responsibility for my action in the world.'
(Freire 1998:26)

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore how Freire's (1970, 1974, 1978, 1985, 1987, 1992) pedagogical theory can be applied in practice to facilitate students with dyslexia towards what Freire (1970, 1974, 1985) refers to as 'conscientization'. This critical awakening enables those who live within an oppressive system to recognise the social, political, historical and economic forces that work to maintain their oppression. Through dialogue and discussion with each other and the wider social world, individuals build an understanding of the world that goes beyond their immediate experience. In understanding the world better, along with the disabling factors that maintain their oppression, individuals are in a much stronger position to change it. The transformation of their consciousness during this process is the focus of this study.

My interest in this area stems from a combination of personal experience (as a dyslexic individual), professional experience of working as both a primary school teacher and a dyslexia tutor and my interactions with the wonderful individuals with dyslexia I have met over the years and their generosity in sharing their stories. These stories often reflected my own and began to suggest to me that individuals with dyslexia live within an oppressive system. The beginning of this awareness led me to pursue an area of research that would not only illuminate this theorised oppressive system but would also work towards transforming it.

Rationale

'Seriously studying a text calls for an analysis of the study of the one who, through studying, wrote it.' (Freire, 1985:2)

As a dyslexic individual, the construction of my identity as "unable" began the moment I started school. The encouragement of my parents was replaced with a narrative of failure, laying the threads for the adult that I was to become. The culture I grew up in, one that views literacy competence as a sign of a person's intelligence and value (Collinson, 2014; Macdonald & Deacon, 2015), formed the framework within which this construction was nurtured. As an adult, I trained to become a teacher. I found a home in the profession for twelve years, until

the gradual infection of neoliberalism saw a move away from teaching and towards a focus on assessment and accountability (Ball, 2016; Cahill & Konings, 2017). I saw the impact this had on the children that I taught and on my own autonomy to teach them. The extraordinary increase in paperwork that this new system brought, quickly exposed my dyslexia. The stigma that surrounds this label emboldened those in charge and resulted in my dismissal from the profession.

The practice of creating a system that excludes certain social groups and then “blaming” the already excluded for failing to thrive in that system, is a common tactic of the oppressors. Freire states that ‘It is imperative that we get beyond societies whose structures beget an ideology that ascribes responsibility for the breakdowns and failures actually created by these same structures, to the failed themselves’ (Freire, 1992:147). Experiencing this contradiction of an education system that speaks of inclusion, yet whose actions exclude, sparked a new awareness in me. Freire (1989:55) discusses this approach of the oppressors and reiterates that ‘what counts most is their action and not their words’. The illusion of the power of those in charge began to slip and the oppressors began to be unmasked (Freire, 1985). As I shared my experience, I recognized the commonality of this oppression. I learned that my uncle had also been dismissed from his job as an accountant after declaring his dyslexia, resulting in him spending much of his life unemployed or underemployed. I met a man at a dyslexia support group who had worked for a firm for 25 years before his employers discovered his dyslexia and promptly dismissed him. As I moved into academia, my work as a dyslexia tutor, led me to many other exceptional individuals. My students’ willingness to share their stories of discrimination in education and in the workplace, reinforced to me that a life with dyslexia is an oppressed life.

Much of the social research into dyslexia highlights this phenomenon. Work by Gyorfi & Smythe (2010) and Macdonald & Deacon (2015) explore the impact of being dyslexic on a person’s employment opportunities and found that most individuals with dyslexia are unemployed or underemployed. Equally other researchers have investigated how dyslexia is over represented in the homeless population (Patterson *et al.*, 2012) and within prison systems (Hewitt-Main, 2013; Dâderman *et al.*, 2012). Perhaps most worryingly, much of the scientific research into dyslexia consistently reinforces a deficit model approach (see Nicolson & Fawcett, 2008; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2016 and Beneventi, 2010 for examples) reinforcing the notion that an individual with dyslexia is insufficient in certain skills.

However, a common feature of both models is their persistence in presenting the *suffering* of the disabled individual, positioning them firmly as a victim (Oliver, 1996). Consequently, I consistently felt a disconnect between the research I was reading about and the students I worked with daily. How did these studies change the lives of individuals with dyslexia? Who was this knowledge for? Who benefited from these studies? Oliver (1992) argues that disability research has done little to change the lives of people with disabilities. He links the practice to Marx's theory of alienation, where workers are kept separate from the products that result from their work. It began to become apparent to me that research into dyslexia, followed a similar approach and perhaps, if unintentionally, reinforced oppression.

I began to search for a form of research that would benefit individuals with dyslexia and particularly the students that I worked with. This exploration led me to the work of Paulo Freire. Freire's pedagogy invites a collaborative exploration of the world, with both student and teacher constructing knowledge together (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1985, 1992). Freire believes that through this exploration of both the known (objective) world along with collective dialogue to expose different ways of knowing (subjective), students can reveal the world and see the possibilities of a world that is in the process of becoming. Through exploratory dialogue, oppressed groups begin to recognise the social, political, historical and economic forces that have led to their situation of oppression. And in recognising that their world (and the oppressive structures that construct it) have been socially, culturally and historically constructed, they recognise the possibility of a world that can be remade (Freire, 1970).

My personal experience of dyslexia along with my recognition that most research into dyslexia ignores the voices of disabled individuals, researching *on* them and not *with* them, formed the rationale for this thesis. Oliver (1996:13) states 'For me our oppression is ultimately due to our continued exclusion from the process of production, and not because of society's hatred (real or imagined) of us.' I realised the importance of working in collaboration with my students, ensuring they are active subjects in the production of this new knowledge and sharing in its outcomes. Their vast experience and reflections on dyslexia is rarely recognised and so their input into this research will create a new and much more comprehensive body of knowledge.

Freire

'Educating, and educating oneself for the purpose of liberation, is the task of those who know that they know little ... in dialogue with those who almost always think they know nothing.' (Freire, 1974:91)

To facilitate this collaborative production of knowledge, the pedagogy of Paulo Freire was explored. Freire's pedagogy is grounded in the humanist belief that humans have the right and the responsibility to create their own knowledge (Aronowitz, 1993:151). Teacher and student work in partnership to explore through dialogue, what we know and the possibility of what does not yet exist as two parts of the same epistemological circle (Freire, 1998). It is through this partnership, that must be forged 'by authentic humanism (and not humanitarianism)' that a pedagogy of the oppressed is developed (Freire, 1970:36).

Freire's work provides a theoretical discussion to guide the Freirean teacher, rather than a series of methods or instructions. He is adamant that each approach must be adopted *with* the students the critical educator is working with and within the social and historical context of the students' world (Freire, 1997a). As this can only be known by the students and teacher through exploration, Freire reiterates how each approach must be unique to the situation, stating how 'technique is always secondary' (Freire, 1997a: 304). He continues 'What I do provide, while avoiding universalizing oppression, is the possibility for the educator to use my discussions and theorizing about oppression and apply them to a specific context' (Freire, 1997a:309). Therefore, the approach taken for this research will be unique. Whilst utilizing Freire's theories and discussions, the approach will be grounded within the context of a university setting and developed with regard to the historical and social context of the dyslexic students that I am working with.

Research Questions

Freire's pedagogy suggests an approach that will enable students to engage in dialogue with others and the world around them. Through this dialogue, which combines an exploration of both their objective and subjective world students develop a much wider understanding of their situation. By critically exploring these ideas and combining them in praxis with action, Freire suggests that oppressed individuals begin to develop conscientization as they begin to see the social, political and historical threads that have led to and reinforce their oppression.

In order to better understand this process and its potential to transform the lived experience of students with dyslexia, this thesis will explore these questions:

- How does a Freirean pedagogical approach facilitate students with dyslexia to develop conscientization?
- What are students' experiences and interpretation of this process?
- Can engaging in a Freirean approach lead to transformation?

Thesis Structure

Freire argues that we cannot understand a situation until we understand the social, political and historical context in which the situation of oppression exists. He writes '...it is impossible to access meaning simply through reading words. One must first read the world in which these words exist' (Freire, 1997a:304). Therefore, although Chapter One will provide an overview of prior literature in this area, giving *some* understanding of the historical threads of the oppression, it is hoped that the reader will treat this chapter as the beginning of a conversation. This dialogue will then continue through subsequent chapters as students' voices are brought into the conversation through transcripts and analysis of their interviews.

The thesis will be structured as follows:

Chapter One will provide a literature review. It will first start with an exploration of dominant theories on dyslexia, discussing both the medical and social models. It will then introduce literature that examines the economic and social impact of being dyslexic before exploring its impact on educational attainment. Freire's work will be examined further, outlining his theories on oppression and the stages leading up to the development of conscientization.

Chapter Two will outline the developing methodological approach of this research. It will explore Freire's theoretical stance on methodology and show how these theories will be applied to this project. The chapter will include further discussion on Freire's ontology and epistemology and how this has helped to construct this project, as well as an examination of the critical theory paradigm which has informed this thesis. Next, an outline of participatory action research will be provided, leading to a discussion of how Freire's work feeds into this methodology. Finally, this chapter will explore how the stages of conscientization can be uncovered within the co-researcher's interviews.

Chapter Three will provide an analysis of the co-researchers' interviews. It will show how the themes within each stage of conscientization (culture of silence, semi-intrinsic consciousness, naïve-transitional consciousness and conscientization) are revealed in the discussions with the co-researchers. The analysis will be presented through the predominant themes of the co-researchers' experiences and linked with literature in this area. This will also provide further insight into the framework of oppression in which these conversations have taken place.

The thesis will conclude by re-examining the research questions. It will then discuss the stages of conscientization and the additional themes of oppression that emerged from the co-researchers' interviews. The transformativity of the project will also be explored through a discussion of the changes that have occurred as a result of the co-researchers' evolving critical consciousness.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Dyslexia is often presented as a difficulty with reading and writing (Ferrer *et al.*, 2009; Fidler & Everatt, 2012; Trenta *et al.*, 2013; Ellis, 2016; Hulme & Snowling, 2016; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2016). Consequently, much of the literature around dyslexia, focuses on interventions to “cure” the deficit (See Stein *et al.*, 2000; Foorman *et al.*, 2011; Heth & Lavidor, 2015) or explanations to justify categorisation (See Turner, 1997; Thomson, 2009; Warmington *et al.*, 2012; Moura, 2013). This section will explore the literature with an aim to suggesting a different viewpoint. It will outline the social and political discourses that have served to create dyslexia as a category of “other” and will suggest that continuation and reinforcement of these discourses, through society and policy enactment, serve to solidify the oppression of individuals with dyslexia.

The second section will present a possible solution through a review of the work of Paulo Freire. Freire’s work engages oppressed groups in critical thinking with the aim of illuminating the social, historical and political forces that have led to and continue to maintain their oppression. Through critical dialogue with each other and both an objective and subjective interrogation of the world, individuals can transition through stages of consciousness. Freire (1970) suggests that oppressed groups initially live within what he terms the ‘culture of silence’, where their socially constructed situation appears normal and unchangeable. It is through engaging in critical dialogue and eventually taking action on the world, that individuals transform their view of the world and develop what Freire refers to as ‘conscientization’, or a critical awakening.

Through utilising Freire’s work, I aim to show how individuals with dyslexia can transform their situation through a pedagogy of critical reflection and dialogue, leading to action. However, first I will endeavour to present literature on dyslexia which exemplifies why I consider people with dyslexia to be oppressed and why Freire offers hope for change.

The Medical & Social Model of Dyslexia

Literature on dyslexia is often divided into two paradigms: the medical model and the social model. The medical model presents an individualistic paradigm, which defines dyslexia in terms of an individual’s deficits (Tamboer *et al.*, 2014). Research invariably serves to highlight weaknesses in reading (Ferrer *et al.*, 2009; Trenta *et al.*, 2013; Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 2005), working memory (Snowling, 2000; Beneventi, 2010), visual processing (Stein, 2001),

organisational skills (Crombie & Crombie 2001; Henderson, 2001; Cooper, 2009) procedural learning (Nicolson & Fawcett, 2008) and working speed (Shaywitz, 2003; Price, 2012). This deficit approach serves to reinforce a familiar discourse surrounding disability, that the “problem” is with the disabled individual.

Others have chosen to discuss dyslexia within a social model framework (Macdonald, 2009), suggesting societal barriers ‘create’ dyslexia (Barden, 2014a:3) or that history and culture have created ‘lexism’, which in turn disables individuals with dyslexia (Collinson, 2014:154). The social model of disability was theorised by Oliver (1983). It provides a tool for illuminating the disabling structures and procedures intrinsic within societal systems and the individuals that embody them (Madriaga, 2007; Macdonald, 2009; Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Oliver, 2013; Barden, 2014b Ledwith, 2016). Within this framework, educational norms obstruct progress from primary school through to university (Miles & Varma, 2004; Watson, 2009; Gibson & Kendall, 2010; de Beer *et al.*, 2014; Herrington and Hunter-Carsch, 2001). Viewed through this model ‘the education system becomes an institutional barrier that masks structural discriminations for people with dyslexia.’ (Macdonald, 2009:353). These social barriers then continue to create challenges on into the workplace (Macdonald, 2009; McLoughlin & Leather, 2013; Moody, 2015) and throughout the life course (McNulty, 2003), constructing and continually reinforcing an identity of failure (Pollak, 2005; Riddell and Weedon, 2014).

However, it is interesting to note that the social model of disability, tends to be applied to physical disabilities with only a few relating this model to dyslexia (Macdonald, 2009). This project will engage students with dyslexia as partners, to further illuminate the social construction of dyslexia and help to address this shortfall in the literature.

Economic Impact of Being Dyslexic

Macdonald (2009) also suggests there is a socio-economic impact on whether individuals with dyslexia succeed in education and in the workplace. Through participant interviews, he found that many middle-class families obtained private specialist dyslexia tuition for their children (deemed by participants to be more effective at teaching effective coping strategies than the support they received in mainstream schools). He argues that, as a result of this, when adults from middle class backgrounds, gain employment, they are already equipped with coping strategies they can use to mask or manage any challenges they may encounter. Whereas those from a working-class background, often do not have these strategies to draw upon, and so tended to find themselves in unskilled or semiskilled roles.

In addition, Bartlett *et al.* (2010) suggest people with dyslexia may also experience difficulties gaining or retaining employment or being able to express themselves well enough to gain promotional opportunities. It could be argued from the work of McDonald (2009) and Bartlett *et al.* (2010) that it would also be more difficult for someone with dyslexia from a working class background to succeed within a professional role as the additional level of literacy required in many professional positions, combined with a lack of personal strategies, is likely to result in failure. This study seeks to further illuminate the oppressive structures that exist to further disable dyslexic individuals.

Mental Health and Dyslexia

Utilising the social model enables us to explore a much wider and more holistic understanding of dyslexia. Work by McNulty (2003), McLoughlin & Leather (2013) and Alexander-Passe (2015) present an understanding of dyslexia that not only impacts educational achievement, but also constructs an individual's self-image throughout their life. Low self-esteem, formed through years of failure at school, follow individuals with dyslexia into adult life (McNulty, 2003; McLoughlin & Leather, 2013). As a result, many individuals either experience mental health difficulties (Alexander-Passe, 2015), or develop compensatory behavioural patterns that enable them to avoid or adapt situations in order to evade the perceived inevitable failure. McNulty (2003) argues that these compensatory behaviours make it more difficult for individuals with dyslexia to then adapt to changes in their lives, perpetuating anxiety and poor mental health and in turn, reinforcing oppression.

In addition to low self-worth, Slorach (2016) also highlights a difference in how neurodiverse individuals are perceived by society compared with those who have a more visible or physical difference. He argues how neurodiverse individuals often find themselves *blamed* for their impairments as the differences in their behaviour or outcomes is often viewed as a weakness within themselves. Slorach (2016) also suggests that within the disabled community, individuals who are neurodiverse are often perceived to not really be disabled and so not worthy of services or support. This dual stigmatisation leaves the dyslexic individual isolated from both the disabled and non-disabled communities. This research aims to directly challenge this isolation through the creation of a 'cultural circle', where individuals with dyslexia can come together to engage in critical dialogue around dyslexia, thereby creating culture (Freire, 1974:38)

The issue of stigmatisation is explored in more depth by Ellis (1998). Ellis (1998) uses Goffman's work, to investigate stigmatisation of individuals with less visible differences. She concludes that less obvious stigmas often cause more anxiety as the individual lives with constant fear of being discovered. This analysis exemplifies Tyler's (2013:8) assertion that '...stigmatization operates as a form of governance'. The fear of discovery only serves to perpetuate anxiety and low self-esteem. In addition, the use of labels often serves to reinforce this stigma. Caskey *et al.* (2018) comments on how, in 2013, the American Psychology Association defined dyslexia as a 'disorder'. They discuss how this derogative description results in dyslexic students taking on two different labels in contradiction with each other. The stigmatisation of the "dyslexic" label suggests someone who has failed academically, whereas the "student" label demands academic success. This juxtaposition of identity reinforces a feeling of difference and thereby, isolation.

Caskey *et al.*'s (2018) work also highlighted the social challenges of education. Their findings found that many students with dyslexia hated school. Participants cited challenges from early education all the way through to university. They discussed feeling a sense of difference and learned failure. Participants also described regularly encountering institutionalised discrimination, which they would often consider to be normal. Caskey *et al.* (2018) highlight a lack of research into the social and emotional challenges of education for students with dyslexia and call for further work into this area.

Ghisi *et al.* (2016) further explore the impact of social isolation and suggest that, at university, students with dyslexia experienced more mental health difficulties than their non-dyslexic peers. They reiterate how these difficulties are worsened, when a student is diagnosed later in life, as years of failure would have already constituted their identity as a failure. This low self-worth can then lead to self-isolation, as individuals do not feel they belong to the social groups of their peers. Fear of failure can also further this self-isolation as language difficulties, synonymous with dyslexia, can make talking in large groups stressful (Alexander-Passe, 2015).

This study will draw upon this research to explore the impact of this social isolation and whether it serves as a tool for the oppressor to perpetuate their goal.

Entering Higher Education

The UK higher education system creates further challenges for individuals with dyslexia. Students enter a culture where they are graded or excluded based primarily on their literacy skills (Herrington and Hunter-Carsch, 2001). They are expected to acquire knowledge through reading vast amounts of literature, memorise and process verbal information at speed in the form of lectures, juggle social situations, manage change and organise both their study and personal lives. All of these procedures put strain on the very feature that others individuals with dyslexia. In addition, their knowledge is then judged through their ability to transform what they know into a written format (Collinson *et al.*, 2012). This disabling method often leads those who are guardians of this process (often non-disabled professionals (Smith, 2009)), to determine that students with dyslexia do not know.

Giroux (1985) argues how intellectuals often maintain authority over the process of defining intellectualism and in doing so unwittingly reinforce division. This division can place students with dyslexia in a position of feeling like they do not belong in academia. Bourdieu (2008) would argue that they belong in two opposing social fields, that of dyslexic (with all the connotations of “unable”) and that of a student entering academia (with the expectations of academia). Bourdieu (2008:100) argues that this collision of contrary social fields creates what he terms a ‘cleft habitus’.

Illich (1995) highlights how learning is often assumed to be the automatic result of teaching. Therefore, if we teach and the student does not learn, it is assumed that the problem must be with the student. However, it could be argued that to teach in a predominantly text-based fashion, creates barriers for students with dyslexia. Collinson’s (2014) discussion on ‘lexism’ suggests that a cultural reliance on text-based medium creates dyslexia and positions those who struggle with this method of communication, as abnormal. In addition, Freire (1978:16) highlights how illiteracy is often viewed as an illness, with society touting the need for its ‘eradication’. This project aims to critique the dominance and prevalence of literacy in modern history (Slorach, 2015), its association with scholarly knowledge and its potential for creating a system where mastery over this method is deemed to show knowledge, and illiteracy represents ignorance.

McInerney (2009) suggests that we have a tendency to justify inequalities in education by bequeathing those effected, a psychological explanation for their failure, medicalising the

problem and again suggesting the fault is with the individual. This then enables those in positions of authority, to create individualised solutions to “cure” the individual, alleviating the system of any need to change while positioning the dyslexic individual as the “other”. In addition, Alves *et al.* (2016) found teachers discourse serves to reflect and reinforce this idea by repeatedly attributing students challenges to characteristics within themselves, rather than a problem within the system. This medicalised approach to education will be investigated to uncover its role in maintaining the ‘culture of silence’ (Freire, 1970, 1985; Gibson, 2006).

The History of Reading

The reliance on the hegemony of literacy as the “correct” form of knowledge has historical and cultural roots. Darnton (2011) argues that there has always been a perception of the appropriate way to read and that this is often dictated by historical and cultural factors. He outlines the social influences on what was perceived to be “proper reading”, from the 17th century when the masses were encouraged to read for the purposes of religion and work (but, interestingly, not to write) to the 18th century, when excessive reading was considered to be bad for you. The changes around what is considered a socially acceptable style of reading is further exemplified by Vincent (2011) who details the beginnings of a reading hierarchy. He discusses how, in the 17th century, reading was a social event, with readers reading newspapers, books and poems out loud in coffee shops. This began to create a divide; those who read were considered educated and those who listened were uneducated and therefore, unthinking. Vincent (2011) suggests this enabled those in power to create a dichotomy; the written word signified truth, modernity, and education, whereas oral communication equalled superstition, untruths and the uneducated. This was often used as a justification for excluding the “uneducated” from political power and economic privilege. He writes, ‘Everywhere, writing and the written word was interpreted as a physical power’ (Vincent, 2011:165).

Fetterley (2011) and McHenry (2011) explore the power that was gained through the acquisition of literacy skills. Fetterley (2011:93) succinctly states, “Literacy is political”. She affirms that when an individual’s access to literacy is limited, only one reality is ever explored. This leads to what Fetterley (2011:93) refers to as a ‘confusion of consciousness’ where ‘impalpability flourishes’. Additionally, McHenry (2011) discusses the importance of literacy and reading for free African-Americans in transforming society. The oppressive white society valued literacy, science and the arts. Therefore, in order to gain acknowledgement, it was believed people had to emulate these tropes. Otherwise, they would be excluded from the benefits of reading and literacy study. Darnton (2011) furthers this point by highlighting how

literacy theorists argue that books do not hold a fixed meaning. Instead knowledge from a book is co-constructed between author and reader. Therefore, to not be involved in this co-construction would give others the power of interpretation and, consequently, the power to define knowledge and truth.

This project seeks to explore the impact of this historical discourse and its impact on normalising the oppression of individuals with dyslexia.

Contemporary Literacy Debates

In more contemporary times, it became a necessary step for the masses to also acquire reading skills. The advent of industrialisation necessitated that workers developed a basic level of reading, enough to allow instructional information to be passed among the workers (Darnton, 2011).

This approach to reading has continued to be practiced in schools with what Freire (1985:2) refers to as 'mechanical' reading being deemed to be the primary skill. Meek (1987:viii) argues how 'The notion of 'basic skills' [a term often used to describe the skills needed to decode the written word] is an educational pleonasm to divert teaching and learning from what most people experientially know about the world'. She argues that this creates a divide between students: those who see books as a repository of knowledge and those who view them as an instructional manual. However, she argues that with the focus on the basic skills of reading (e.g. grammar, spelling and decoding text), books simply become a tool for students to practice the mechanics of reading. The notion of books expanding our knowledge and understanding of the world is lost and the reader becomes a passive receptacle.

In discussing this notion of 'proper' literacy, Meek (1987:ix) also discusses the influence of those in power enforcing this approach to literacy acquisition. She argues that when students do not master the skills of mechanical reading and writing they are deemed to be failing. Those in power will repeat the rhetoric of failing standards in literacy and imply that students somehow lack the 'traditional respect for their elders embodied in the notion of 'correctness' of spelling and grammar' (Meek, 1987:ix). In addition, Freire (1985) suggests that literacy debates tend to repeat this discourse and purely focus on literacy as a mechanical process where the goal is to simply memorise the text. Giroux (1987) argues that this approach to literacy teaching enables those in power to "train" workers to manage paper-based tasks in the workplace. At the same time, they give governments a measurable marker in which to test

students and hold schools accountable if students do not maintain this standard. He argues how this highlights the neoliberal tactic, where schools are alienating themselves with the business world. Equally, those who do not reach this marker are quickly deemed to be failures. Meek (1988:3) highlights this point eloquently, when she states, 'Reading is no different from anything else we learn, except perhaps in that we really have to learn to do it if we are to be recognised by others as someone who can learn'.

To counter the belief that the teaching of reading should be a mechanical process both Meek (1987, 1988), hooks (1994) and Freire & Macedo (1987) argue how literacy education should instead involve a critical reflection on what is read and written. Students should explore the meaning of language and recognise its dialogical connection with the world. Freire (1985:88) writes 'the word is not something static or disconnected from men's existential experience, but a dimension of their thought-language about the world' Consequently, Meek (1987) suggests that when critics state that literacy standards are failing, what they really mean is that students are often reading and writing more creatively and imaginatively than before; it is simply the case that those in power do not always like what they have to say. Both Meek (1987) and Freire & Macedo's (1987) arguments question the assumption of what it means to be deemed literate. This research will delve into this further by interrogating societies notion of literacy and investigating how this focus on mechanical reading serves to restrict access to knowledge.

Amsler (2015) discusses how revolutionary pedagogies are often met with scepticism by teachers who will argue that it will not work in their circumstance. However, Amsler (2015:120) points out how it is education that becomes the most powerful tool to transform policy, politics and popular opinion. She states, '...unlearning domination and learning autonomy, courage and co-operation are essential elements of radical democracy'. Equally, Giroux (1987) argues that literacy shows us how to critique the world. Through this approach, we learn how ideas and discourses are developed. Arguing in support of Freire's approach to literacy teaching, he suggests that maintaining illiteracy is a form of 'moral and social regulation' (Giroux, 1987:12). Recognising the difference between mechanical and critical literacy education is essential given Gramsci's (1971) warning that literacy can be both hegemonic and counter hegemonic.

Freire (1985) goes on to suggest an oppressive agenda behind the mechanists' approach to literacy education. He suggests that by simply teaching the process of reading, we ignore the connection between reading and our understanding of the world. In doing so, the focus of the student is on decoding the text rather than a critical engagement with the knowledge to be gained from the text. In ignoring, or being distracted from this aspect of reading, the oppressed are unable to gain an understanding of their world beyond their immediate circumstances or view the construction of their situation by the elite.

Freire & Macedo (1987) also argues that in keeping the masses focused on the mechanics of reading, the elite retain a monopoly over literacy as a form of knowledge. They gain power over the interpretation of text and the definition of truth. Equally, they maintain the ability to define intellectualism and the "proper" way to do things. Freire & Macedo (1987:122) echo Giroux (1985) when they state, 'To be intellectual one must do exactly what those with the power to define intellectualism do'. Gramsci (1971:9) also suggests that being deemed to be intellectual has nothing to do with qualifications or 'organic' intellect but rather our position in society. This creates an uncomfortable "truth". Those in power are able to define the parameters of "appropriate" literacy skills, while hindering the masses access to critical literacy. They then belittle and silence those who do not achieve these expected parameters (e.g. dyslexics) and ensure that those who do not conform (e.g. those who struggle to spell or have poor grammar) are othered and therefore, unable to access positions of power (Freire, 1987, Giroux, 1987).

Freire's (1987) assessment of literacy hegemony is further supported by Collinson (2014) when he argues that individuals with dyslexia are restricted by a 'lexist' society. However, whereas Collinson argues for the erosion of these lexicist barriers, Freire, suggests that the oppressed need to learn to speak the language of the oppressor in order to understand their own construction. He argues that developing critical literacy skills leads to a greater understanding of the world. Consequently, the oppressed recognise how their situation and their culture has been constructed by the language of the elite and hence, the oppressed begin to recognise how language can play a part in transforming that reality (Freire, 1987). This area will be explored with students with dyslexia as part of this project.

Freire (1987:42) discusses how the perception of literacy, as something only the elite possess, creates a situation where by the illiterate person is viewed as 'lost' and 'outside reality'.

Individual intervention programs are then created to “gift” the written word to these unfortunates. They must then passively receive this gift and follow the instruction from above. Anyone who turns away from this gift or fails to learn through this mechanical approach is then deemed to be ungrateful. This study will draw upon Freire’s theoretical perspective to aid in a critique of students’ experience of the “support” offered throughout their education. Through putting Freire’s theory into practice, this study will add to our understanding of Freire’s work.

The Use of ‘Tokenistic’ Support

The prevalence of these individualised solutions can be seen throughout policy aimed at “supporting” students with dyslexia at university. The Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) was introduced in the UK higher education system in 1990 (Willets, 2014). Its aim was to provide students with dyslexia, assistive technology and individual 1:1 specialist tuition designed to help them access their education. Ledwith (2016) argues this form of tokenistic support is often put in place by dominant groups, in order to give the impression of equality. In reality, she contends, this approach only serves to strengthen the divide between dominant and oppressed groups as it positions the “supported” group as victims who need help and assistance, objects with no agency. At the same time, Miles & Ainscow (2010:2) argue how this focus on individualised responses, ‘deflect attention away from the creation of practices that can reach out to all learners’. These placatory, individualised practices alleviate society of any need to make the adjustments needed to truly include disadvantaged groups in society, an act that would jeopardise the dominant position of the elite.

This argument is supported by Freire (1987:33), who reiterates how welfare systems often work to position people as objects. He states that ‘Cultural action for domination is opposed to dialogue and serves to domesticate people’ (Freire, 1985:85). He describes the input of such systems as a ‘cultural invasion’ as welfare is enforced on the people and not developed *with* them. In addition, both Giroux (1987) and Cahill & Konings (2017) discuss how welfare support is intertwined with the deficit model. It is deemed that those on benefits simply lack something. Therefore, if they do not learn or gain employment after government money is seemingly “thrown at them” then discourse develops suggesting they simply cannot be bothered.

hooks (1994) exemplifies the complications with oversimplifying this argument. She highlights how this approach of tokenistic support lacks the wider understanding of historical, cultural

and social barriers to achievement. She discusses the disenchantment of young black youths with literacy programs in the United States. Pointing out the absurdity of youths from an oppressed group, having to engage with a literacy program that teaches through the language of the white oppressors and fails to demonstrate the value of education. In addition, Cahill & Konings (2017) use the workfare welfare schemes initiated by both Ronald Reagan's and Bill Clinton's governments in the United States to demonstrate how providing schemes to encourage the unemployed back to employment while reducing benefits (often to the extent that not working becomes an impossibility), does nothing to ensure that they have a job to go to. Equally, reducing the benefits of single mothers and making them work 30 hours per week (in an effort to reduce what is portrayed to the public as "laziness" and an unwillingness to work) ignores the issue of how mothers are expected to manage this while caring for a family. Cahill & Konings, (2017:89) state 'It is the characteristics of the unemployed, rather than the labour market, that are targeted for modification.' This neoliberal approach to welfare often focuses on changing or controlling those who are being denied access to employment or education rather than addressing an economic system that creates little opportunity for marginalised groups.

This approach to educational support has led Cahill & Konings (2017:120) to state that neoliberalism enforces 'exclusion through inclusion'. Students are included into an exclusionary system through tokenistic support, which often serves to further the divide between social groups. This exploitation of the notion of inclusion is equally exemplified by Waldschmit (2006). Waldschmit (2006) proposes that when the illusion of inclusivity is touted through policy, the dominant majority will strengthen the boundaries between the categories of "normal" and "abnormal", in order to maintain their dominance. This approach is evident throughout policy in the UK. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (DfES, 2015:17) policy consistently uses the language of 'disabled' and 'non-disabled children', reinforcing the segregation of these two separate groups throughout. In addition, the Equality Act (2010:5) defines disability as a person who has a 'physical or mental impairment'. The use of the word 'impairment' again reinforces this divide, as it requires a definitive "norm", a perceived normal body and mind that an individual can be impaired from. Disability is framed as a problem, as a result of people not being able to 'conform to standards of normality' (Smith, 2009:17). Human beings are no longer viewed as unique, varied individuals but instead are categorised and divided into two distinct binaries, with the dominant majority defining the parameters of each.

Freire's work gives us a lens in which to observe this phenomenon, expanding our understanding of how this neoliberal approach to "support" maintains oppression. By putting Freire into practice, this study will explore whether throwing tokenistic support at oppressed groups, serves to pacify and reinforce the culture of silence.

The Impact of Neoliberalism

Oliver & Barnes (2012) also point out how the definition and categorisation of disability is often changed during each economic crisis, to enable the elite to reduce the funding required for this tokenist support. This is evident in the recent changes to the DSA where funding has been reduced for so called 'mild conditions' such as dyslexia and mental health (Taylor *et al.*, 2017:369) in order to 'achieve value for money' (Willetts, 2014). This reclassification has enabled a reduction in funding that is expected to save the government an estimated £24.5 million per year (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2015). These changes are then justified through the creation, manipulation and perpetuation of discourses, designed to position the disabled individual as unworthy (Powell & Gilbert, 2008; Briant *et al.*, 2011; Barden, 2014b; Heeney 2015). Public perception is 'maneuvered by the mass media' (Freire, 1974:31) until the social disadvantages of disabled individuals are viewed as a life choice and financial support is deemed to create a culture of scroungers (Briant *et al.*, 2011; Slorach, 2016).

Cahill and Konings (2017) also discuss the impact of neoliberal politics on welfare. They point out how neoliberal policies lead to the marketisation and privatisation of the welfare state with private companies being funded by the government to take on the provision of welfare. Equally, Ball (2016:1049) discusses the 'contracting-out' of state services, discussing how the elements of neoliberalism ('Market, Management and Performance') are 'multifaceted mechanisms of change that bear upon and reinvent public sector services'. This approach to welfare then leads to the creation of new markets, increasing profitability for private support providers. This trend is currently being exemplified in policy with the new intensive regulation of DSA funded specialist tuition (Quality Assurance Guidance, 2019), making it almost impossible for many self-employed tutors to comply. This has, in turn, seen the rise of larger agencies bringing with them zero-hour contracts which invariably leads to a drop in wages and job insecurity for those working within the industry (O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2017). Cahill and Konings (2017:86) describe this phenomenon as a turn to 'corporate sponsorship of public services'.

They continue by outlining how the welfare state has now begun to adopt many of the strategies employed by companies to improve profitability while at the same time, limiting the employment rights of those who work in the sector.

Freire (1992:31) warns that this perceived ‘modernisation’ (a term actually employed by the government when they introduced their changes (see Willets, 2014)), often just means ‘the modernisation of the structures of society in order to improve the efficiency of production’. He reminds us that it is not in the interest of the elite to involve the people in this transformation. This approach is exemplified in the language used for this statement from Student Finance England (2018), regarding the supply of assistive technology training for disabled students, which will exclude many experienced trainers in place of recognised government approved suppliers:

... consideration was given to **modernising** the procurement and supply of Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) funded hardware, software, and specialist equipment items. The proposed changes were based on the need to embed a **sustainable supply model** that is both compliant with commercial legislation and better placed to deliver **value to students and the tax payer**. (own emphasis)

This study will delve into the implication of this approach to “modernisation” through exploring students’ awakening to the implementation of these changes and their impact.

Barriers to Employment

Cahill & Konings (2017) go on to suggest that neoliberal policies have also created a rise in unemployment, low wages and zero-hour contracts (Cahill & Konings, 2017). The consequence of this has been a reduction in the rights of the employee (Cahill & Konings, 2017). Given the previously mention comments from Bartlett *et al.* (2010) and MacDonald (2009) stating that dyslexic employees are more likely to find themselves unemployed or in low skilled (and low waged) positions and less likely to gain promotion, this reduction in employee rights is likely to have an even greater impact on dyslexic workers.

Burden (2008), Santuzzi *et al.* (2014) and Riddell & Weedon, (2014) all discuss how people’s misunderstanding of dyslexia often results in greater challenges for dyslexic employees within the workplace. There is a vast amount of literature assessing the impact of dyslexia in the workplace (see Bartlett *et al.*, 2010; Moody, 2015; McLoughlin & Leather, 2016; Leather & Kirwan, 2012). Blankfield (2001) & McLoughlin & Leather (2016) discuss the ambiguity often

expressed by managers who assume dyslexia affects individuals in education yet has little bearing within a workplace environment. However, given that many working environments present the same challenges as the education system (Moody, 2015; McLoughlin & Leather, 2016) this often results in dyslexic employees being labeled with the familiar labels of lazy, careless or incompetent (Sumner, 2012). Conversely, Riddell & Weedon (2014), Burden (2008) Santuzzi, (2014) discuss how for some employers, dyslexia is automatically assumed to denote a weakness in an employee and the notion that dyslexia means incompetence is continued.

The UK's Equality Act (2010) also serves to reinforce this rhetoric. Despite being devised as a policy aimed at challenging discrimination, Gerber et al (2012) point out how there has been little research into its effectiveness. Equally, dyslexic employees are forced to choose between keeping quiet and assuming a "non-dyslexic" identity or declaring their dyslexia, and as a consequence, their otherness. In fact, if a dyslexic employee was to employ the Equality Act (2010) to challenge employment discrimination, the Act first demands that they prove they have a disability, thereby proving that they are an other, and secondly, prove that their disability has an effect on their ability to do their job (see The Equality Act, 2010:5). In essence, they are asked to prove that they have failed *because* of their dyslexia and not because their work environment causes barriers to their success.

This issue of policy reinforcing difference is highlighted in Pogge's (2010) critique of the capabilities approach to social justice. In his critique he argues that the capabilities approach, which is reflected in the Equality Act (2010), stigmatises individuals by highlighting their 'inferior natural endowments' (Pogge, 2010:24). In addition, Riddle (2014) asks whether negative stereotypes are reinforced when an attempt to deliver equality forces us to focus on difference. It is also worth reflecting on Stagg & Sjoblom's (2018) findings that dyslexics have much lower self-efficacy than their non-dyslexic peers, meaning that challenging the issue of discrimination at work (an act that would often pitch an individual against an entire organisation) would present a near impossible challenge.

In an employment market where neoliberal policies have eroded employee rights (Cahill & Konings, 2017), it is easy to see how this discourse around dyslexic employees, combined with little protection from discrimination can lead to the situations of low employment (McDonald & Deacon, 2015), underemployment and a lack of career development opportunities (Gyorfi & Smythe, 2010). The continued social and economic impact of this (along with a life time of

being failed by the education system) can be seen in the startling figures emerging in regards to the high number of individuals with dyslexia in prison systems around Europe (see Talbot, 2008, Hewitt-Main, 2013 & Dåderman *et al.*, 2012) and the frequency of dyslexia among the homeless population (Patterson *et al.*, 2012).

This study aims to not only explore this inequality, but also to challenge it. Through utilizing Freire's critical dialogical approach to education and engaging students as co-researchers, these employment inequalities will be discovered. In their discovery, the mechanisms for their creation will emerge placing students in a stronger position to challenge them.

'National Objects'

This prevalence of dyslexia among the unemployed and within the criminal justice system positions individuals with dyslexia as 'national objects'; a term coined by Tyler (2013:9) to describe individuals who are deemed to harm the economy. It is perceived that these objects, will drain the economy through funded support rather than contribute to it through employment. It is through the creation of these figures that a society's historic fears and prejudices are given a focus and a reduction in funded "support", such as the recent reductions to DSA funding, is deemed justified. She continues by arguing that the creation of these national objects and the fear and loathing it creates is a fundamental tactic of neoliberal governments. This claim is supported by Cahill & Konings (2017) through their discussion of state welfare schemes, which invariably position the unemployed as the problem. Neoliberal ideology puts emphasis on the individual over the collective and neglects 'complex issues which lock people into cycles of poverty' (Heeney 2015:651). It leads to society devaluing a group, whereby, after being deemed deviant or wrong, they 'become outsiders whose voices are silenced, locked out' (Gibson, 2006:318). This silencing results in any discrimination or reinforcement of social disadvantage for that group, to be deemed socially acceptable (Tyler, 2013).

The creation and maintenance of these national objects necessitates that individuals within a society do not look beyond their own individual perception of reality. If they do, then the seemingly inevitable reality of oppression, prescribed by neoliberal governments, begins to unravel. However, through collective dialogue and critical reflection, communities can begin to see how their designation as national objects, is fed into the public sphere by the government and media (Freire, 1974; 1998). Therefore, critical reflection, such as that advocated by Freire (1970, 1974, 1985) is a direct threat to neoliberal ideology. It is for this

reason that this study will encourage a deep interrogation of these discourses, in order to challenge this ideology, unmask the oppressor and 'condemn the fabrication of illusion' (Freire, 1998:23). The impact of this interrogation on students' critical consciousness will then be explored.

The Art of Invisibility

However, without this intervention, the best way to avoid the hostilities of society, if you are deemed to be an 'object', is to become invisible (Tyler, 2013). Riddell & Weedon (2014) argue that invisibility is a common tactic employed by individuals with dyslexia. They discuss how the disabled identity is often adopted at university but then hidden in the workplace. They suggest that university culture offers an environment that protects individuals from the more negative discourse around disability. Therefore, the benefits attached to the disabled identity at university, outweigh any potential risks. Whereas, in the workplace, a fear of losing one's job or being deemed incapable, results in an attempt to conform to the expected norm, to adopt a non-disabled identity. This echoes Macdonald's (2009) study where participants acknowledged a desire to learn strategies that helped them to mask their dyslexia. Stets & Burke (2014) also reiterates how fear of exclusion from a social group can result in us acting in a way that will regain us acceptance. In the workplace, the disabled identity once again becomes stigmatising and the dyslexic individual desires to conform to the expected norm. Freire (1970:28) writes 'The one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole'.

This study will explore incidences of invisibility and its connection with Freire's culture of silence. However, through engaging students as co-researchers, the project will work to transform passive invisibility into a desire to become active subjects in the world.

Social Constructionism

The construction of disability, via societal discourse and social structures, illuminates the social constructivist ontology of this study. Within this paradigm, reality is socially constructed through creation and recreation (Burr, 2015). As Luckman (2008) explains, if we acknowledge that the world can be objectively observed and categorised from the outside (as is common within a positivist ontology) we must also acknowledge that the world has an inside. Within this world, we are social actors, directed by our culture, histories and institutional structures. We form our world through our interactions, interpreting each encounter based on our prior understanding; what Luckman (2008:285) refers to as our 'social stock of knowledge'. This

perpetual cycle of interaction, interpretation and reiteration constructs what we view as our world.

Bourdieu (1980) expands this understanding, reminding us that within each social interaction, are beings who are themselves socially constructed. Within the intersection of this interaction, the world is further constructed and renewed. Bourdieu (1980:52) refers to this as a process of 'structured, structuring dispositions'. Within these interactions, knowledge is constructed and reconstructed (Ryan *et al.*, 2013), transforming and growing through each social act. Ideas we often perceive as "truths" are simply constructed by the society and culture we live in and interpreted through our historical and ideological lens, building on what was there before (Freire, 1992). It is through the process of exploring and interacting with the world that we construct new knowledge.

However, Foucault (1980) and Bourdieu (1980) would argue that our interpretation of this socially constructed world is formed by dominant discourses fed to us by the elite and merged into our ideology as we continue to interact. It is this epistemological understanding of the construction of knowledge, that have lead theorists such as Tyler (2013), Ledwith (2016) and Heeney (2015) to highlight how what we "know" about particular social groups is often an idea fed to us by those who hold positions of power, in order to maintain their dominant status.

Amsler (2015:3) points out the potential consequences of this when she argues how 'both dignity and indignation can be educated and unlearned'. Instead she advocates a need for hope among educators, a need to remember that through conversation, we can transform education for the better. She states how 'Speaking the truth demonstrates that there is something beyond silence' (2015:17).

This study will adopt this ontology, utilising cooperative critical dialogue to socially construct all co-researchers' worldviews and enable them to recognise and interact with the world beyond their silence.

Paulo Freire

The review of the literature above outlines the social and political discourses that construct oppression for individuals with dyslexia. This section will evaluate a potential solution offered by the work of critical educationalist Paulo Freire. Freire (1970, 1974, 1985, 1992, 1998) advocates the use of a critical pedagogy that utilises dialogue to unveil the world and allow oppressed communities to see the social and political threads that have constructed their place within the world.

Fundamental to Freire's work is the discussion of his ontology. Freire believes that reality is not static or predetermined and that people are not passive objects within it (Freire, 1970). He passionately argues for man and woman's ability to transform the world as part of a continuing dialectical relationship between consciousness and the world (Freire, 1970). For Freire, it is the way we process knowledge that determines *how* it continues to be socially constructed. Knowledge is formed through our interpretation, which leads to the construction of new knowledge; and in turn, our interpretation is informed by our history and our culture.

If we only view the world through an objective bubble, where we only see our immediate world, knowledge is only ever constructed within this limited bubble and nothing changes. However, if we begin to understand the world more fully, through investigation of the wider historical, social and economic threads that have constructed our world, the knowledge is transformed, leading in turn to a transformation of our social world. His insistence that reality is not static leads to an awareness of its potential for transformation (Freire, 1970).

Freire's ontological theory will inform the methodological approach of this study. A dialogical, co-operative approach to exploring the world will be adopted, initiating Freire's (1970) insistence on praxis and ensuring that theory become practice.

Objectivity/Subjectivity

Freire's discussion of objectivity and subjectivity provides further insight into how he understands the mechanisms of oppression and how it is only through a combination of objectivity and subjectivity that the oppressed can unveil and challenge their situation. Freire outlines how many individuals in oppressed situations see the world in a purely objective way. He states, 'For mechanistic objectivism, consciousness is merely a "copy" of objective reality' (Freire 1985:69). In other words, how the oppressed think and reflect upon the world is an

objective copy of how they experience it. The world is a static “fact” viewed only within the limited bubble of their own experience, a phenomenon Freire (1970:21) refers to as a ‘circle of certainty’. The hope of a different world seems fantastical and their reality, unchangeable. An objective way of thinking is a fatalistic way of thinking.

Equally, Freire (1970) outlines an additional risk in the oppressed remaining within this closed objective bubble. If the oppressed are to achieve freedom from their oppression from within this bubble, then the new reality they create will only reinforce this limited view of the world. Freire (1970) gives a stark warning that this will result in the oppressed becoming the oppressor. He warns that with a purely objective reading of the world, the oppressed will often view the oppressor’s way of life as being the most desirable.

Equally, Freire (1970) outlines the dangers of viewing the world through pure subjectivity, without objectivity. Through this process, the oppressed see only a fantasy of their reality. One built on the myths of their oppression, often perceiving it as the result of some supernatural force or fate. This view of the world also makes change an impossibility as the myths of their oppression become undeniable. In addition, Freire suggests that change from a purely subjective viewpoint often leads to an egocentric approach, as the oppressed worldview is often based on their interpretation of their own experience alone, without the objective observation of the reality of others. Freire (1985:69) states ‘For solipsism, the world is reduced to a capricious creation of consciousness’.

Consequently, Freire (1970) argues that a combination of objectivity and subjectivity is needed for true liberation. It is through a dialectical relationship of both ontologies that the oppressed see the objective conditions that have led to their oppression (including the historical and cultural traditions). In addition, they are then able to theorise the subjective world beyond their own lived experience. It allows people to view and reflect upon the opinions of others and in turn develop their understanding of the world beyond their own experience. Freire (1985:68) states, ‘Men on the contrary, who can serve this adherence and transcend mere being in the world, add to the life they have with existence which they make’.

This study will develop Freire’s analysis of objectivity and subjectivity by exploring a practical application of his ontology. Through investigating both the objective and subjective world, all

co-researchers will engage in this exploration and an analysis will be performed to ascertain whether this awareness can serve to transform their situation.

Culture

Freire's interpretation of an ontology that is constantly evolving through our interactions informs his ideas of how culture is constructed. People create culture through their interactions (Freire, 1985). According to Freire (1985) what we define as culture is a set of traditions, rules, patterns and structures that we create and are equally created by, forming a dialectical relationship. However, many oppressed groups do not recognise their contribution to this process (Freire, 1974). Each time we act, we are acting from a position of being constructed by the cultural construction before us. We build from this foundation, solidifying the rules and structures laid down by previous culture as well as adding to and raising our cultural development. However, Freire (1985:30) warns that this effect can become domesticating, where our culture as we see it, is perceived as a fixed, historically situated, reality, 'a product that is simultaneously capable of conditioning its creator'.

Freire (2014) reminds us that these acts of cultural construction occur within the context of the natural world. Our creation of culture often, simultaneously transforms the world around us. If we write a poem or build a well, we are transforming our environment. Conversely, when we change the physical world, we 'create and solidify a culture ... by "making" we are creating and recreating reality, we are grasping the meaning of culture' (Freire, 2014:52). By making things we are changing our physical reality, therefore, culture changes our reality. Through collective conversation, all co-creators of this study will explore the cultural construction of dyslexia. Drawing upon Freire's theory of culture, this understanding will initiate a transformation as co-researchers begin to recognise the construction of their oppression and hence their ability to reconstruct it.

Freire *et al.* (2014) also reminds us that culture is defined and dependent on the differences between human beings. However, this understanding also necessitates that we maintain a respect for the differences between cultures. It is vital that the primary culture does not impose its ideas and traditions on others or attempt to solidify certain traditions and beliefs as the norm. Freire's (1985, 2014) interpretation of culture highlights how culture can be used to transform yet also to oppress. This again draws upon a vital necessity of Freire's argument, that people need to view the world through a combination of objectivity and subjectivity. It is only through engaging in this dialectical relationship with the world that people begin to see

how the elite can use power to oppress (through the domination of culture) yet equally how power can move through people to liberate (through the creation of culture and consequently, the world) (Freire, 1985). Freire (1997b) reiterates that it is not the elite who *create* fatalism and negative discourses around oppressed groups. Rather, this fatalism is formed through the historical threads of existence but then nourished by the dominant classes. Therefore, in highlighting these threads as part of this study, co-researchers will be able to question and challenge this fatalistic discourse.

Oppression

Freire's (1970, 1985, 1989, 1997a) understanding of oppression is multifaceted. He describes multiple layers of oppression, from societal oppression to dominant classes and individuals. In its broadest sense, oppression is constructed in the interplay between the superstructure (a construct of our traditions, history and culture) and the infrastructure (societies structures, policies and procedures). The infrastructure is informed by the superstructure and in turn, reinforces the superstructure through the solidification and enactment of its doctrine. Oppression is created in the relationship between the superstructure and the infrastructure (Freire, 1985). Working within this structure, Freire (1978:53) outlines how it is the dominant classes who have 'the power to define, profile and describe the world' through dominating politics, policy and the mass media. He suggests that as a result of this, it is the elite who dominate the construction and solidification of both the superstructure and the infrastructure. Culture then serves as a form of production, categorising, defining and reproducing the validity of oppression (Freire, 1978). Freire (1970:33) discusses how this 'oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness'.

In education, hegemony works in schools through multiple means, to create 'a truth reflecting the needs and aspirations, values and beliefs of one dominant social group' (Gibson, 2006:319). It determines one form of knowledge, deemed to be the correct way of thinking and behaving, and those who fall outside this dominant ideology are silenced and excluded (Gibson, 2006). Freire discusses how this oppressive reality is reinforced through the banking system, which he refers to as being the mechanism by which the elite maintain their oppression. By depositing "knowledge" the elite are able to control what is taught, to fortify the dominate discourse that maintains their authority while positioning students as passive, unthinking reciprocals for this "knowledge" (Freire, 1970).

Freire (1978) discusses how some educators naively assimilate the hegemonic ideology of the elite, assuming it is simply the way things are. These 'bank-clerk' teachers teach through the banking system without being aware that they are reinforcing oppression (Freire 1970:56). However, he also suggests some educators genuinely believe in their own superiority as intellectuals and treat their students as dependents, dictating doctrine and preventing dialogue. Freire (1997a:313) refers to these teachers as 'Herr Professors'. This observation is further supported by Giroux (1985:xxii) who argues how many academics still assume a monopoly over 'theoretical leadership' and in doing so 'often reproduce the division of mental and manual labour that was at the core of most forms of domination'. Only the truly liberatory educator, one who is willing to recognise and challenge their own elitism, can begin to challenge this oppressive cycle.

The Stages of Awakening Towards Conscientization

Freire's (1970) theorising on the construction of culture takes on an interesting turn when he begins to consider the cultural construction of oppressed groups. Freire (1970) discusses how the negative discourse, fatalism and oppressor's rhetoric form and solidifies oppression through the interrelationship of the superstructure and the infrastructure. He suggests that this forming and reforming normalises oppression and creates what he refers to as a 'Culture of Silence'. In order to break free from the culture of silence, oppressed groups need to first become aware of this pacifying situation and work towards developing their critical consciousness, cumulating in what Freire refers to as conscientization (a critical awakening). The following sections will outline Freire's theory of the progressive stages of consciousness from a culture of silence to conscientization.

Freire (1970, 1992) theorises that many oppressed groups are not consciously aware that they are oppressed. He suggests that as they have been constructed by the same reality that rationalises their oppression, they view their situation as simply "the way things are". They live in a state that Freire refers to as a Culture of Silence (Freire 1985, 1970). Within this state, the oppressed have no voice. They speak and think with the words of the oppressor, echoing their rhetoric and therefore having no genuine voice of their own. They are consumed by fatalism, a belief that they are not creators of their own history and culture but instead passive subjects with no agency. They see no possibility for change (Freire, 1985, 1997). Freire (1974:21) writes '...societies which are denied dialogue in favour of decrees become predominantly silent'.

Freire describes the transition societies go through as they progress from a culture of silence to conscientization (Freire, 1985). He suggests that the first phase is Semi-Intransitive Consciousness. Within this phase, the oppressed are beginning to recognise their oppression but lack 'structural perception' or the ability to see the social, political and historical forces that maintain their position (Freire, 1985:75). Therefore, they will often attribute their status as being the result of either supernatural forces, such as religious interventions or bad luck, or to a fault or inadequacy within themselves. The prevalence of this phenomenon is exemplified through the previously mentioned body of evidence touting the deficits of dyslexia. Within this stage, individuals are predisposed to develop fatalism. If their situation is a result of a deficit or forces beyond their control, there is no option for things to change.

Freire refers to the next phase as Naïve Transitional Consciousness. He argues that when structures in society begin to change, the oppressed begin to recognise certain structures within their objective reality that are working to maintain their oppression. However, they will often only perceive an objective reality within their own sphere and will still fail to recognise the wider forces. Therefore, their efforts to challenge oppression tend to result in short lived activism that ultimately has little impact. Interestingly, Freire also suggests the elite experience a similar change at this stage as they begin to be unmasked. In their fear and panic, they will often introduce superficial practises, designed to alleviate the implementation of any real change. This reflects Tyler (2013) and Ledwith's (2016) argument of tokenistic, placatory practices offering individualised "support" for those in disadvantaged positions.

Freire (1970, 1985, 1992) argues that in order for the oppressed to move beyond these early stages, they need to develop a critical conscientiousness to enable them to see beyond their own reality. This process, that Freire refers to as Conscientization, involves a critical analysis of both the oppressed's objective and subjective reality. This process allows them to uncover the social and political forces that maintain their oppressed position, enabling them to reveal the possibility of an alternative world. An epistemological analysis is also needed, with Freire (1985) advocating the need to highlight the perceived hegemonic structure of knowledge. This process helps to dissipate the apparent "magical" properties of the oppressor's knowledge and perceived right to dominate. In uncovering these falsehoods, the oppressed no longer blame their social position on their own perceived inadequacies and instead can begin to see the external forces that have constructed their position (Freire, 1974). This awakening can help to challenge the perceived low self-worth, of many within oppressed groups.

However, as previously stated, Freire (1970) warns that this process can only be achieved through a combination of both a subjective and objective reading of the world. He suggests that without this, the desire for freedom can lead to a sectarian approach to change and runs the risk of the oppressed becoming the oppressor. Freire (1997b) warns how if we do not make history with others we end up remaking them. Equally, through a purely subjective reading of the world, the oppressed are inclined to remain in their fatalistic bubble. Without incorporating objectivity, they cannot observe the threads, both historical and societal, that have moulded their situation and hence are inclined to view their oppression as being the result of their own inadequacies. Therefore, Freire argues that both a subjective and objective reading of the world is necessary to develop conscientization.

This study will add to Freire's theoretical analysis of conscientization by investigating its development in practice.

Freire's Pedagogical Approach

In order to initiate this process, Freire (1970, 1974) employs the approach of critical dialogical pedagogy. He believes that it is the role of education to not simply deposit "facts" but to encourage students to engage in critical reflection 'in the world, with the world and with each other' (Freire, 1970:53). This approach directly challenges the banking system of education.

To counter the banking system approach, Freire (1974) argues for the need to engage students in critical pedagogy. He suggests educators must first learn about their students' world through listening to and observing their culture. From this, themes will develop that reflect the educator's view of the students' culture. These themes are then discussed with the students until a collection of generative themes emerge, that reflect the students' current view of their world. It is then the educator's role to re-present these themes back to the students for critical discussion. It is through this dialogue and questions, posed by both educator and students, that a critical awakening is nurtured.

Freire (1985:33) argues that this approach to teaching requires an understanding of education as a 'cultural unity', where teachers and students create culture as they work. This approach reduces the risk of teaching becoming a list of instructions and instead becomes a dialectical relationship, an amalgamation and growth of the culture of both teacher and student. Freire

(1985) argues how education is a place that can both initiate this transformation and give us a means to do this.

Through this dialectical process, students are encouraged to look beyond their own experiences of the world until an awareness of the wider political, social and historical influences on their position, begin to emerge (Freire, 1970, 1985). It is within this continual process of dialogue and critical reflection that conscientization emerges. However, Freire warns that this process must always be in motion. When we stop learning, we stop knowing. The social construction of knowledge means that it is always developing. Freire (1997:2) writes, 'knowledge has historicity. It never is, it is always in the process of being'. In order to develop true conscientization, we must never stop our critical engagement with the world.

For Freire (1970:48), the oppressed developing a new awareness of the world is not enough, for thought without action leads to an 'armchair revelation'. He argues for the need for praxis, the combination of thought and action working together in the dialectic. Freire suggests that true critical thought automatically leads to action as understanding the world better (and how it constructs oppression) leads those who are oppressed to recognise that this one reality can be transformed into another, where they are free from oppression. He writes 'they had discovered not only that they could speak, but that their critical discourse upon the world, was a way of re-making that world' (Freire, 1992:31). However, any action that is contemplated must be critically considered within praxis. Otherwise, the action becomes purely activism, running the risk of the oppressed becoming the oppressors (Freire, 1970). It is for this reason that this study ensures that theory and action is combined to enable an ethical transformation.

With the political, social and historical construction of disability, students with dyslexia at university are increasingly being positioned to believe they are unable. The impact of this on their identity and belief in their self-efficacy has been outlined within this literature review. While students with dyslexia live within a culture of silence, excepting tokenistic "support" that reinforces their construction as unable, their situation is unlikely to change. Freire's pedagogy offers a potential solution. A reimagining of his approach, one initiated *with* students with dyslexia as co-researchers, has the potential to transform this situation. Freire (1985:57) argues 'to be utopian is not to be merely idealistic or impractical but rather to engage in denunciation and annunciation'. This study will engage in this process, facilitating

co-researchers desire to announce and denounce the world, driving towards transformation.

Chapter 2: Methodology

'Technique is always secondary and is only important when it is in the service of something larger. To make technique primary is to lose the purpose of education'
(Freire 1997a:304)

Bourdieu & Waquant (1992:7) state that a sociologist's task is to uncover the buried structures within society and to reveal the 'mechanisms' that perpetually construct and re-construct these structures. It is only through understanding these structures and their construction that we can begin the process of their transformation. However, in order to gain an understanding of these mechanisms, the researcher first needs to develop an understanding of the social world in which they are working. Bourdieu & Waquant (1992:9) argue that this understanding must also include an understanding that consciousness is an 'essential component' of that world. Any methodological approach employed by the researcher cannot treat human beings as inanimate objects, separate from the world in which they live. It must, instead, recognise that as people, we are the ones responsible for making this world, forming its history, culture, politics and economic structures (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1987; Bourdieu, 1980). Our contribution to the world as human beings, cannot be ignored (Freire, 1982). The methodology theorised and discussed in this chapter will show how this study developed a methodology with others.

There is an ever-expanding array of methodological approaches available to social researchers (Creswell, 2014, Punch, 2014). However, many of these approaches place the focus of the research on the collection and interpretation of data. For example, proponents of grounded theory will argue that its purpose is to uncover knowledge grounded in data (Birks & Miles, 2011), whereas those who favour a narrative approach will investigate the 'constituting elements' that construct stories provided by the participants (Esin *et al.*, 2014:207). This focus on the data (produced by the participants) is not appropriate for this study as it often negates the human element and puts the focus of the research on the collection of data and interpretation of data.

This data driven approach to research is particularly commonplace among disability researchers (Buettgen *et al.*, 2011). Through investigating these methods, I became increasingly frustrated that despite there being over a centuries' worth of research into dyslexia (the first recorded case of 'word blindness' was in 1896 (Ford, 1928)), very little of this work is accessible to dyslexic individuals. Knowledge gained from the research is shared

among “specialists” and researchers but often remains unknown by dyslexics who are not engaged in the elite culture of academia. Equally, the social inequalities still experienced by dyslexic people (Macdonald & Deacon, 2015; Patterson, 2012; Gyorfi & Smythe, 2010) suggested that very little has actually changed in the day-to-day lives of individuals living with dyslexia. I was also beginning to recognise that a lot of the research seemed to be historically and politically situated and would often be used to support the current government policy or agenda (Bloor, 2011). This frustration, led me to search for a methodological approach that would not only involve dyslexic students in the research process (so that the knowledge gained was their knowledge and not the ownership of the academic community) but would also result in a transformation, one that would highlight the political, economic and historical factors that have led to the oppression of dyslexic individuals and begin to challenge that oppression.

This methodology section will explore and develop methods of research that seek to work with individuals with dyslexia, employing their expertise and experiences, for all involved to gain a fuller understanding of this world with an aim to transforming it (Freire, 1982). The aim of this exploration is not to show a fixed methodology, with steps and rules to validate its application to this research. Rather, it is to suggest a methodology in motion; a theoretical approach that has grown and developed throughout the research process and will continue to evolve as a result of the reflection necessary to write this chapter. Freire & Macedo (1987:62) argues that the aim of any educator, is not to begin with a theoretical framework which she or he then applies but rather to ‘discover the theoretical elements rooted in practice’. It is this notion that has informed my methodological approach. Therefore, this section will discuss the development of a methodology and its evolution with the participants, throughout the research practice.

Mack (2010) and Grix (2002) argue that the use of a research paradigm is essential as any researcher needs to be aware of how their worldview will impact on the data created. However, if we are to argue that research needs to be developed with the community you are researching with, to develop a research approach based on a pre-designed plan, involving a set of academic rules and conventions, assumes that society is also a fixed set of parameters that can be fit neatly into one research design (Punch, 2014), an idea rejected by this thesis. This approach also runs the risk of diverting the focus of the research away from the community (Townsend, 2013; Freire, 1982) as the researcher attempts to *fit* a pre-conceived

model to a collaborative project. It is conceivable that any research approach that puts its focus on the real world with real people, with their wonderful randomness, is always going to be messy (Kanuka, 2010). Thus, the methodology for this study has been developed through a combination of my engagement with methodological texts, conversations with colleagues, dialogue with the writings of Freire and discussions with the dyslexic students I work with daily, and moulded by the critical insights, influence and dedication of my co-researchers.

An Evolving Paradigm

The methodology for this study has been constructed through a social constructivist ontology. Social constructivism suggests that reality is constructed and reconstructed through our interactions with each other and with the world (Freire, 1970; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bourdieu, 1980). The reality and the “truth” that we perceive is a construction brought about by our history and culture (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1992; Peters *et al.* 2003) and reinforced and consistently reconstituted through our daily interactions (Burr, 2015). This perpetual construction of reality suggests that knowledge is always changing, and “truths” are situated in time and space (Burr, 2015, Hegel, 1977). Therefore, any observation of the world based on pure objectivist observation, would quickly become out-dated as reality continues to evolve (Hegel, 1977).

This ontology presents two points for consideration for this study. If the world is constantly changing, then any observation must be made within the social sphere, with social actors who have a critical awareness of their construction as well as the construction of their reality. Otherwise, knowledge becomes the objective observations of the researcher alone and will neglect that its construction is an amalgamation of objective reality with the interpretations and perceptions of social actors, in this case, the co-researchers of this study. And secondly, any knowledge gained must remain under observation by all parties, or it will quickly become outdated. Additionally, Lincoln & Guba (2013) discuss how scientific research approaches used to suggest an epistemological binary of true and false, with nothing in the middle. Constructivist methodology allows for a continuum of opinions to be explored (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In exploring these multiple realities, both the researcher and co-researchers of this study can explore the possibility of a reality that could transform their situation.

If our world is socially constructed by multiple actors, creating multiple realities, then in order to better understand this world, it become paramount that this study uses an approach to research that interrogates these multiple realities with multiple opinions and voices through

an iterative, dialogical, unceasing investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). This again reiterates that any methodological approach designed to explore the co-researcher's world, must not be fixed.

This approach to inquiry challenges the expected norms of research, as there is often a demand for research that produces easily measurable and recordable results (Zeller-Berkman *et al.*, 2015). However, if we ascribe to the social constructivist epistemology then knowledge is constantly in flux. As Freire (1985:38) states 'Critically speaking for anything to be, it has to be in the process of being'. Additionally, Savin-Baden & Major (2010) discuss the connection between wisdom and uncertainty, suggesting that they are necessarily complimentary terms. Wisdom leads to uncertainty, as the knower recognises the consistently evolving nature of knowledge and that not all can be known. This in turn, leads to wisdom as the knower continues to explore the world through the dialectic with uncertainty. Therefore, it is proposed that the methodology for this study must also be consistently re-examined as the 'act of knowing becomes a dynamic act' (Freire, 1985:53).

Critical Theory

The theory that knowledge is social constructed raises the question of how we settle on the definitive "truth". Foucault (1980) would argue that how we define "truth" is simply a product of those in power defining knowledge. He argues that power and knowledge are one and the same thing and truth is simply a social construction by those in authority who have the power to influence public opinion. Freire (1970, 1992), on the other hand, would argue that this kind of power is fictitious, and it is through the reinforcement of myths that those in power are able to maintain this false hierarchy. Adopting a critical theory approach will enable this study to interrogate and explore these constructions of knowledge and assess the influence of power on their construction.

Critical theory acknowledges that knowledge is always embedded within a historical, cultural and social structure (Corradetti, 2017). Its aim is to highlight and 'challenge social injustice through exposing the contradiction between social reality and the idealized understanding a society has of itself' Forst (1996:139). It serves to widen people's perceptions of the social world, raising consciousness through a greater awareness of this contradiction (Corradetti, 2017). Critical theory allows this study to unveil what is hidden between the binaries of true and false and right and wrong (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In doing so critical theory seeks to undermine and destabilise the perceived norm, resulting in an unveiling of a new reality

(Freire, 1970, 1985). It is hoped that this unveiling will begin to illuminate the social threads that have constructed reality. In recognising the world's construction, all co-researchers will be in a much stronger position to change it (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1982).

However, consideration needs to be given as to the ethical issues surrounding this potential transformation. Given that social constructivism asserts that there are multiple realities, and multiple ways of interpreting that reality, how will all co-researchers of this study ensure that, in transforming their situation, they do not make things worse for others? Equally, many researchers ask whether it is ethical to substitute knowledge acquisition for a political agenda (Seale, 1999; Corradetti, 2017). However, it could be argued that all research is political. Burr (2015:172) reminds us 'no human being can step outside of their humanity and view the world from no position at all'. Therefore, it is apparent that all researchers will enter the social field with a political opinion and agenda. Perhaps critical theorists are simply more transparent about what their aim is?

Despite this transparency, this study still needs to be wary of the potential power asymmetries formed by such an approach. If we are conscious beings with agency, interacting with and creating our world, then we must also be conscious of our ethical responsibilities within this process (Freire, 1998). Lincoln & Guba (2013:35) warn how neoliberal policies, have created a 'cult of efficiency' within research. They suggest that profit and speed have become more valued than education, social justice and the production of knowledge. In addition, Freire (1998:23) argues how we need to challenge the dominant power, through the creation and application of a 'universal human ethic', which can be used to challenge the 'ethics of the market'. These issues will need to be addressed through continual critical reflection throughout this project, to ensure any ethical issues are unveiled and discussed by all co-researchers.

What is essential for this study is that all co-researchers ensure they gain as much awareness of the object of study as possible, giving further clarity to the research process. Guba & Lincoln (1994) suggest that critical theorists should achieve this by employing a subjective reading of the world. They argue that objectivity is an illusion and that reality is formed through pure subjectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). However, developing a purely subjective reading of the world, runs the risk of developing an ego-centric view, one that ignores the concrete reality of oppression (Freire, 1970). Objectivity must be explored in the dialectic with subjectivity (Freire, 1987). It is only when all co-researchers of this study engage in both a

subjective and objective reading of the world that reality, in its entirety, will be revealed (Freire, 1970, 1992). It is through this process that women and men can 'transcend mere being in the world' and can 'add to the life they have with existence which they make' (Freire, 1985:68).

The Influence of Participatory Action Research

As the co-researchers of this study begin to engage in this objective/subjective dialectic, reality will be revealed. In exploring the social threads that have constructed their reality, they will begin to see how their position in the world is a result of historical, social and cultural threads (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1982; McIntyre, 2008). McIntyre (2008) suggests that it is this exploration that motivates people into taking action to change their situation. He suggests that the process of knowledge construction leading to action for change becomes a 'living dialectical process' (McIntyre, 2008:2). This dialectical process informs and helps to construct the methodology behind many participatory action research projects.

Wimpenny (2010:89-90) describes participatory action research as an approach where by 'a group of people who are affected by some problem or issue ... decide to get together to work out how they want to tackle the problem.' Most importantly, it is not the researcher who determines the action to be taken, but rather the people effected by the identified issue (Zeller-Berkman *et al.*, 2015). This serves to challenge 'the old borders between knowledge-producing and knowledge-consuming elites' (Wimpenny, 2010:90) and begins to address the issue of knowledge being held by academia and disseminated to the masses through the myth of hegemony (Freire, 1997a) and often in a format that is inaccessible to many (Freire, 1989). Lewin (1946:35) reiterated this intent when he stated how 'Research which produces nothing but books will not suffice.' In addition, it could be argued that in order to challenge the notion that knowledge is determined by the powerful (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1985, 1992; Freire & Macedo, 1987), we need to stop relying solely on powerful institutions for knowledge and begin to rely on ourselves (Illich, 1970). Therefore, this study will be influenced by a participatory action research approach whereby knowledge is co-constructed by all co-researchers.

In order to ensure that the people involved in this research are humanised through their involvement, it is important for this study to ensure an ethical research approach (Freire, 1982). However, for humanisation to take place, this involvement must be genuine and not paternal (Freire, 1970, Ledwith, 2016). This cannot be achieved through objectively observing

the community. Freire (1992) warns that if we consider ourselves capable of objective observation, then we view people as the objects of our observations. A purely objective approach would also negate an essential aspect of knowledge acquisition, as the knowledge of the community would be lost. Instead, Freire advocates that if we view reality as a dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity, it becomes necessary to involve people from the community where the focus of the research takes place, in order to learn and reflect upon their subjective viewing of the phenomenon (1982, 1992). Freire (1982) suggests that we cannot fully know something until we know how people directly involved perceive it. Therefore, this study must pursue a methodological approach that enables co-researchers to co-construct the knowledge. Genat (2009) suggests that it is this approach to participatory action research that leads to transformation and ultimately transcends the search for knowledge.

Freire's Research Approach: Creating Methodology with People

Freire (1982) argues that methodology is developed as part of the research process. It is in the process of doing research that we create methodology (Freire, 1982). In attempting to define methodology as a series of techniques or rules to follow, we are negating the very essence of social research, to understand humans and in understanding, to construct. No research or educational experience 'takes place in a vacuum, only in a real context - historical, economic, political' (Freire, 1985:12). Therefore, if this study were to follow a set of rules and procedures and call it methodology, it would mean that the approach taken was developed separately from the people and then applied to them. Instead, an approach will be developed with the co-researchers and will continue to be co-developed and refined as the study progresses. This will ensure the mechanisms for creating knowledge become a reflexive and ethical process.

Freire (1970) suggests that to avoid making people objects of observation, the researcher needs to ensure that the focus of the research is on themes and not people themselves (Freire, 1970). He suggests that researchers need to visit the community the researcher wishes to understand and begin to learn about the key themes that form their culture (in this case, dyslexic students) (Freire, 1970, 1974). These themes are then coded and re-presented back to the community as codifications: images or stories representing the themes to be discussed and debated. Freire (1985) suggests that through discussing these themes, people begin to question their previous perception of their world and begin to develop a more critical understanding. This process of critical reflection will be employed as part of this study, to widen all co-researchers understanding and perception of their objective reality and enable them to expand their understanding. Freire (1992:30) states 'If I am interested in knowing the

people's ways of thinking and levels of perception, then the people have to think about their thinking and not be only the objects of my thinking'. It is through this reflection and dialogue that myths can be exposed and the mechanisms that have created the co-researchers' world can be examined (Freire, 1970). In order to understand dyslexia and oppression, all co-researchers will need to widen their perception and examine what forms and influences it before they begin to understand its construction (Freire, 1998). Freire (1997b:92) refers to this process as 'epistemological encircling'.

Freire suggests that this process of critical reflection, of both objective and subjective reality, is vital in order to prevent the oppressed from becoming the new oppressors (1970, 1992). He discusses the difference between developing sectarianism versus radicalism (1970). He suggests that when people do not engage in the process of critical reflection with action, they develop a sectarian view of the world that is limited to their own perception. They live within a bubble, a 'circle of certainty' where anything outside of this is considered a lie (Freire, 1970: 20). Within this world, reality is unchangeable, and any oppressive situation remains. However, when a person looks deeper into reality through critical reflection with the world and with each other, they learn to see beyond the bubble and begin to recognise the construction of their world. In understanding the mechanisms of their construction, people begin to see that the world can be re-made (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1992).

However, in order to facilitate that transformation with the co-researchers of this study, critical reflection must occur in praxis with action (Freire, 1970). It is in taking action upon the world that pure subjectivity can be combined with our objective reality (Freire, 1970, 1974). Gaventa, (2003) suggests that we cannot simply possess the power to initiate change, we must also be able to exercise it. To reflect without taking action would simply result in verbalism, where ideas are debated but nothing ever changes (Freire, 1970). Whereas, to act, without reflection, would create a dangerous situation in which this study encouraged the sort of activism where the oppressed run the risk of creating a new reality that oppresses others (Freire, 1970). Therefore, a combination of both will be required if this study is to create opportunities for any ethical transformation to take place.

This study will combine critical reflection with action to create a world where change is possible (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1992). Freire argues that:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. (Freire 1970:31)

Within dialogue, transformation can occur as all co-researchers begin to develop a wider, more critical understanding of their situation. Through this process of conscientization, new worlds are created, as co-researchers recognise the historical and political factors that have created their world (Freire, 1970, 1985). In understanding their construction, they can recognise the possibility of an alternative construction, and are motivated into taking action to create it, thereby, transforming their reality.

Identifying Conscientization

Freire (1997 & 1985) states that in order to understand something, we need to understand what forms it, what influences it and the mechanisms of its construction. In order to better understand the process and development of conscientization, an epistemological investigation into its construction was required (Freire, 1997).

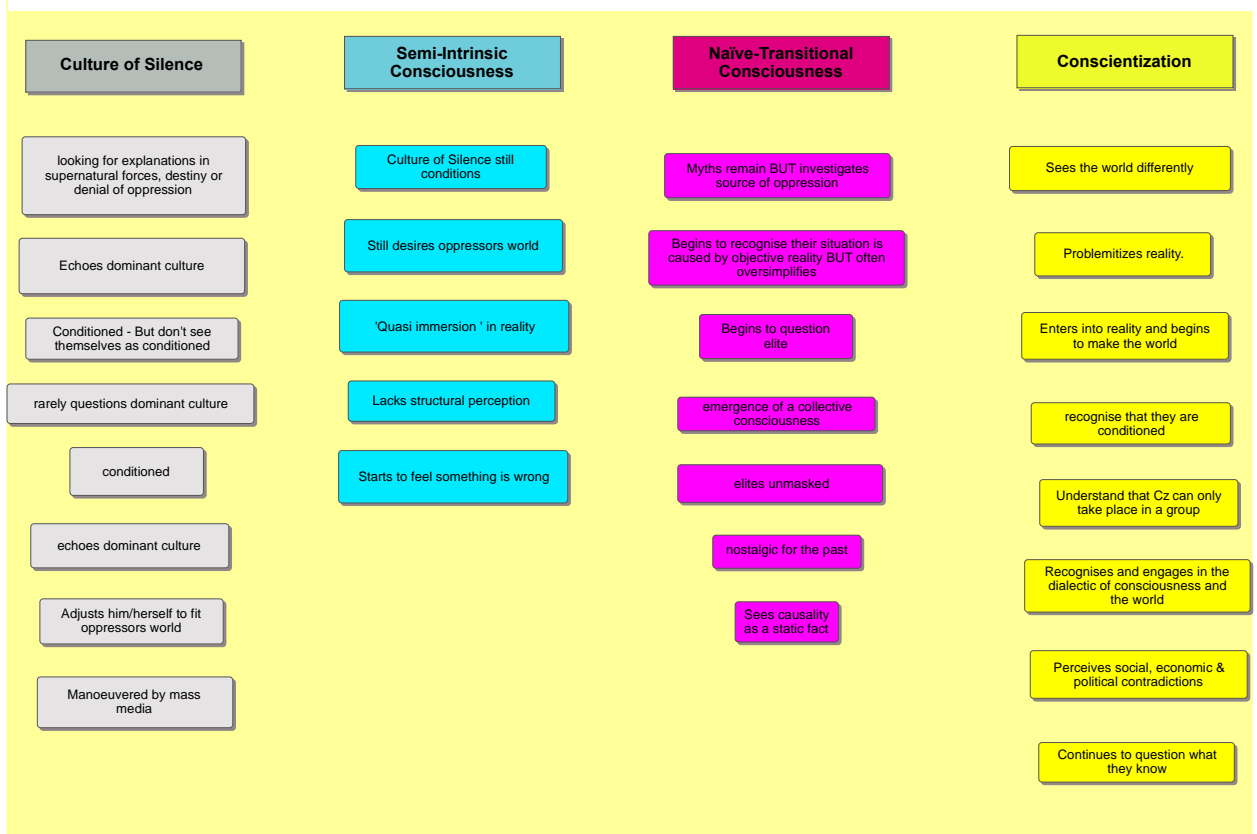
Freire (1985) argues that in order to understand levels of consciousness we must first understand how consciousness is suppressed through oppression. He describes a superstructure made up of our historical traditions and cultural structures. Within this superstructure is the infrastructure, made up of societies expectations, policies and structures. The infrastructure is informed by the superstructure; its weight providing a degree of “truthfulness” to the infrastructure. The ideas, policies and resulting structures of the infrastructure are viewed as the norm and hence unchangeable. The need to question or challenge the “truth” is perceived as unwarranted. As Freire (1985:89) states if our consciousness is conditioned by the reality in which we live, ‘conscientization is first of all the effort to enlighten men about the obstacles preventing them from a clear perception of reality.’

If this study seeks to explore conscientization, then we first need to define it as the object of study, in order to recognise it. Freire (1970, 1974, 1985) suggests that conscientization is a process. It is not a state that we either have or do not have, nor is it an end goal that once achieved, no longer requires achieving. Instead it is the continual process of critical reflection and dialogue of both our objective and subjective world. It is an on-going conversation, with others where our knowledge of the world is continually evaluated in order to gain a wider understanding. However, Freire (1985) suggests that, for groups living under oppression, the

development towards conscientization can be understood in stages as the world is gradually revealed. He provides explanations of each step in this process and suggest four stages: culture of silence, semi-intrinsic consciousness, naïve-transitional and finally conscientization. Within each stage, Freire provides us with an indication of its existence, causes and consequences. A full account of each of these can be viewed in [Appendix A](#).

In order to begin to establish an understanding of each stage, I undertook a re-reading of Freire’s writings along with a review of the notes I had made in previous readings. I then collected a selection of direct quotes from Freire and thoughts I had recorded during both my initial readings and subsequent readings. This enabled me to ensure that my use of Freire’s work was not purely objective but was instead, an amalgamation of Freire’s writings mixed with reflections on my own personal experience of developing conscientization and with my experiences of working with the co-researchers on the project. These experiences allowed me to link the theoretical explanations of Freire’s writings, to the objective reality of the social world. Though this process, I was able to identify and correlate the descriptions of each stage. The writings from each stage were then reduced through a process that involved identifying common themes within the text. This resulted in a list of five to eight key themes for each stage, which could be reflexively used to identify stages of critical awakening in the dialogue of the co-researchers. These key themes are shown in Figure 1 below, with the process of reduction of the themes shown in [Appendix B](#).

Figure 1 - Key Themes of Each Stage



Project Design

As previously stated, the design for this study has consistently developed, as more about the social world of dyslexia and my co-researchers experiences of it, was understood. These assumptions were continually challenged and updated as I began to interact with this world through the pilot project for this thesis and throughout the research process. Therefore, the design presented below, is situated within the historic and social context of the time of writing.

The focus for this research was to explore the development of conscientization in students with dyslexia, after they had experienced a period of the critical reflection, action, and reflection cycle. Whereas most action research projects focus on developing a change in an institutional structure, the influence of Freire's work has moved the focus of this study to initiating a change, firstly, in the worldview of the individuals within the community (Baum, 2016). Freire suggests that as it is people who create our world, changing the mind-set of people results in a change in their interactions with the world. This in turn, begins to then impact upon the structures that have constructed their oppression.

Freire consistently reiterates the importance of starting any project from the perspective of the culture you are investigating with. Therefore, before beginning this project, it was vital to begin to understand how individuals with dyslexia viewed their own situation. In order to establish this a pilot study was conducted prior to beginning the main study. The study recruited six students with dyslexia. Five of the students only took part in the pilot study whereas one student took part in the pilot and the main study. The purpose of the study was to begin to explore the themes of the dyslexic culture. These themes then informed the codifications for the main study.

Figure 2 demonstrates the overview of the research design for the main study. In order to explore the process of conscientization, three sets of interviews were proposed. The first round involved individual semi-structured interviews that enabled co-researchers to discuss their experiences and opinions of dyslexia. Next a series of group workshops were planned that incorporated the action/reflection cycle. Finally, this was followed by a second individual interview. The aim was to then explore whether there were any changes within the co-researchers' perceptions of dyslexia that indicated a development towards conscientization. The third interview was then employed as a data analysis session, whereby myself and each

co-researcher worked together to discuss any noted changes. In addition to this original design, a final analysis stage was employed, whereby my final written analysis was shared with each co-researcher for their feedback.

Research Model

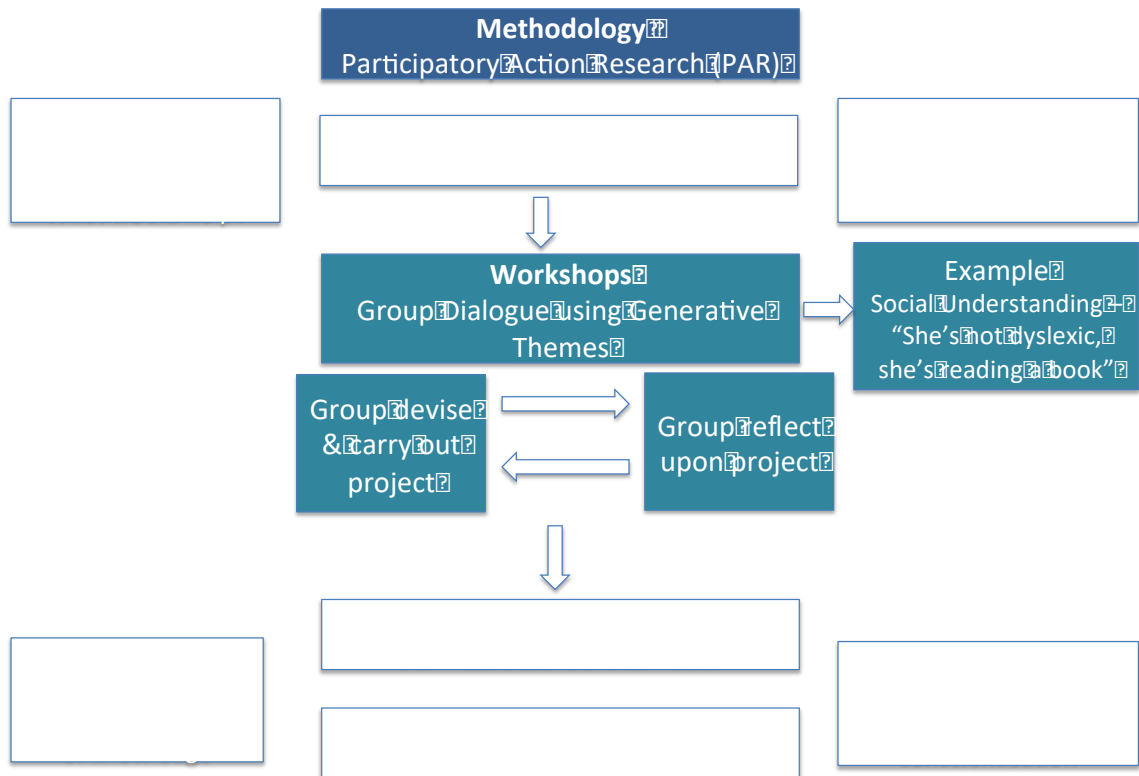


Figure 2 - Project Design

Sampling

Gelinas *et al.* (2017:4) comments on how 'Recruitment to research remains a perennial challenge'. This becomes an even greater challenge when researchers are attempting to recruit participants from vulnerable groups who are frequently made objects of the research process (Sadler *et al.*, 2010). There is invariably a feeling of mistrust towards the researcher, teacher or institution as communities have historically been placed as objects to be researched on (Sadler *et al.*, 2010, Shedlin *et al.*, 2009).

During the pilot study for this report, recruitment was identified as an immense challenge. Out of the 600 students who were emailed with details about the pilot, only six responded. It was apparent that the issues surrounding this needed to be reflected upon. Many dyslexic

individuals have experienced a difficult education, as evidenced in the literature review of this study. Therefore, I needed to be conscious that I, as facilitator and recruiter to the project, am a teacher and hence, for many dyslexic students, I represent the anxiety of education. In addition, for this study, I was demanding a major commitment from my co-researchers, as the project was to span eleven weeks. Considering that many dyslexic students will take much longer to complete personal and study tasks (Shaywitz, 2003), it was apparent that the time required to commit to the project would also be a barrier. Therefore, it became paramount to stress the perceived benefits of the project to the co-researchers and to ensure that they were aware that this would be a joint space for sharing knowledge.

These issues were addressed by firstly, inviting students to an initial meeting where potential participants could come and find out about the project. Students were then given the option of signing up there and then if they wanted to or emailing me after the event if they wished to consider their options first. This approach was recommended by Kirkwood & Kirkwood (2011) who apply Freire's approach to research through engaging in community projects in Scotland. They suggest that recruiting via an initial meeting allows potential participants to discuss the project first with the researcher and enables them to make an informed decision. I was also conscious of the language I used in the promotional material as "academic" terms can often add to the anxiety of potential participants and alienate some from participating (Shedlin *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, the term "project" was used instead of "research" or "study". Additionally, the promotional material was designed to reflect a more familiar social advertisement than a formal academic one ([Appendix C](#)).

I deliberately adopted this more passive approach to recruitment (Gelinas, 2017) as I was aware that some of the students recruited to the project might be students that I tutor or had previously tutored. This presented an additional ethical concern as I ran the risk of influencing student to participate because of my position. However, I was also aware of the potential benefits to students who became involved in the project. Therefore, I also had to consider the ethical implications of excluding certain students from participation. I was also conscious that, as students tend to see multiple tutors, it would be very difficult to find a student with dyslexia at the university that I had not taught at some time. Therefore, rather than pretending that I could erase this potential power differential, I chose to remain reflexive about it and openly discuss it, where possible. For example, at the initial meeting I made it clear that I had two roles: my role as a researcher and my role as a tutor. I reminded students

that as a tutor I wanted them to be sure that they were not taking on additional work that may negatively affect the time they have to complete their studies. I also provided the contact details of my supervisor and encouraged the students to contact him if they were concerned about the impact of the project on their studies.

Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) also discusses the need, when recruiting, to consider the differing power relationships in complex societies. For example, as discussed, I am a member of the institution, but I am also a student with dyslexia. Equally, my potential participants hold multiple positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fawcett, & Hearn, 2004). I required the criteria that they were students with dyslexia but they may also be members of staff, hold positions of authority within education and be undergraduate or post graduate students. Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) also points out that the socio-cultural context in which the research is carried out, has a profound impact on the diversity of the recruitment sample. The fact that I was recruiting within the social boundaries of a university, instantly dictated that only students with dyslexia who have gained access to the university, could attend the project. Given the vast amount of literature outlining the exclusionary nature of university for dyslexic individuals (see Caskey *et al.*, 2018; Ghisi *et al.*, 2016; Herrington and Hunter-Carsch, 2001; McLoughlin & Leather, 2013; Pollack, 2005) this created an uncomfortable barrier. It is also interesting to note that Gaventa (2003) highlights this issue by discussing how power impacts various spaces for participation in society and often dictates who can and cannot enter each space. This created a concern and one that I aim to address with future projects.

The First Interviews

In order to measure whether the workshops had initiated a change in the co-researchers' worldview, interviews were used to assess this potential change. The purpose of the first interview was to begin to co-construct each participants' individual view of the world (King & Horrocks, 2010). Given that Freire (1970, 1974) argues in support of collectivism rather than individualised epistemology, careful consideration was given as to whether individual interviews were the most appropriate way to assess conscientization. However, if conscientization takes place through dialogue with others, then it is reasonable to conclude that this process could be sparked during an initial group interview, as co-researchers discuss their personal experiences. Instead, I wanted to have an unadulterated starting point for analysis, a reflection of the co-researchers' current understanding of the world before they engaged in the process of critical reflection and action. Therefore, individual interviews were

chosen for comparison at the beginning and end of the process, with group discussions being used to investigate the progression.

Despite this, I also needed to remain aware that, as part of the interview dialogue, I would be responsible for co-constructing the interview data (King & Horrocks, 2010). Therefore, the initial interviews would never be entirely unadulterated. Peräkylä (2011) suggest that researchers need to reflect upon whether the views being expressed in an interview are the opinions of the participant, or a result of the interview process. Additionally, Brinkmann & Kyale (2005) suggest that the interviewer needs to be conscious of the fact that they are selecting the area of discussion, asking the questions and selecting the interview agenda. However, if we take the stance that all knowledge is co-constructed, then these points of reflexivity become unavoidable. It is also worth remembering Freire's insistence that in order to gain knowledge of the social world, we must engage in an objective and subjective reading. Therefore, if we place too much emphasis on eradicating the role of subjectivity in the construction of what is said, then we are implying that we should be exploring the interviewee's words as an objective reflection of the social world, rather than acknowledging the subjectivity. Interview data does not provide us with observable "truths" (King & Horrocks, 2010) but instead gives us an indication of how knowledge is constructed (Romm, 2014).

Therefore, the initial interviews enabled a construction of each co-researcher's world that was situated within the time and space at which the words were spoken, and the ideas constructed.

The Workshops

For Freire (1970, 1974, 1985) the world is made through our interactions with each other. Culture is created, transformed and built through our daily interactions, constructing our social world in a combined act of creation (Freire, 1985). Individualism, Freire (1987:58) argues, 'dichotomizes the individual from the social' and suggests that we have no agency over its creation. Therefore, transformation of our social world must be a collective struggle, one that takes place with others. The workshops for this project were designed to facilitate this transformation.

The workshops took place over ten weeks. The first five weeks involved critically reflecting and discussing various themes around dyslexia. The next four workshops were put aside to

plan and implement the action part of the project, with the final workshop used to evaluate and reflect upon the action taken. This final session was also used to generate further areas for discussion and future action to be taken, as the cycle of reflection and action continues.

The themes for the reflective workshops were constructed during a previous pilot study. The themes were constructed with dyslexic students through the method of Nominal Group Technique (Delbecq & Van de Ven, 1971). This was followed by a reflective discussion, to interrogate them. As these themes were collected with a different group of students (although one participant contributed to both projects), consideration was given as to whether the collection of themes should be repeated. However, the themes are not presented here as an objective reflection of dyslexic culture, but rather as a starting point for discussion. It is the process of reflection and debate that is vital for the development of conscientization and not the construction of the theme. Therefore, the themes collected via the pilot study were used. These were: *a social understanding of dyslexia, obstacles, stigma, an academic understanding of dyslexia and politics*. The social and academic understanding themes derived from participants' perception that society's understanding of dyslexia was full of misconceptions and myths, where as in academia, the "truth" was understood.

In order to spark discussion, each theme was coded into an image, story or video. The codifications for each theme are shown in [Appendix D](#). This process of codification enables a person to look again at something that has become familiar to them (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011). Freire suggests that the oppressed's social world, can be problematized if it is presented back to people in an alternative format. This then allows them to discuss and debate something that once felt fixed. This approach also ensures that the alternative perspective is developed with the oppressed, through critical dialogue, and guards against it becoming yet another prescriptive lecture by the teacher (Freire, 1970, 1974). This process of critical discussion creates knowledge as people create and encounter alternative ideas, expanding their own worldview beyond an individualised understanding.

The first workshop began by exploring the perception of the misconceptions involved in a social understanding of dyslexia. In order to spark discussion, I began by sharing a story that happened to me while I was working as a primary school teacher. An image was chosen to represent this story. The use of a cartoon image to code the story, was specifically chosen in an attempt to present a more friendly and less "academic" feel to the workshops. This was

important, as many of the co-researchers had expressed concerns, during the recruitment meeting that they might not be intelligent enough to contribute to the workshops. Representing the theme as an image, provided the illusion of a less formalised discussion of the story, while still re-presenting the theme back to the co-researchers for discussion. hooks (1994) argues that if we expect our students to share their world, we need to be prepared to share ours. The image chosen shows me sat in the staff room at lunchtime, reading a book ([Appendix D1](#)). The event took place shortly after my workload as a teacher had been rapidly increased to an unmanageable level. This had forced me to disclose my dyslexia to my head teacher. My declaration was met with scepticism by many of my colleagues and led to this incident. hooks (1994) also suggests that using your own story can be an effective means to spark discussion.

The second workshop focused on the idea of obstacles to success. This theme was coded using a series of case studies, showing challenges encountered by individuals with dyslexia and societies reactions to these challenges ([Appendix D2](#)). The case studies were debated for their ethical interpretation as well as from a political perspective.

Stigmatisation was the focus of the third workshop. In coding this theme, I reflected back on the discussions that took place during the previous workshops. When many of the co-researchers had discussed their own stories, these tended to focus around literacy challenges. Therefore, in exploring the idea of stigmatisation I used a code that would spark a discussion on the media's portrayal of failing standards in literacy ([Appendix D3](#)). The aim was, not to simply present students with commonly held stigmas such as making spelling mistakes or the embarrassment of having to read out loud, but instead to interrogate the cultural construction of these stigmas and why they persist as perceived "truths" (Collinson, 2014). The hope was that in interrogating these cultural "truths", the co-researchers would begin to create their own cultural construction of literacy. Freire (1997) states that if we do not make history and culture with others we end up remaking them.

Many of the co-researchers had expressed an understanding that dyslexia is viewed very differently in academia and that this perception is much more positive and reflects a truth. Leading on from the previous week's discussion on literacy and stigmatisation, which grew many interesting discussions around the historical value of literacy, this workshop aimed to continue this discussion while addressing the role of academia. A video was shown of a TED

talk by Jessica Hartley (2017) entitled *Rupturing Cycles of Shame*. Hartley's talk provides an evocative codification of what we mean by 'academic' ([Appendix D4](#)). The video was used to encourage co-researchers to investigate perceptions of academia and its role in the construction of dyslexia.

The final workshop addressed the political impact on dyslexia. I chose a code that presented a familiar issue but in a new light, namely, the current changes to the Disabled Student Allowance (Willets, 2014; Gov.co.uk, 2018). The aim of this was to use this codification as a starting point for debate in order to explore the impact of politics on dyslexia's construction ([Appendix D5](#)).

Action

After the critical dialogue sessions, the remaining workshops were used to devise and plan a form of action, something that the co-researchers wanted to do to transform their oppression. The students chose to put together an evening event that raised awareness around dyslexia. The event was named Dyslexics' Untie, a name chosen by the co-researchers as a spin on the phrase Dyslexics' Unite. They chose to raise awareness through a variety of methods: stalls providing information to students and staff at the university and presentations and videos utilizing many of the discussion points we had explored in the workshops ([Appendix E](#)).

After the event, a final workshop was used to discuss and debate the action taken. The aim of this was to encourage the co-researchers to reflect on whether there had been any impact from the event. Freire (1970, 1974, 1985) discusses how developing conscientization must be an on-going process and not an end destination. Therefore, this session was deemed paramount. If conscientization was to be sparked through this project, then the process of reflecting on the action (and not just theorising about the subjective world) would help to put in motion the action/reflection cycle that is paramount to initiating transformation (Freire, 1970, 1974).

The Second Interviews

The second interviews took a very similar approach to the first. Interviews were individual and semi-structured. The interviews repeated a few of the questions from the original in order to provide a direct comparison in the co-researchers answers ([Appendix F](#)). In addition, a few

points from each co-researcher's first interview, were pulled out for further interrogation. This was done as the comments made in the first interview were a reflection of the co-researcher's perception of reality before investigation. I was interested to observe whether the co-researcher's perception of these events had been changed when they re-investigated them. I also asked a few questions regarding each co-researchers' perception of the Dyslexics Untie evening. This was a direct result of Freire's (1985:59) assertion that the development towards conscientization involves people's 'critical self-insertion into reality' where people begin to change their perception of hopelessness and recognise that they can transform their situation. The oppressed no longer view the culture of silence as unchangeable (Freire, 1985). Therefore, in asking about people's perceptions of the evening, I was able to assess (with the co-researchers input) whether they had begun to recognise that they had impacted upon the world.

Analysis Interviews

The analysis interviews were a methodological step that grew from my evolving understanding of conscientization. My initial intent was to complete a full analysis and then to take my analysis to the co-researchers for their input. However, I soon realised how that approach would have required my objective reading of the data and would not have taken the co-researcher's opinions into account. It also became apparent that the only people who can truly recognise a change in the co-researchers view of the world, are the co-researchers themselves. Therefore, a graduated approach to analysis was devised, whereby the interpretation of the data was gradually built up through a dialectical layering of the researcher's and co-researcher's analysis.

As part of the analysis interview, I started each session by providing a brief explanation of conscientization so that the co-researchers would be aware of what we would be looking for in the data. This conversation was also important because as Freire (1985:168) states 'Comprehension of the process of conscientization and its practice is directly linked, then, to ones understanding of consciousness in its relations to the world.' Therefore, through exploring conscientization together, the co-researchers would enhance their understanding and be in a stronger position to further the development of their conscientization.

In order to begin this conversation with the co-researchers, a critical inspection of Freire's writings was conducted, to establish how he describes the process leading up to

conscientization. This was followed by mapping Freire's descriptions to the comments made by each co-researcher during their interviews. This enabled an initial identification of where conscientization is implied within the co-researcher's transcripts. These moments within the transcripts were then shared and discussed with the co-researchers as part of the analysis interviews. This initial joint analysis then informed a further investigation into Freire's account of conscientization and the stages leading up to it. These stages, along with a more detailed description of the analysis process will be outlined below.

Process of Analysis

Freire (1970, 1974, 1985, 1992) is implicit in his observation that the process towards conscientization is an on-going process. Therefore, to assess it as an end goal is to misunderstand its concept. In analysing the interviews, it was important to maintain this understanding and not to look at the analysis as a pure comparative study, comparing Freire's definition of conscientization with an objective reading of the interview data. This would suggest that the interviews can be objectively observed, without the researchers' interpretations and co-construction, and that the co-researchers' words are themselves an objective reflection of their reality. Instead, to analyse the data requires both an objective and subjective interpretation, perpetuating the cycle of reflection through dialogue. If the act of reflection and action perpetuates conscientization, then it can be argued that the act of analysing the previous critical reflection, will again evolve the object of the research study and facilitate the co-researchers further towards conscientization. This process reflects Bourdieu & Wacquant's (1992:69) discussion on the effect of the 'scholarly gaze'. This reasoning also denotes why the process of analysis *must* be a joint effort that involves a layering of reflection and discussion with all involved. Otherwise, the object being studied (e.g. conscientization) will be formed and analysed solely by the researcher.

Ideally, it would have been advantageous to perform all of these tasks with the co-researchers. However, this in itself created both practical and ethical challenges. Given the magnitude of the analysis task, I could not expect the co-researchers to dedicate that amount of time towards the analysis. Additionally, a number of the co-researchers were final year students, meaning their time was especially precious. Despite this, given that conscientization is, in its most basic form, a change in mind-set from a fixed view of the world to a more critical one, the only people qualified to assess this change, are the co-researchers themselves. However, recognising this change would require both an objective and subjective reading.

Therefore, in conducting an initial analysis through the objectivity of their interviews, I was able to provide an initial objective reflection that could then be combined with their own subjective interpretation to begin to provide a fuller assessment of conscientization.

In order to achieve this, as previously stated, a review was conducted of how Freire expresses the development towards conscientization. These expressions were collected and sorted into the various four stages of the *culture of silence*, *semi-intrinsic consciousness*, *naïve - transitional consciousness* and *conscientization*. It was interesting to note that most of Freire's discussion is focused on defining the culture of silence and conscientization, with only a few comments on semi-intrinsic and naïve-transitional consciousness. However, Freire (1985) states that these later two stages are not mutually exclusive, with the oppressed often showing elements of both and oscillating between the two as part of their journey. Two additional areas were also further defined: Freire's discussion on culture and how he describes objective and subjective thinking. Through collecting these descriptions, it became apparent that part of Freire's assertion on the conditions needed to achieve conscientization, is the ability to think both objectively and subjectively. Therefore, it was considered that it would be interesting to also explore indications of these various forms of thinking in the co-researches' discussions. Equally, Freire (1974) often tells stories about how his co-teachers experienced realisations of their culture and their ability to create culture (and through this, their world). He implies that it is often at this point that people begin to recognise their worth and the value and power of their contributions to making the world. Therefore, this was also deemed to be an interesting area to explore.

The initial examination of the interviews resulted in a few key moments being identified. These moments were then discussed with each co-researcher individually, during the analysis interview. The co-researcher's further reflection on each point produced an unanticipated result. It was evident that in further examining their own dialogue, participants were able to recognise a change in their own worldview, which in turn, furthered their own development towards conscientization.

Writing the Report

One of the challenges of developing a participatory methodology is balancing the joint construction of the project with the ethics and practicalities of asking the co-researchers to contribute their time and energy. This issue is further complicated, when consideration is

made to the analysis and the write up of the research (King & Horrocks, 2010). Initially, I found myself concerned about the fact that I would be “taking” the knowledge developed together with the co-researchers of this project and writing *my* interpretation in *my* words. It felt that in doing so, I would be removing the agency of the co-researchers to define their world. While some researchers advocate involving the co-researchers in this process (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2015), it seemed profoundly unethical and impractical to expect dyslexic students to contribute additional time to writing this report. Instead, I decided to look upon the report writing as a continuation of the co-construction of knowledge and the dialogue with the co-researchers throughout this project.

Freire (1992:32) suggests that the moment a researcher begins to write up the report ‘they cannot escape their own subjectivity’. In writing this report, I am forced to reflect again upon my own thinking (Freire, 2005). It is unavoidable for any researcher to not re-present the knowledge that has been constructed throughout the research process (Cousins, 2010). Equally, if I am suggesting that the knowledge from this project has been co-constructed through subjectivity and objectivity, then I need not be fearful of my own subjective contribution, one that has been formed with objectivity. Although this write-up has been predominantly an individual exercise, the processes that led up to and informed this stage were collaborative (Lewin, 1946).

Therefore, this report was initially written by myself. A copy of the literature review, methodology and analysis was then provided to all co-researchers for their comments and contributions. In order to make reviewing the text less time consuming, each co-researchers’ original data was highlighted to enable them to provide insight on the most recent analysis.

Creating methodology

The methodology for this project has developed and is continuing to develop. It is through engaging with this project, with co-researchers, that a methodological approach has developed. As Freire states ‘...by doing it, you learn to do it better because by putting this methodology into practice, you are creating methodology’ (Freire, 1982:37). The dynamic nature of methodology has determined that an approach was not simply found and then applied to the project but instead, has developed with the project. Elements from critical theory, social constructivism, participatory action research and the research approach suggested by Freire (1982) have combined with my own reflections on each of these theories

and the needs of the co-researchers, to create a methodological approach specific to this research project.

A full outline of how this methodology has informed the analysis of the data will be outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Findings and Analysis

As previously stated in the methodology section, in order to analyse the interview data and compare it to the development of conscientization, a series of steps were devised that firstly involved a thematic analysis of Freire's descriptions of the process of conscientization. To achieve this, sections from Freire's writing were collected and sorted into the four stages of consciousness leading up to conscientization: *culture of silence*, *semi-intrinsic consciousness*, *naïve-transitional consciousness* and *conscientization*. These statements were then amalgamated to draw out the key themes for each stage ([Appendix B](#)). The themes from Freire's writings were then used to code the interview data, comparing what the co-researchers said with the descriptions of the four stages. An example of this is provided in [Appendix G](#).

The colour-coded themes from the three interviews for each student (first, final and analysis) were then displayed side by side ([Appendix H](#)). The culture of silence is represented in grey, semi-intrinsic consciousness is turquoise, naïve-transitional consciousness is pink and finally conscientization is shown in yellow. Additionally, sections from the first interview are outlined in red, the final interview in yellow and the analysis in green. This enabled an observation of the changes in colour towards conscientization from the first interview, through to the analysis interviews. An overview of this colour change for each participant can be viewed in [Appendix I](#). Each selected statement from the interviews was then given an additional theme to show the topic of conversation. This was done to enable a comparison of ideas, based around a theme, from the succession of interviews. For example, a co-researcher's conversations on the theme of 'dyslexia' were analysed to compare comments from the first interview, with comments from the subsequent interviews. An example is shown in [Appendix J](#).

Firstly, their comments within each topic of conversation will be discussed in relation to how they indicate the process towards conscientization. Secondly, for some themes additional discussion will be provided to exemplify the social, political and cultural context in which each statement is derived, indicating the participant's developing understanding of the wider world.

Each participant's data will be presented individually. As discussed in the previous chapter, the question of whether to conduct individual or group interviews was carefully considered. It

was decided that conducting individual interviews either side of the workshops would provide unadulterated narratives that could be explored for evidence of developing conscientization. Regarding the presentation of the data, similar attention was paid to this issue. As Freire (1970, 1974) suggests conscientization can only occur as a collective, it might have been deemed appropriate to have presented the data as a list of collective group themes from the three stages of interviews. However, the role of conscientization is not to create a single group of people who all share a homogenous opinion. To do so would negate a vital part of the process, to question and challenge the dominant opinion. Voices would be silenced and no true conscientization would occur. Conscientization is instead a process of self-awareness that is facilitated *through* collective dialogue, not a process that sees collective opinion as the end goal. Therefore, if I were to present these findings as a collective opinion, pulling together collective themes across each individual's interviews to show a group perspective, I would lose the nuances of each co-researchers' individuality and end up hiding their unique stories. This analysis would have then become a creation of my own doing and would have silenced the individual voices of the co-researchers.

It is also important to note that Freire's anxiety of the individual over the collective, is a result of his understanding of how it 'dichotomizes the individual from the social' (Freire, 1978:58). This will not be an issue in this study as the connection between the individual and society is strengthened in the collective dialogue of the workshops.

Therefore, the analysis of each co-researchers' interviews will be presented individually.

Participant 1 - Kami

Kami is a first-year undergraduate student, studying performing arts. In order to explore the process towards conscientization, the interview data from Kami has been grouped into these topics: *School, Dyslexia, Diagnosis* and *Transformation*.

School

Two topics were identified within the *School* topic. These were a discussion on *power* and *grades*.

Power

In the first interview, Kami details the struggle she had throughout her schooling, to get help for her dyslexia. She explains:

I remember approaching my tutor, we had morning tutors, so I remember approaching her and I was like, I think I might be dyslexic. Don't really know what to do about it, like can you help me? Um, and she was like, oh yeah, I'll try and contact the head of year and see if you can get a test but then nothing happened after that. And I remember going to my English teacher and I was like 'I'm really struggling to, you know, concentrate. I'm really struggling to read and take notes at the pace you're going at' and other traits I'd been noticing. And she was sort of like, ah, it's just 'cause you're not concentrating in class. And I was like, ah, but I am trying to. And it was the point because obviously, like it was a bit vice versa 'cause I was like trying my hardest but sort of gave up half way through classes...

(Kami, first interview, section 7)

(Code – *culture of silence*: Echoes dominant culture)

Kami's narrative embodies Freire's concept of the culture of silence. Throughout the narrative, she continually represents herself as powerless, searching for help and each time, being silenced. Freire writes how the oppressed often 'have a diffuse, magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor' (Freire, 1970:46). In addition, she is told that she is struggling as a result of her own deficit, her difficulty with concentration. Freire highlights this tactic of the oppressors when he states:

So often do they [the oppressed] hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything – that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive – that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitnes. (Freire, 1970:45)

Kami then echoes her teacher's doctrine by pointing out that she did tend to lose concentration half way through a class. This "confession" firmly reinforces Kami's position within the culture of silence where individuals are 'at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized' (Freire, 1970:30). Her propensity to blame herself or passively accept the inactivity of her teachers, demonstrates how, within the culture of silence, a person often echoes the dominant culture rather than challenge it (Freire, 1985). In addition, the reaction of her English teacher, to blame Kami for her difficulties in class, exemplifies a phenomenon described by Smith (2009) where non-disabled professionals consider themselves experts on a disabled person's disability.

Kami also comments on the challenges she has experienced, learning to write. She states, "'Cause, um, I do struggle to write.' (Kami, first interview, section 2). Again, her comments reflect those of the dominant culture, blaming herself for her difficulty to learn, rather than

recognising that the responsibility to teach her in a way that she can learn, falls with her teachers.

As well as the culture of silence, Kami's first interview also shows elements of naïve-transitional consciousness. Freire (1985) suggests that within this phase, the culture of silence has not been overcome, but people do begin to challenge the elite. This isolated statement does not suggest a full emergence within the stage of naïve-transitional consciousness, but rather the beginnings of Kami's critical consciousness. She states:

I know my primary school, they had a whole like ah...they had a whole, ah, what's it called, like a facility that like catered for people...that catered for kids with special needs and with learning diffi...difficul, disabilities ... they didn't ever test any of us, you know, they didn't ever ask around. Like it wasn't really made aware that that was something we could ask for.

(Kami, first interview, section 5)

(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

In this passage, she begins to challenge the actions of her school. She describes how her school had a learning support centre but that this knowledge was rarely shared. Her irritation at this is shown when she exclaims 'they didn't ever test any of us, they didn't ever ask around'. This statement exemplifies Freire's (1985) suggestion that when oppressed individuals begin to move into naïve-transitional consciousness, they begin to question the elite. Kami's comments demonstrate the beginnings of this transition. However, she is not yet displaying signs of conscientization. She recognises the inequality but does not look for the mechanisms of its construction or imply that she can change the situation. Her analysis of her story is still formed within her own objective bubble.

Kami's final interview shows her progression towards conscientization. During this interview, she was referred back to the story she told in the first interview and was asked 'What would you like to say to these teachers?' she responded with:

Probably a rude word that I can't say [laughs] No, I'd just tell them they need to educate themselves more ...'

(Kami, final interview, section 4)

(Code – *conscientization* – Perceives social, political, economic contradictions)

Her recognition that teachers themselves need educating shows a significant shift from her previous train of thought, which placed teachers as the experts with all the power. She also begins to view her teachers as flawed human beings when she continues:

some teachers, they see it as you know, another thing they have to deal with which is something else they don't really want to deal with.'

(Kami, final interview, section 4)

(Code – *conscientization* – Perceives social, political, economic contradictions)

The myth of her teachers holding absolute power, is replaced with an awareness of teachers as human beings in the process of becoming (Freire, 1998), individuals who are as much learners as everyone else (Freire, 1970, 1974). The doctrine of the banking system of education, where teachers have all the knowledge, has been eroded (Freire, 1970, 1974) and a new epistemological awareness has evolved.

This shift in Kami's perception of knowledge and power within her school, is further exemplified in this section of the analysis interview, where previous comments were reflected upon further:

Because like coming to uni I've realised that like lecturers are just, they don't know everything. 'Cause you grow up in a system where you're like teachers, oh my god they know everything! ... And it's really weird because you grow up idolizing these teachers who are teaching you, so you expect them to be like ten out of ten and know everything and it's just like, you come to uni and you just like, you know lecturers, who feed down to teachers, and friends who are going to be teachers, they don't know everything and it's like, well in that case, they need to educate themselves more ... Its definitely something that I've realised they're not, you know, maybe they don't have as much power as I thought they did, you know. So that is definitely a change.

(Kami, analysis interview, section 6)

(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world)

Freire argues that when conscientization begins when '...the conscience about the world, which also implies the conscience of the self, emerges and establishes a dialectical relationship with the world' (Freire, 1997:5). Kami's comments exemplify this process. Her narrative shows a critical connection with the world around her where her ideas are formed through both an objective interaction with reality (her concrete experiences) and subjectivity through critical thought and reflection. Kami's comments exemplify Freire's (1982, 1985) observation that truly knowing something must involve a dialectical analysis of both an objective and subjective view of the world.

Equally, the growth of Kami's critical understanding from the final interview to the analysis interview, suggests that her journey towards conscientization has been on going, even after the workshops ended. Freire (1985:55) maintains how the 'act of knowing is a dynamic act'. Therefore, the longer an individual problematize something, the more they 'enter into the "essence" of the problematized object' (Freire, 1985:59). In order to truly know something an individual must '...not only admires the object but must always be re-admiring [her] former admiration' (Freire, 1985:55). The development in Kami's consciousness of her experience at school, shows how the dialogical process of critical reflection with the world and with others has awakened the beginnings of conscientization.

Grades

Kami's discussion of grading within the school system shows a similar awakening. In the first interview, she discusses her experience of being graded and how this effected how she was then grouped and sorted.

I was like, I can't do everything at the pace you're telling me, ... and everyone's sort of lumped into one ability 'cause we're all set, were all split in two abilities, well in my secondary school. A and B, you know. You knew, the ones who were getting the A grades and the ones who were getting the C grades.

(Kami, first interview, section 7)

(Code – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something's wrong)

Her frustration at not being able to work at the pace that she is being told to, suggests that she is beginning to recognise a problem with how students are graded in school. However, again her narrative is describing, rather than challenging this notion. She then further cements her acceptance of this when she states:

Which is absolutely fine cause I think that works well but then, obviously all the people who are lumped with a 'C' are then lumped all together and then, we're not split up like into groups.

(Kami, first interview, section 7)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Echoes Dominant Culture)

She is still questioning the situation but also shows a trait indicative of the culture of silence when she echoes the dominant culture by suggesting that this grouping through grades 'works well'.

In the final interview, the discussion on grades begins to reflect a more critical perception. She highlights the discrepancy between the grades she received for practical tasks and the grades she received for theory-based exams:

it was just secondary school was where you could really see like, my dyslexia because my grades were all over the place. And my practicals were all 'A' star and 'A's and then all my theories were all like C's and F's and D's, you know.

(Kami, final interview, section 4)

(Code – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – culture of silence still conditions)

Despite recognising the discrepancy between grades, she does not challenge the purpose of this grading system until later in the interview when she states:

it's not going to be effective in the long run if we can't keep producing those grades throughout our life because you haven't targeted the fact that we might be struggling, not just because we're disruptive but actually because, you know, we do generally struggle with those things so...

(Kami, final interview, section 6)

(Code – *conscientization* – Perceives the world differently)

Here, Kami is questioning why she, and others, struggle to achieve particular grades. She is asking for schools to investigate why some students do not achieve the grades they are expected to. In doing so, she is recognising the dialectic inquiry that is required to fully understand the world. She is beginning to enter 'into a dialectal relationship with the world' (Freire, 1997b:5).

Dyslexia

The second topic of discussion for Kami was *Dyslexia*. This was divided into two sub-topics: *describing dyslexia* and *dyslexic identity*.

Describing Dyslexia

Kami's initial description of dyslexia, follows the traditional deficit model:

So, dyslexia for me is a very frustrating learning difficulty ... I guess obviously the writing I get very frustrated at and the reading as well. I mean those two, then I find my memories gone as well.

(Kami, first interview, section 9)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Echoes Dominant Culture)

She echoes a textbook definition of dyslexia, suggesting difficulties with reading, writing and memory. This represents a stark contrast to her comments in the final interview. When asked again what dyslexia is, she responds:

It's a big question isn't it. ... Because it's a whole bunch of things. And that's what I've learnt doing this. It's a whole bunch of things. It's not just reading and writing ... But I think that's because we, there isn't enough research and I probably don't know enough to say what it is you know
(Kami, final interview, section 11)
(Code – *conscientization* – Continues to question what they know)

Her description has shifted from an objective echo of what she has been told dyslexia is, to an interpretation based on a combination of subjective thinking and wider objective observations through interaction with others.

When this perceptual change is pointed out to her in the analysis interview, Kami reinforces her position, stating that 'Yeah and that's definitely what I learnt, like through this process. Like we don't know enough to solidly define it.' (Kami, analysis interview, section 3: Code – *conscientization* – Continues to question what they know). This reflection exemplifies Freire's (1985:168-169) insistence that when someone is in the process of conscientization, they must understand reality 'not as something that only exists, but as something that is to be, something that is being.'

Dyslexic Identity

Further discussion around dyslexia focused on the development of a dyslexic identity. In the first interview, Kami describes her frustration at her friends' responses to her not being able to remember their names during Fresher's Week:

it was worse in Fresher's Week when I remember trying to remember all these new names and I can't and people are getting annoyed at me for it. And they're like come on I'm in your lectures and I'm like, I can't. And when I tell them it's because I'm dyslexic, they're like, yeah whatever
(Kami, first interview, section 10)
(Code – *culture of silence* – Looks for explanations in super natural forces of destiny)

This situation described by Kami suggests a number of forces at play. Kami's friends are quick to dismiss her own experience of her dyslexia and instead have allowed their perception to be formed by what they have seen and heard in the media, reverberating a negative societal discourse. Freire (1974:31) suggests that when men and women have no agency they are

easily manoeuvred by the mass media until they believe nothing they have 'not heard on the radio, seen on the television, or read in the newspaper. He [she] comes to accept mythical explanations of his [her] reality.' In turn, Kami herself is silenced by their declaration.

The final interview saw a slight shift in perception. Here Kami discusses how her dyslexic identity was being formed through her interactions with others:

...one of the people I go...I do a lecture with, her son's dyslexic and that was really cool, talking to her about it. 'Cause she had a different like point of view about it all

(Kami, final interview, section 2)

(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Emergence of a collective consciousness)

Although, she equally describes a situation where her objective perception of her dyslexia is challenged by an alternative perspective, her description of the event suggests a dialectical interaction, rather than one of domination. Rather than silencing her, the interaction resulted in dialogue. This shows a development away from the culture of silence towards an active engagement with the world and with each other (Freire, 1997)

Diagnosis

A further topic discussed was that of *diagnosis*. This topic had close links with the other topics of *school* and *dyslexia* but the discussion around diagnosis was deemed to be significant enough to warrant a separate topic.

Breaking through the barrier/power

In the first interview, Kami narrates a story of frustration in trying to get tested for dyslexia throughout her schooling. She describes numerous attempts to ask her teachers for help, while each time being dismissed:

So yeah, it was just 'you're not concentrating', 'but I'm trying to. Believe me, I am'. So yeah, it was just...and I remember even approaching my year head and she was like 'yeah, well, maybe in Collage they can test you and I'm like it's been a couple of years. And even at collage they didn't. I approached them, I went straight there like the first couple of days and I said I think I'm dyslexic can I get a test and they're oh, well you don't, you don't do an A-Level so there's no point. You don't have an exam. That was their legit accuse.

(Kami, first interview, section 7)

(Code – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something's wrong)

Her exasperated comment at the end of the section suggests that she recognises that their response was inappropriate. However, her commentary is purely based on an objective

retelling of the situation. At this point, she does not suggest any reason for her teachers' lack of support or attempt to suggest an alternative solution. Here, Kami embodies Freire's semi-intrinsic consciousness. She begins to feel something is wrong but does not reflect upon an alternative possibility. In addition, further comments support this analysis when she states:

And I think it's because the only thing they can do if you have dyslexia is give you extra time in exams. Obviously I didn't have exams so at the same time they were thinking, well, I can't give anything ...
(Kami, first interview, section 7)
(Code – *culture of silence* – Echoes dominant culture)

Here she is echoing the dominant culture, her teachers, providing them with an excuse for their lack of support through reinforcing their own justifications. Her response at this point in time shows fatalism, as she accepts rather than challenges the decree from the dominant culture.

In the final interview, we start to see a change:

I don't think it's a massive toll just to be like 'oh, can she get tested', like just you know, ...
(Kami, final interview, section 4)
(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begin to recognise their situation caused by objective reality BUT often oversimplification)

Here, Kami recognises how her teachers' lack of action was inappropriate and challenges them. However, she is not yet suggesting a reason for their lack of action by theorising beyond her objective experience. Therefore, this would suggest that she is still within the transition stage of naïve-transitional consciousness. However, later in the interview, Kami states:

you know before you get tested for dyslexia, you have to do a screening test, I want that test to be everywhere. If kids could do it once at the beginning of every year or maybe like every half year, where they just fill out a form and there's like thirty questions and they just, it screens for like a range of things
(Kami, final interview, section 6)
(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world)

Here she shows she has moved beyond naïve-transitional consciousness and is aware of her agency to transform her situation. She marries her objective experience of completing a screening with critical reflection and creates a new possibility. Freire (1985:169) states that reality's '...transformation, whatever that may be, cannot be verified outside experience'.

Transformation

The final topic that emerged from the interviews with Kami was that of transformation.

Interestingly, this topic did not materialise within the first interview, where Kami's narrative tended to present an objective description of her experiences, rather than offer any suggestions for change. However, after the workshops, both her final and analysis interviews were full of suggestions for transformation. Below is a selection of some of these:

...that (Dyslexics Untie evening) was perfect for a little starter, like 'we are here now'.
(Kami, final interview, section 2)
(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world)

I think if we do something at Fresher's Week or try and, um, get students as soon as they come to university to start thinking about getting tested or start applying for DSA. ... So, I think like if we do like a group morning event or we do similar events like yeah, maybe in dyslexia week. I think it'll make, I think it'll definitely impact more students
(Kami, final interview, section 3)
(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world)

So, I think it (Dyslexia) opens doors and sometimes it closes them but actually it's like, there's enough doors [laughs]
(Kami, final interview, section 8)
(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world)

Each of these statements demonstrates a shift in consciousness for Kami, from passively accepting oppression to actively transforming. Kami recognises this process herself in the analysis interview:

Because like I've realised through this process that actually like instead of, you know, I've gone through similar situations in my life where I'm just like keep nagging about things, whereas actually if we just step back and be like, instead of nagging about it, we need to just get changing, do you know what I mean like.
(Kami, analysis interview, section 5)
(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world)

Kami's declaration shows an awakening that Freire describes as vital to the continued process of conscientization. He states:

...conscientization cannot stop at the stage of revealing reality. It becomes authentic when we experience the revelation of the real world as a dynamic and dialectical unity with the actual transformation of reality.' (Freire 1985:169)

Kami's statement shows a desire and capability to change her world.

Participant 2 – Jean

The topics of conversation for Jean were: *Dyslexia, Society, Diagnosis, School*.

Dyslexia

The topic of *Dyslexia* was grouped into only one subtheme. This was *Society as the barrier*.

Society as the barrier

From the first interview, Jean already showed an understanding of dyslexia beyond her own personal experience. This might be because of her area of study in Education. In the first interview she discusses how her brother's dyslexia is very different to her own, stating 'I think that's when my misconception had also come in, with my brother. His dyslexia's completely different to mine' (Jean, first interview, section 7 - Code – semi-intrinsic consciousness – Quasi immersion in reality).

Later in the interview, she takes this analysis further by stating:

I think it's just like lack of information. I think when...like 'cause we generalise things into groups like a generalisation of everyone with dyslexia, is like nobody can spell ... so I think it really comes with a lack of understanding and trying to simplify things really.

(Jean, first interview, section 8)

(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begin to recognise their situation caused by objective reality BUT often oversimplification)

She is beginning to look at the causes of the misconceptions, recognising that it might come from a simplification and lack of knowledge around dyslexia. However, the analysis is still formulated within her own immediate world and is not yet expanded to look at the wider societal, political and cultural causes.

In the final interview, Jean continues this analysis, but she turns a predominantly objective analysis into one that also incorporates subjectivity. Her comments show that not only has she widened her understanding of dyslexia but most importantly, she is continually questioning what she knows. Below is her response when asked the question, what is dyslexia?

Easy, yeah [laughs] right, ah. OK...um [pause] to some I'd say it's processing. I don't know, I don't know which word to use, is it an 'other' or disorder or inability or [pause] disability? But with processing information, um so...and that is, with dyslexia, that's the form that comes in the form of the English language as the sort of barrier. (Jean, final interview, section 17)
(Code – *conscientization* – Problimitizes reality)

The first part of this comment shows Jean's recognition that this is a complex question with no fixed answer, a shift from her previous descriptions. Secondly, Jean then debates which language to use to describe dyslexia, trialling various forms and questioning each. This epistemological change echoes Freire's (1997, 1985, 1970) assumption that conscientization is reflected in our ability to continue to question what we know. To conclude, she provides a suggestion for the cause of dyslexia that considers aspects beyond her immediate objective world. She suggests that dyslexia may be caused by the barrier of the English language, an idea that reflects Collinson's (2014) work (something which was discussed during the workshops).

However, this reflection on language as a barrier to people with dyslexia, is then taken further:

So, like, I think it's quite commonly said that dyslexics are more creative. Whether that's true or not, don't know. But um, I suppose it's if the English language is the problem, then people find other ways to communicate and a lot of people communicate via words and sentences and letters and like papers but then, some people communicate through music or through art or through dance or theatre. And I think the, the barrier that is like the English language, which is one path of the thing and I think the normalisation of the English language as the only way to communicate is like, that's where half the problem is. Because then we're not acknowledging all these other ways that people with dyslexia can communicate with you, if you're willing to just listen in the way they want to communicate ... to put it into sentences and letters and things it must be...cause it's almost like coding. Like you're...cause if you're...like we don't really think about it because like we use it so much but we're coding thoughts into words all the time. So, is it any surprise that some people find that difficult? Like cause it's a...your coding like a thought, an abstract thought into like letters and sentences and full stops and punctuation. Is it any wonder some people find that a bit difficult?
(Jean, final interview, section 17)
(Code – *conscientization* – Sees the world differently)

Here she is outlining how people with dyslexia think differently and the English language is not always the best medium to enable them to adequately portray their thoughts. Her discussion of the need to 'code' thoughts into words, shows a much wider level of critical and reflective

thinking, beyond the purely objective world. Whereas in the first interview, her analysis was based on her personal experience, now she is expanding the parameters of her thinking to question perceived norms within society.

However, it is interesting to observe that the culture of silence may still be conditioning her, despite this depth of critical thinking. When asked whether she realised she was dyslexic when she was younger, she replied:

it hadn't crossed my mind because literally probably because of my [pause] spelling, probably, and reading ability. Um, I keep getting my 'i's and 'e's mixed up and I've always got 'i's and 'e's mixed up. But like that was it.
(Jean, final interview, section 4)
(Code – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – culture of silence still conditions)

Her narrative reverts back to discussing a deficit model of dyslexia. This is in keeping with Freire's (1985) reflections, when he suggests that the culture of silence continues to condition even after the journey towards conscientization has begun.

In the analysis interview, Jean continues to challenge the power of others to define her dyslexia:

Um, but there's a lot of stuff, especially in my church job, that I've started to just say 'yeah I'm dyslexic' that isn't going to work. You're going to have to give me like five extra minutes to read *that* because that is not getting read now ... I try, especially with my kids, to let them know because then, if any of those guys are dyslexic, I don't want them to feel like they're on their own. Or I want them to be able to see that, yeah, its fine.
(Jean, analysis interview, section 7)
(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality / begins to make the world)

In this section, she describes how she now recognises herself to be the expert on her own dyslexia and how she is building the confidence to ask for what she needs. Equally, she discusses the importance of sharing her experience with others, recognising that conscientization can only happen as a collective, as each new discovery of knowledge is dialectically built upon by another (Freire, 1974). This notion of a collective consciousness is again reiterated:

Um, so I think the, watching how other people are dealing with it (dyslexia) as well, it's like expanded my knowledge ... 'cause I probably had my own assumptions cause I didn't know that much about it.

(Jean, analysis interview, section 3)

(Code – *conscientization* – Recognises they're conditioned/ Sees the world differently)

Freire (1985:125) argues that conscientization occurs because of the 'dialectical movement that relates critical reflection on past action to the continuing struggle'. Jean's comments echo this sentiment as she reflects upon the expansion of her own knowledge through a dialectical challenge of her past assumptions.

Diagnosis

Jean's discussion of dyslexia diagnosis shows a further progression towards conscientization.

In the first interview she says:

... some of the things I was having difficulties with I didn't realise. I thought everyone was the same. And then, I guess it was kind of reassuring that it wasn't just me being stupid. It was like, there was actually something, like, in my brain. So um, it was kind of reassuring, then, I think...[pause] um but yeah... [tails off]

(Jean, first interview, section 5)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny)

Her narrative in the first interview outlines that she went from believing herself to be stupid to believing there was a deficit within her brain. Interestingly, both of these explanations place the blame for her oppression on herself. This is especially interesting in light of Alves *et al.*'s (2016) findings who highlighted how teachers also reinforce the discourse that the "problem" is with the individual. The diagnosis gave the illusion of change, but in actuality, it served to cement the blame onto the oppressed individual.

However, in the final interview, Jean suggests a paradox with diagnosis.

I think 'cause they do the primary [school] kind of, that's where most diagnosis is, is in the primary age. And if you miss that, then you're too functional for them to bother so they don't really do anything.

(Jean, final interview, section 4)

(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

In this final statement, Jean, is beginning to question the role of dyslexia diagnoses. She points out how schools do not assess if a student is able to hide their difference or remain invisible (Riddell & Weedon, 2014). Her questioning shows the beginnings of a critical dialogue around diagnosis.

School

A discussion around school and the education system was also prevalent in Jean's interviews. This topic has been divided into three additional sub-topics: *challenges & structure of education, diagnosis and mental health, needs fixing*.

Challenges & Structure of Education

A large part of the discussion in Jean's interviews focused around education, in particular the challenges caused by the structure of the education system. In the first interview, she presents a variety of reflections on expected norms within education. In discussing examinations, she states 'And I'm not very good at exams' (Jean, first interview, section 3 - Code – *culture of silence* – Conditioned). Her statement shows a fixed mind-set. It does not reflect beyond an objective observation and serves to reinforce a deficit model of dyslexia. This highlights the power of the oppressive society to condition the oppressed (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1987).

However, later within the first interview, her comments suggest that she is already beginning to critique education conventions and is beginning to feel like something is wrong. This can be seen in her discussion of exams in schools:

Um, I think they're alright, I just don't think they're OK, like on their own. So, personally I think it depends on the individual really cause some people are good at exams and some people aren't.
(Jean, first interview, section 3)
(Code – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

Her narrative shows her questioning the assumption that examinations are an objective measure of knowledge. This recognition that things are not quite right, indicates her move towards semi-intrinsic consciousness. This is then taken further as she begins to question exactly what it is that examinations measure:

Um, if you want to measure the content of a subject with an exam, that's OK but then I think you've got to like add in some course work as well cause people, in like any normal situation, aren't going to perform one day, the same as they perform the entire year. So um, it'll probably be alright but just not on its own I think really.
(Jean, first interview, section 3)
(Code – *naive-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigating the source of oppression)

The normalisation of examinations within education remains but she is beginning to question this concept. The final sentence also displays a degree of tentativeness in critiquing the perceived norm, highlighting how the myths of the oppressor remain (Freire, 1985).

Interestingly, the final interview presents a very similar level of consciousness. Jean frequently suggests that the difficulties she experienced at school were due to problems with her:

‘Cause I mean like I didn't use to pay attention at all, so I was like chatting like all the time. (Final Interview Section 5 – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – culture of silence still conditions)

I think like it was following, following instructions, um, I had an issue with, and I think they just thought it was my attention... (Final Interview Section 6 – *culture of silence* - Echoes dominant culture)

However, the narrative suddenly changes during the analysis interview:

No, I think it was a kind of change [in mindset] ‘cause I can remember when we did one of the sessions, about the reason we need the English language or like, do we really need it to be like this? And I think it was that sort of, it was that conversation that changed it some more. Because then I was like, that made me think. Cause first I was like, well we do need the English language, it's just we can't process it properly. But then, I thought about it for a while. I thought do we actually need to be this pedantic about everything. I think that's probably what changed it to that one. That conversation about how relevant it is, like how important is language. And how important is like the structure of things and do we really need to put that much emphasis on how its structured?

(Jean, analysis interview, section 5)

(Code – *conscientization* – Understands & engages in dialectic of consciousness and world)

In this section, Jean reflects upon her own shift in mind-set. She describes how initially, she remained fixed in her ideas around literacy. However, after listening to the dialogue, constructed by the various voices of those within the group, she began to consider an alternative reality. Jean's discussion clearly exemplifies the development of conscientization and how the process of revisiting previous thoughts, further progresses this process. Freire (1985:55) reiterates this when he states that ‘in order to know, man not only admires the object but must always be re-admiring his former admiration’.

Diagnosis and Mental Health

This section shows Jean's awakening to the impact of dyslexia diagnosis on mental health. In the first interview, when asked why she thought her school did not pick up on her dyslexia (after describing numerous indicators), she replies:

I don't, I don't think my school is funded to do it. Or I don't think they allocate funding to do it.

(Jean, first interview, section 7)

(Code – *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – lacks structural perception)

Her answer suggested that while she currently lacks the awareness of the structures, policies and procedures of the education system, she is beginning to question the inequality. As a result, she seeks a reason for the school's lack of support by suggesting that it is the result of a lack of funding. This response also seems to reflect an assumption that in order for her to be taught (as a dyslexic student), the school requires additional funding. It reinforces the myth that dyslexia teaching is somehow different to "standard" good teaching practices, a myth that is challenged by many proponents of inclusive teaching (Hornstra *et al.*, 2010; Reid *et al.*, 2013; Griful-Freixenet *et al.*, 2017; Moriarty & Scarffe, 2019)

In the final interview, this analysis is taken further, when Jean reflects upon the impact of this lack of support:

...and I think the pressure that you're then putting on a kid is gonna cause like um, them to think that they're not good enough or them to be like be anxious about like saying the wrong thing. Cause I know that was definitely the case with me ..., if they haven't quite got it right then like they might think it's their fault rather than what it's just...it could be that their disability isn't really being catered for properly. When really like it, and that's the case, rather than its their individual problem.

(Jean, final interview, section 10)

(Code – *conscientization* – Recognises they are conditioned)

This statement suggests a shift in Jean's thinking. She now recognises how she was conditioned into believing the challenges she experienced in learning were the result of her own inadequacies. This again exemplifies Freire's (1985) commitment that to experience conscientization, an individual needs to re-examine their previous reflections. Jean also recognises how this shortfall in support, may cause additional anxiety in students. With this analysis, she is beginning to draw together her objective experience of the world with a

subjective reflection. The conclusions she draws are in line with those drawn by Alexander-Passe (2015) and McNulty, (2003), who explore the impact of dyslexia on mental health.

Jean continues to question and reflect upon her understanding of this issue, later in the interview when she comments:

And yeah, they [teachers] can have like their principles and things like that but to make sure the kids and also their wellbeing's looked after. That's probably more important than getting them all to a certain grade. I don't know, I...

(Jean, final interview, section 11)

(Code – *conscientization* – Sees the world differently/Understands & engages in dialectic of consciousness and world)

The use of the word 'principles' implies that Jean recognises that some teachers feel their role is to get to a particular grade. She is now fully identifying and challenging this oppressive approach to teaching. She challenges the assumption that grades and metrics should be the goal of educators and instead suggests that a student's wellbeing should be the priority as learning is hampered by poor mental health (Mojtabai *et al.*, 2016; Cornaglia *et al.*, 2012). Her argument reflects (Smyth *et al.*, 2015:261) who argue 'the focus needs to be less on standardised testing and accountability systems and more on creating socially just schools' for as Ball (2003:224) writes, 'performance has no room for caring.' In addition, her final unfinished comment of 'I don't know, I...' implies that her assessment is not a fixed truth, but the result of continued dialectical reflection.

Equally, when discussing changes she would like to make to her school systems, she says,

...what I think would have helped is if there was like a ...some sort of...like you had the counselling side but then you had like the study side like study skills kind of thing ... Like instead of like, instead of like, instead of just disciplining them, if you took them to like a study skills kind of thing and tried to work out what it was that they weren't getting, ... So, I think adding like the, like separating mental health from, um, sort of academic skills. Obviously sometimes they overlap but like have like a separate thing for that. And I think that would help to sort of...so they're not, it's not that they're troubled, cause they're not, they're just like ... So, have like a different thing. I don't know if that would quite work.

(Jean, final interview, section 9)

(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/ begins to make the world Problematicizes reality)

Her comments further exemplify her move towards conscientization. She is again recognising the link between dyslexia and poor mental health but is reflecting further by suggesting a change in the system that could make things less oppressive. Her reflection that a lack of appropriate teaching, leads to anxiety and poor mental health has led her to conclude that the focus needs to be on addressing the cause (a poor education) rather than trying to cure the symptom (poor mental health). Jean's iterative and sometimes hesitant critique of reality reflects Freire's (1985:55) assertion that:

In the process of decodifying representations of their existential situations and perceiving former perceptions, the learner gradually, hesitatingly, and timorously place in doubt the opinion they held of reality and replace it with a more and more critical knowledge.

Needs Fixing

Jean's critique of the education system is further exemplified within this theme, which takes quotes from the later interviews. In the first interview, Jean would often search for excuses for her inadequate education, citing a lack of funding or her own perceived inadequacies. However, in the final interview, she suggests the cause of her oppression is the system itself, using the analogy 'it's like trying to put like a square peg into a circle hole. Like a circle peg into a square hole' (Jean, final interview, section 10, Code – *conscientization* - Perceives social and political contradictions)

Additionally, when asked if it is possible to create an education system for all, she states:

Yeah, um I think it's, it's very, very difficult cause obviously the school system was built for the majority ... But if they're [students] not made to think like the classroom is the only place that they can learn. If that kind of...the school, the school almost acts as a supplement to the ed...or like an enabler of education, rather than like just supplying it on its own. Like there's other ways to educate and the school is just one of them.

(Jean, final interview, section 11)

(Code – *conscientization* – Problematizes reality)

Jean begins by suggesting a problem, that schools are designed for the dominant majority. She then goes on to suggest an alternative way of understanding the situation, an alternate reality that could exist. She discusses how students are made to think that the classroom is the only place that learning takes place, an argument indicative of Illich's (1970). She then suggests that schools should be 'an enabler of education'. This new reality that she is creating,

would place the student as the knower, on an equal footing with the teacher reflecting Freire's own pedagogical approach to education (Freire, 1970, 1974).

Her analysis also suggests that she is now exploring the world through both an objective and subjective lens. She is aware of some of the objective challenges facing the education system but does not see this reality as fixed. Instead, she employs subjectivity to enable her to consider an alternative perspective, again reinforcing Freire's (1970, 1985) assertion for the need of an objective and subjective reading of the world for true conscientization.

The next section, also from the final interview, shows Jean's ability to not only suggest an alternative reality but to form that reality based on an awareness of the wider world.

...if you'd literally just slow down and not like go full steam ahead. And it's very difficult to separate as a country for us to do that because the world is also demanding that we do that too. So to correct one school within a country that wants to speed up, within a world that wants to speed up, is like, its counter cultural and I think you'd have to and I think if, if you got a lot of people on board with the same idea, you could do it but then its...yeah, it's getting more people on board with the same type of thing.

(Jean, final interview, section 14)

(Code – *conscientization* – Enters into reality/begins to make the world - Perceives social, political, economic contradictions.)

Her reflection that the change she suggests would be 'counter cultural' displays a wide understanding of the societal and cultural ideas that have formed her world (Freire, 1970, 1974). It could also be argued that her analysis reflects an awareness of the impact of neoliberalism on the education system, leading to a need for fast, measurable results (Ball, 2016; Lynch & Hennessy, 2017; Van der Walt, 2017). In addition, Jean again demonstrates an awareness of the necessity of collectivism (Freire, 1974). She is conscious that this transformation would require collective action.

Society

Community

This section shows further examples of Jean's awareness of the need for collective action. The quotes below all exemplify this:

when we're doing our dyslexia assessments and we're coming to our tutoring, like it's a very one-person thing. So, like I think events [Dyslexics Untie] like that help, not only

to raise awareness of dyslexia itself but like also for people who like have dyslexia to kind of bring them more together

(Jean, final interview, section 3)

(Code – *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

you do your tutoring which is like really good but it's all very like academic and stuff and you don't really have that like community aspect where you can like say ask somebody else about it

(Jean, final interview, section 3)

(Code – *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

In addition, in the analysis interview, she describes how collectivism and community leads to change in awareness:

...cause, doing the Dyslexics Untie, the meetings before that and meeting new people increases my knowledge of dyslexia, my knowledge of how it is responded to by other people, which then in turn, would impact how I would see it in another person.

(Jean, analysis interview, section 6)

(Code – *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

Her description from the analysis interview describes a dialectical helix where her knowledge is developed through the praxis of action and reflection. New knowledge is then developed further in the dialectic, reflecting upon past knowledge and experience to create a new understanding. This epistemology is equally prevalent in Freire's (1985) description of conscientization.

Categorising Society/capitalism

In this extended narrative, Jean, shows just how far she has transitioned towards conscientization, when she links the oppression of dyslexic individuals with the needs of a capitalist society:

Uh, I think it's like a feature of a capitalistic culture, not to go down that like thing [laughs] cause that will go ... I imagine it's to do with the sort of efficiency whole...the whole efficiency thing so it's less...the people who are like neurotypical, the world is built for neurotypicals cause that was what was considered normal and that's what *is* considered normal. So, the whole, like, business and things like that are built for people who are neurotypical. Um, so when you have the people who are...I'm using neurotypical as a bit of a generalisation but you know what I mean. Ah, then you have like the different neurodiversities and some of them fall into this bit [shows two spaces with hands, with a gap in the middle] and you can get away with it and it sort of just sort of stays there. But then there's other people are like here and I think what

the, what the government or what like people in power think is that, because there's so many people here [indicates 'majority' with hands], and we can get away with putting some people here, even in here, um its more, there's a more ability to...like they allocate more resources and finance to this section because that seems to be the thing that's going to move forward the fastest. Um, and people back here, that's just people who...we get left behind. We gotta leave some people behind [laughs]. That's, I think that's the [pause] the issue is, I think the issue is how fast paced society is ... So, I think that's maybe why the money is focused on things that go the fastest and in current society that usually correlates with who is neurotypical, who goes the fastest. 'Cause they're the ones that are catered for. If that makes sense.

(Jean, analysis interview, section 12)

(Code – *conscientization* – Perceives social, political and economic contradictions)

She argues that capitalism demands a fast-paced production of goods. This includes education as well as in the workplace. People with dyslexia are counterproductive to this model, as they do not work well at a fast pace (Schaywitz, 2003; Price 2012; Adubasim, 2018). Therefore, their contribution to this world would hold back the majority. Consequently, it is not within the interests of those in power to educate dyslexics as this would enable them to integrate into the workforce and seemingly slow productivity down. This reflection echoes Slorach's (2016) suggestion that disability was constructed by capitalism and its focus on increasing production and profitability.

Participant 3 – Katherina

Analysis of Katherina's interview data identified seven main themes. These were *Dyslexia*, *Exams*, *Reading*, *Conversation*, *Writing*, *Social* and *Education*.

Dyslexia

The theme of *dyslexia* was split into three areas: *what is dyslexia*, *diagnosis* and *self-blame*.

What is Dyslexia?

When answering the question 'what is dyslexia?' Katherina responded:

...like for me I have like different weakness but mine is to do with reading, I think. Like I'm not a fluent reader. I usually have...I quite often get people to read, um, what I have to, like I have a computer software that reads to me or I get someone to read it to me or it just doesn't go in.

(Katherina, first interview, section 10)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

Like really annoyed. Like, it kind of made me feel kind of incapable

(Katherina, first interview, section 7)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny)

I don't know I don't know whether it's to do with like [pause] memory or anything.
(Katherina, first interview, section 8)
(Code – *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

Each of these expressions emphasise the conditioning of the oppressive society as she blames herself for the challenges she experiences (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1985). She states how she relies on other people or computer technology to ensure she reads at an expected speed, echoing Freire's assertion that 'If a man is incapable of changing reality, he adjusts himself instead' (Freire 1974:4). She is conditioned to believe that she struggles in education as a result of her own inadequacy and as a consequence, she is the one who needs fixing. Freire (1970:45) discusses this notion when he writes 'Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them.'

It is also interesting to note that in these early interviews, Katherina provides a very individual, personalised account of her dyslexia, reflecting her experience within her immediate sphere. This provides a contrast for her emerging consciousness shown in the final and analysis interviews. When discussing whether she feels there will be any impact from the Dyslexic's Untie evening, she comments:

I think it will, like it will help just the general wider...not just people who have dyslexia but maybe just like everyone else as well,
(Katherina, final interview, section 4)
(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Emergence of a coactive consciousness)

She begins to acknowledge that a wider world exists and by influencing those who inhabit that wider world, we can begin to change the social construction of dyslexia.

This widening of her worldview is further enhanced during the analysis interview, when she states:

I think it like...well after doing all this stuff, I feel like it cha...it differs from person to person a lot more than...um...I anticipated (sees the world differently) ... So, I wouldn't know how to define it cause it's a big broad thing.
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 16)
(Code – *conscientization* – Continues to question what they know)

These two statements show a considerable shift in thinking from Katherina's earlier definition of dyslexia, which focused on a list of deficits. Not only is she now acknowledging the value in collective wisdom, she is also acknowledging that knowledge is always evolving. These two epistemic points, echo Freire's (1970, 1974) definition of conscientization, and reiterate his point that conscientization can only occur as part of a collective and must involve the knower continuing to question what they know.

Diagnosis

In the first interview, during Katherina's discussion on her diagnosis, she states 'So it was like a relief like I wasn't actually stupid [laughs]. It was more like, like my brains just functioning differently' (Katherina, first interview, section 6 - Code – *culture of silence* – Conditioned). Her statement suggests that she sees the challenges she has been experiencing in her education, as the result of a difference in the way her brain functions. Despite her representing this explanation as better than being labelled as 'stupid', both explanations place the blame on the dyslexic individual. The diagnosis has served to pacify Katherina's inquiry. This approach of distracting the oppressed from their oppression with an alternative (more palatable) explanations for their disadvantage is a technique discussed by Ledwith (2015) and reiterated by Freire (1985:78) when he states 'The elites are anxious to maintain the status quo by allowing only superficial transformations designed to prevent any real change in their power of prescription'. Katherina's 'diagnosis' gives her a more palatable reason for the challenges she experiences in education.

In the final interview, Katherina's discussion on dyslexia diagnosis, takes two forms. Firstly, she discusses how her understanding has developed based on conversations with other individuals with dyslexia:

some people were saying that they got like...that it took them a long time to actually realise that they got dyslexia. And then I was in a similar situation so, um... [tails off] But like a lot of times it was just like how they found it more difficult when like people didn't really understand

(Katherina, final interview, section 2)

(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Emergence of a collective consciousness)

Within this statement, she communicates an awareness of other individuals with dyslexia and how their experience relates to her own, showing an awareness of the importance of collective knowledge production. Secondly, she acknowledges the wider community when she states, 'people didn't really understand'.

She further extends this reflection when she states:

poor people with dyslexia it's like, how are they supposed to stand a chance if they don't even realise they have it.

(Katherina, final interview, section 7)

(Code – *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates source of oppression)

Katherina is showing that she is beginning to think critically about the social situation and is spotting contradictions. She realises that many people with dyslexia are undiagnosed and so do not often realise that the difficulties they are experiencing are a result of living within a system that is designed for neuro-typical individuals. However, it is interesting to note that her comments still imply that the diagnosis is needed before adjustments are deemed necessary, rather than society working to remove barriers.

Self-Blame

When discussing the additional effort she was putting into her exams, compared to her peers, and the low grades she received, despite this extra effort, Katherina was asked how this made her feel. She responded 'Like really annoyed. Like, it kind of made me feel kind of incapable' (Katherina, first interview, section 7, Code – *culture of silence* – Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny). Her reaction to her oppressed situation is to blame herself. This is further expressed in the following statements where she discusses the challenges she experiences as an individual with dyslexia:

I don't know I don't know whether it's to do with like [pause] memory or anything.
But...

(Katherina, first interview, section 8)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

And like cause different exams you have to like remember certain words ... remember how to spell certain words to remember what the actual word meant. I think it all just took a bit longer to like [pause] actually do [nervous laugh].

(Katherina, first interview, section 8)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Adjusts herself)

Within each of these statements, Katherina explains her understanding of what causes these challenges by describing specific 'deficits' within her. She explains that the difficulties she experiences are the result of a deficit in working memory or working speed. She describes how she compensates by adjusting herself and working longer. Her narrative suggests that her

views on dyslexia have been formed by the oppressive society, which consistently represents dyslexia as a list of deficits (Tambour *et al.*, 2014). These ideas have been internalised, providing a fixed, finite definition that suppresses any further enquiry. Freire (1970:33) states that 'One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness.'

In the final interview, Katherina shows how the culture of silence continues to condition her way of seeing the world (Freire, 1985). When discussing the Dyslexic Untie evening, she states:

I think it was giving them more information about how to um, deal with it. So, like we gave them leaflets and like guidelines and stuff
(Katherina, first interview, section 3)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Echoes dominant culture)

Her use of the phrase 'deal with it' suggests she still views dyslexia as something the dyslexic individual needs to fix.

In the analysis interview, the section above was presented back to Katherina. This process encouraged further reflection and she stated:

Well, I feel like some of the symptoms are still to do with me. Like memory, coordination, stuff like that, that is me. But then other parts...it's kind of confusing whether...it is dyslexia, but it's me at the same time. There is like a cross over isn't there?
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 14)
(Code - *conscientization* – Engages in the dialectic of consciousness and the world.)

Although, Katherina is still focusing on herself rather than looking at the wider world, she engages in a critical dialogue with herself, debating whether there is a separation between dyslexia and herself as an individual. This debate shows a move towards conscientization and a willingness to challenge her initial objective perception.

Exams

This section is divided into two subthemes: *revision and hard work equals achievement* and *the purpose of exams*.

Revision and hard work equals achievement

This theme is quite prevalent in Katherina's discussion, despite her own experiences of studying hard and not achieving the grades (see section – Self Blame). When discussing A-Level exams, she states 'in A-Level you can just study really hard and then get like all the exams.' (Katherina, first interview, section 2 - Code - *culture of silence* – Echoes dominant Culture). This idea is often reinforced throughout the education system, with students consistently told that if they work hard, they will succeed (Hamilton *et al.*, 2015; Langørgen & Magnus, 2018). Katherina's reference to this, highlights Freire's (1970, 1985) suggestion that within the culture of silence, the oppressed will often echo the dominant culture. Her response is based on pure objectivity, giving the oppressors the power to define her world (Freire, 1970)

Later, in the first interview, Katherina begins to question the injustice of this idea. This can be seen through these statements:

... I'd be revising since like Christmas like for my exams and I didn't understand why.'
(Katherina, first interview, section)
(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong).

um, I think for me like, my like grades weren't as good as other people and like I'd put in so much more effort and then like some of my friends wouldn't revise and then I'd still come out with a C or a B and then they'd get like an A or something and I'd be like, I've been revising since December, what have you... and you haven't revised
[irritation]
(Katherina, first interview, section 7)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Adjusts herself to fit reality)

I don't know why I'm having to put in all this effort when other people aren't having to put in anything ... it was really weird cause...[pause]. Yeah it was just really strange cause
(Katherina, first interview, section 7)
(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Lacks structural perception)

While she is not yet attempting to challenge the injustice, she is beginning to recognise that something is unjust and wrong about the situation.

In the final interview, Katherina shows that she has taken this questioning further:

... like for example, I was really good at history and I got, um for GCSE I got an A* on my coursework but I got a C in the exam. So, I was really, like I was never going to get

an A*. I got like an A in one of the courses and A* on the other, something like that. I can't remember. It may have been an A and a B. ... I feel like people [short pause] wrote me off as being dumb ... I wrote myself off because the grades were so important

(Katherina, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Beginning to recognise their situation is caused by objective reality but often oversimplifies.)

Where as in the first interview, Katherina spoke about her exams grades as purely an objective observation, in the final interview she extends this by discussing the potential consequences. Her final statement, where she recognises how she 'wrote herself off', shows that she is questioning the doctrine she has been taught and is beginning to challenge it.

In addition, she continues by discussing not just the problem, but a need to explore the causes of this problem 'I think exams *are* important, but I feel like there needs, there needs to be an, understanding about why people aren't fi...getting it' (Katherina, final interview, section 5 - Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates the sources of oppression/ Beginning to question elite). The idea that hard work equates to high exam grades, is now being challenged.

The purpose of exams

In the final interview, Katherina's focus on grades develops into a much wider discussion on the purpose of exams in general. This can be seen in the following extracts:

The exams are really important, but they've got really...they've just got way to stressful. They're just making everyone like...like it's all your doing is revising for these exams that like...I do understand why we have exams it's a lot easier to mark and everything but I just...the way they've gone is gone a bit too much and everyone's stressed out about them...

(Katherina, final interview, section 7)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates source of oppression)

So, I don't know, like...there's a difference between the exams so I suppose there should be a similarity. And then if people get higher in one exam board then lower in the other one, then there's different questions. So maybe, that should be the starting point. [pause] and then...[pause] I don't know, I don't know how else you could...maybe I maybe like make it so [pause] for the... I appreciate like maths and stuff you couldn't have coursework but like for some of them you could ... Because, now they've got it so there's only exams, haven't the for GCSEs and A-Levels? So, it's like you're putting so much pressure on like one exam.

(Katherina, final interview, section 8)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Beginning to recognise their situation is caused by objective reality but often oversimplifies)

In each of these monologues, Katherina is highlighting contradictions and issues with the exam culture. She discusses the level of anxiety created by exams and the variation in questions between exam boards. She also suggests they are chosen as a form of assessment because they are easier to mark. Her reflections echo the neoliberal approach to education where exams are often used to create metrics in an attempt to quantify learning and success (Mendick *et al.*, 2015; Lynch & Hennessy, 2017). This analysis shows a move away from the culture of silence and towards conscientization.

When asked, later in the interview, why she thought we still assessed through exams, she reinforced her previous assessment:

I feel like it's the easiest way to be assessed. Because it's just like, a few ticks here and there, for the lecturers and, well I mean... I mean, it will probably take them quite a while to read it but like, I feel like it's easier than like re-watching loads of like presentations or something. Or what...I don't know.

(Katherina, final interview, section 14)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Beginning to recognise their situation is caused by objective reality but often oversimplifies)

Her response to this question shows her thinking beyond the injustice of the situation (as presented in the first interviews). Instead, she attempts to understand why exams might still be used, drawing upon both objective thinking (the practicalities of marking) with subjective thinking, when she begins to consider alternative approaches. However, her confidence in this critique appears to falter when she repeats 'I don't know'. This could be viewed in two ways. It might be a sign of her continual critique and reflection of the issue, suggesting a dialogical analysis. However, her hesitancy suggests that the oppressors' doctrine may still be conditioning.

However, there are a few sections within the final interview where these ideas are critiqued further:

I don't know what that's teaching. ... they're not testing you on literature, they're testing you on memory. Aren't they? So, what's the point in that? [laughs] literally, what is the point in...I just...it's gone a bit too...it's gone a bit silly hasn't it.

(Katherina, final interview, section 7)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problematizing reality)

Her reflection that exams purely test memorization, shows that she is beginning to question the doctrine of the elite. The combination of her comments on exams being used due to their simplicity as a tool of measurement and this question on what they are measuring, shows a development towards conscientization that was not evident in the first interview.

This level of consciousness can also be seen in the analysis interview where the topic of exams arises again.

... that's what they were thinking of bringing in, limited retakes. So, it's kind of gone a bit too much. Like what are they actually trying to get from this? ... See I don't actually see like what they're trying to gain from this?

(Katherina, analysis interview, section 8)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problematizing reality)

Katherina asks the same question twice. The normalisation and 'logic' of examinations has disintegrated, and she is questioning what she used to see as a fact.

Reading

When discussing reading, Katherina focuses on the theme of the *elitism of academic texts*.

Elitism of academic texts

In this section Katherina explores her understanding of academic texts and begins to challenge the exclusive nature of some text:

Sometimes like the journal articles are written in like a standard they know that they kind of only want... this is what my lecturer said, they only want like academic people to be able to read it [laughs] ... So, I think that's probably like an elitist point.

(Katherina, first interview, section 4)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – starts to feel something is wrong)

In the final interview, the conversation is brought back to her previous comments in the first interview. Again, she reinforces her previous point but then takes her critique further by questioning the validity of a text if it does not convey its meaning.

it's kind of like elitist isn't it. But um, which I disagree with because if you're gonna, if you're going to do this sort of thing then it should be... you should make it more open to everyone. Accessible to whatever theory you are talking about.

(Katherina, final interview, section 13)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates source of oppression)

Her analysis shows her beginning to investigate the source of her oppression (Freire, 1985).

In the analysis interviews, her narrative on academic texts provides further incite:

...like I'm just going to generalise loads and it's a major stereotype but if you have like people from poorer backgrounds who don't have so much influences from like this sort of literature, and then you come to it and they're the first generation to come to university of something and then they have like these sorts of text, no-one can really understand. None on the course can understand. And then they're trying to work out what it means. It's kind of like, what are they writing...I mean what's the point if they're only trying to get the major academics? When you should be trying to influence the people, who come into the...and the, and then they'll work up (Katherina, analysis interview, section 10)
(Code - *conscientization* – problematizes reality)

Katherina acknowledges that social economic status can impact capital (Bourdieu, 1990) and hence an individual's access to books, literature and language. She evaluates that this will then hamper an individual further, when they come to university and encounter complex text. In addition, she asks what the point of writing in this way is if writers do not provide information that people can access. This narrative shows a clear move towards conscientization. She has gone from simply repeating an idea she has been told, to problematizing this idea and extending its initial idea to consider the wider implications. Freire (1985:59) states that the longer students problematize something, the more they 'enter into the "essence" of the problematized object'. As a result of this problematization "...the conscience about the world...emerges and establishes a dialectical relationship with the world." (Freire, 1997:5)

Education

The theme of *Education* has been split into two themes: *only one way to teach* and *diagnosis in schools*.

Only teaching in one way

In the final interview, when discussing her school education, Katherina argues for there being a separate place where students can go if they are struggling with their work

I understand that money's tight and everything, but I think at the very least there should be like a place where you like go to like get help. Like academical help. So, like you can show them your essay or you can show them like whatever and you can see what you are doing wrong. Because I don't think...like obviously teachers would give

you all they could but then they have like lots of other students. So, they wouldn't actually be able to give you that time.
(Katherina, final interview, section 10)
(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – starts to feel something is wrong/ lacks structural perception)

This statement shows that Katherina is recognising an inequality, but her analysis is based on an emerging knowledge of the situation rather than a wider understanding. She does not question the one approach for all style of education and instead, is advocating the individualised, tokenistic support Ledwith (2015:9) refers to as 'placatory practice'.

In the analysis interview, her comments on education contain an interesting combination of critical reflection alongside echoing the dominant discourse.

I do think lecturers need to support a bit but if like 99% of the class can write like that, and you're the only one who can't, then I don't know if they should really facilitate for like a few people. Like you should really go back and find out what you're doing wrong.
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 7)
(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Culture of silence still conditions)

This fatalistic comment is juxtaposed by this next comment:

Yeah, I feel, I feel like it doesn't necessarily need to come down to money. If they can't actually afford study skills people then they can still give out coloured overlays and they can still like have dyslexia note books and stuff, like how to take notes. There could still be like power points and stuff. Like, so you could find out the information yourself, maybe. If they didn't actually want to give you the information or help you. Maybe they could still help people progress in other ways
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 5)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, political, economic contradictions/ Continues to question what they know)

The differences in her responses show how the culture of silence still conditions on the journey towards conscientization (Freire, 1985).

Diagnosis in Schools

Similar to the previous theme, when discussing the issue of diagnosis in school, Katherina does not mention this during the first interview. However, in the final interview, she acknowledges the lack of provision for diagnosis by saying:

I think you're automatically labelled as being stupid because the schools don't want to pay for you to get tested.

(Katherina, final interview, section 9)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question the elite)

But then I feel like schools don't want to pick it up. Like its too much work.

(Katherina, final interview, section 9)

(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, economic and political contradictions)

...even if you do really have dyslexia at school, the schools don't really give you the help you need'

(Katherina, final interview, section 9)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

She is beginning to question the lack of support she received at school, suggesting that this could be motivated by economic factors or teachers not wanting an additional workload.

However, she still accepts this situation. Here analysis shows a definite move towards conscientization but lacks understanding of the wider world.

In the Analysis interview, she takes her initial analysis further. She no longer just accepts this situation as simply the way it is, she is now reflecting upon the consequences of this lack of support:

But I feel like they could have done [offered support] ...cause obviously it wasn't just me. like how many other kids went through school not knowing?

(Katherina, analysis interview, section 5)

(Code - *conscientization* – Enters into reality/begins to make the world)

In addition, she again introduces a reflection upon the wider economic factors impacting diagnosis.

...at school, it's more like scary. Cause if you have to pay and you're not dyslexic, then it's kind of like, oh, am I just stupid? What happens now?

(Katherina, analysis interview, section 14)

(Code - *conscientization* – perceives social, political & economic contradictions)

Here, she is beginning to not only question how social economic status can impact access to diagnosis, but she also begins to question the value of that diagnosis.

She continues:

But then I feel like schools don't want to pick it up. Like its too much work.
(Katherina, final interview, section 5)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, political & economic contradictions)

Yeah, yeah, I appreciate that there's probably other factors. And parents are like, Oh, you can't do this if my child's not getting help as well. If it's not like helping my child, or whatever. So, I get that it's all chaotic.
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 5)
(Code - *conscientization* – Continues to question what they know)

I think schools don't want to have people with dyslexia because I think its too much hassle and too much money. So, they don't really want you to be dyslexic.
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 4)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, economic, political contradictions)

Katherina has moved from describing an objective situation with diagnosis in schools, to questioning and challenging the reasons behind this.

Finally, when asked in the analysis interview whether she felt her opinion had changed, she replied:

I feel like it has changed, because I didn't realise how much of an impact outside has. Like what politicians have and educationalists have ... like not as broad ... Um, yeah, politicians and stuff [pause] I feel like them saying it doesn't exist and stuff, is a load of..., it's stupid isn't it. Like, come on.
(Katherina, analysis interview, section 15)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, economic, political contradictions)

Participant 4 – Andy

Like Jean, the analysis of Andy's interviews showed a good level of critical thinking from the very beginning. This could possibly be contributed to his area of study, history and politics. However, his results in the final interviews still show a much deeper understanding from the first.

Andy's analysis will be presented in five themes: *Dyslexia, Education System, Literacy, Transformation*

Dyslexia

Andy's discussion around *dyslexia* focused on two areas: *support* and *community*.

Support

When discussing the support he received for his dyslexia, Andy states 'From going so long without having any support to like having some support it all felt a little bit weird, if that makes sense.' (1st interview, section 6, *semi-intrinsic consciousness* - Starts to feel something is wrong). He is questioning the purpose of that support and acknowledges that suddenly having support felt strange

In the final interview, a series of comments made by Andy, show that he has continued to question the form that this dyslexia support takes:

One in four people are dyslexic so, I think there must be, what...only 100 people who get study support? I don't know the exact thing, you'd probably have a better idea than me but there's a lot more people effected by dyslexia that may not ever know, will know. And I think it's about time we bring this to the for front of people's minds (Andy, final interview, section 4)
(Code - *conscientization* – Continues to question what they know)

Andy is questioning whether the system is providing support for everyone who needs it. He is highlighting how individualised support will not help those who are undiagnosed.

In addition, later in the final interview, he challenges the universities use of learning agreements (documentation produced by the university outlining reasonable adjustments for students) as a means of informing teaching staff how to support a student.

And I think, that's what worries me sometimes when I look at learning agreements; they're a standard default of what we are as people. They're just very generic and people will think oh well ...But something needs to be done! [said with emphasis]
(Andy, final interview, section 14)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives, social, economic and political contradictions)

Andy uncovers many issues with individualised dyslexia support, finishing his critique with a rallying cry that 'something needs to be done'. From the first to the final interview, Andy has gone from having a feeling that something is a bit 'weird' about the support offered to beginning to uncover what causes the problems and wanting to take action to change this. His transformation exemplifies the steps required for conscientization (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1992)

This passion for transformation is further exemplified in this next section from the final interview:

and I'd like to think that this time next year, we'd be sat in a better place where perhaps we would have been able to challenge some of the problems we've...this un...I'm not saying this university is failing, cause it's not failing. It's doing a very good job and I can't fault Student Services at all, for the support I've had over the past three years. But it's that sort of, ensuring the learning agreement is right, ensuring the lecturers are sticking to it. Making sure lectures are aware, you know...those sorts of things which I really think... I know I've got the hunger and drive for it after coming to all these sessions. And certainly, at the end of my little bit on Tuesday [when Andy spoke at the Dyslexics Untie event] but, I just hope it can carry on with the sort of cannon ball that we've given it

(Andy, final interview, section 4)

(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives, social, economic and political contradictions)

Community

Andy discusses community and collective dialogue, frequently throughout his interviews. However, there is an interesting difference between how he relates this area in the first interview (shown below) and his focus in the latter interviews.

And um, looking at other people in the world who have got dyslexia and thinking oh well, they've managed to accomplish that and in that high field. So, it must be able to be done

(Andy, first interview, section 11)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates source of oppression)

In the first interview, when discussing the wider dyslexic community, he describes individuals within that community, rather than a cohesive collective. He also focuses his attention on *exceptional* individuals who are also frequently highlighted in the press (Alexander-Passe, 2016). However, during the Analysis interview, his community is formed by those around him:

I think so. I think it's a, I think it's that sitting with a fantastic group of people. And learning just how brilliant, you know, people's minds can be. For far too long we've been told dyslexic students, you know, can't achieve, you know, can't achieve very much. Won't get to the top grades. May not push those first-class honours but we've learnt in the last twelve weeks that we're great at problem solving, we're very highly opinionated, and we love making things happen. You know. It's that really, it's that sort of imagination. That sort of idea.

(Andy, analysis interview, section 13)

(Code - *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

His perception of dyslexia is now been constructed through his interactions with other dyslexic students, rather than stories he has heard through the mass media (Freire, 1974). It is also interesting to note that he frequently uses the term 'we', suggesting recognition of belonging to a community. Freire (1974) argues that conscientization can only take place as part of a collective. He states, 'It is the "we think" which establishes the "I think" and not the contrary' (Freire, 1974:124). It is through our interactions with others that our knowledge of objective reality grows and continues to grow. Freire (1974:124) suggests that the object then becomes 'the mediator of communication'.

Andy expands upon this notion when he states:

Yeah. And again, I think that for me is the transition of coming to terms with what dyslexia is and excepting it in the wider world and that sort of 'it's not just me'. Its...its...everyone has to some extent, dyslexia. And, yeah, again. I probably was a bit down in the dumps to start with, when you start finding out. And um, I don't know. My mind has been opened again. [laughs]
(Andy, analysis interview, section 6)
(Code - *conscientization* – Recognise that they are conditioned)

Andy talks about understanding dyslexia within the wider world and how this has helped him to re-evaluate his own dyslexia. He remarks how engaging in the workshops has 'opened his mind', echoing Freire's (1974:31) notion of conscientization widening our perceptions. Freire writes, "...the development of their language...finally showed them that the lovelier world to which they aspired was being announced, somehow anticipated, in their imagination."

Education System

Andy's discussion on the education system is divided into four areas: *diagnosis*, *grades*, *systems/pedagogy* and *assessment*.

Diagnosis

When discussing his diagnosis, from the first interview, Andy talks about his frustration at not being diagnosed earlier. In this first section, he begins by discussing his teachers' response to his diagnosis:

...we didn't realise you didn't have it because you were so good at talking and like were able to cover it up really well, you know. It was that sort of, I don't know, it's just...well we thought you were a good student, so we didn't think you had any sort of problems or things. Whereas I think that really does address that there is diversity in the academic world
(Andy, first interview, section 4)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

His retelling of his teachers' response implies that his teachers embraced a familiar narrative around dyslexia; to be dyslexic means to be unable (Tamboer *et al.*, 2014, Threlkeld, 2015). This is a notion that Andy challenges when he reminds us that there is diversity in academia. The implication being that we should not judge intelligence based on a single criterion (Silverman, 2009; Shearer & Karanian, 2017). Andy's comments show that he is critically reflecting upon his situation. However, his analysis is based on his personal sphere and does not yet draw on knowledge of the wider world.

When asked how this made him feel, he responds:

I think a little bit of anger that it had taken so long ... I look back on it now and I think actually, I'm quite...in some respects, I'm quite happy because it made me work hard and sort of, have that sort of relief that this is something I have got but have been able to cope with for so long

(Andy, first interview, section 5)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

Andy shows his frustration at not being assessed earlier but then seeks to justify it by saying how he then adjusted himself by working harder, to enable him to manage within a neuro-typical system. He reflects Freire's (1974) assertion that the oppressed will adjust themselves to fit the oppressive situation. However, it is interesting to note the effect his diagnosis had on him, when he finally received it, as outlined below.

now I understand why perhaps my grammar doesn't make sense and why I can't...why my phonics don't work and why perhaps I feel a bit conscious for allowing other people to view my work and stuff

(Andy, first interview, section 5)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Echoes dominant culture)

Rather than rallying his passion for change within the system, his diagnosis acts to pacify him. It focuses the "blame" for his struggles on his own "deficits". His passion for change is directed towards faster diagnosis, more understanding of the cognitive deficits of dyslexic students. This is exemplified in his statement 'couldn't this have been done earlier?' (Andy, first interview, section 6, Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

It is interesting that this direction of thought has continued into the final interview.

Yeah, I think so, instead of doing, now this may seem quite a radical idea, but we do so many tests of children, why don't we, instead of a SATS test in year six, why don't we test every student for dyslexia by giving them a simple test? ... I know people will be showing earlier signs before then, but it ensures, no one else gets missed through the barrier.

(Andy, final interview, section 12)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to recognise their situation is caused by objective reality BUT often oversimplifies)

This statement shows a continuation of the belief that diagnosis is key to accessing an education. However, it also shows a transition from a simple cry for change (in the first interview) to a clear suggestion of what that change should look like. Andy also suggests a change that is based on a wider critique of the grading and assessment system within education, questioning why we consistently test for academic ability but not dyslexia.

Grades

In this section, Andy discusses his view on academic grades.

So, I remember receiving my AS Level results and being absolutely upset...very upset cause obviously, you put all the work in, and I hadn't achieved the grades I'd wanted. It was quite a drop in grades. It was still good grades, but they weren't like the grades that I thought I would be able to achieve. So, it's that sort of...you start to sort of question yourself.

(Andy, first interview, section 5)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Adjusts himself)

Andy's reaction to not achieving the grades he wanted is to question what is "wrong" with him, rather than question the way he was taught. His narrative also suggests that grades are the end goal of education, the indicator of success.

This idea is challenged in the final interview. Andy still expresses an interest in grades but extends this focus to present a much wider interpretation of education.

... although I may leave education in two weeks' time, I'm still going to be inspired to learn new things and want to do new things and have those skills and progress. So, its social and it's your learning impact and then its grades, yeah.

(Andy, final interview, section 10)

(Code - *conscientization* – Engages in a dialectic of consciousness and the world)

Dialogue with others in the group have constructed his opinions of education beyond his immediate world, to include areas such as the social and lifelong learning. In this narrative, grades are presented as one aspect in a list of many qualities. His critical engagement with the world and with others, as well as taking action upon that world (cumulating in the Dyslexic's Untie evening) has expanded his view. Freire (1970) argues that these are the conditions needed to develop conscientization. He suggests conscientization exists only when 'I not only recognise but also experiment with the dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity, reality and consciousness, practice and theory' (Freire, 1970:168).

System/Pedagogy

In the first interview, Andy reflects upon his education, stating 'I think the sense of feeling a bit let down by the whole system of how this thing works. (Andy, first interview, section 6 - Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – starts to feel something is wrong/lacks structural perception). This feeling is further expanded upon in subsequent statements:

I think it's also partly down to how we're taught at a young age and perhaps the ability to adapt a bit further to try and help all these individuals, instead of teaching in a one-way system perhaps.

(Andy, first interview, section 10)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

His comments on the education system suggest that he is already beginning to question the normality of how we teach in this 'one-way system'. He further challenges the status quo when he argues for alternative ways of assessing what students know.

So, I don't know if its perhaps, having to break the mould somehow in the academic, more academic subjects to try and push for perhaps learning differences to try and give the opportunity for, perhaps for people who are not able to write, put things down on paper to give them another way of doing it.

(Andy, first interview, section 10)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begin to recognise their situation caused by objective reality but often oversimplification)

Here, he talks about 'breaking the mould' and giving students alternate ways to express their knowledge. He expresses ideas frequently posited by advocates of Universal Design for Learning (Wray *et al.*, 2019, Moriarty & Scarffe, 2019) demonstrating his willingness to think outside of the norm.

In this final section from the first interview, Andy presents another problem he has identified within the current system. He then discusses another trope of Freire's (1974) when he describes how he adapted himself to cope with this issue.

...thinking that everyone else was doing these extra hours taking, when we used to get set a text, and taking in 20 pages, thinking it would take around two and a half hours for everyone else to read 'cause it was so dense and detailed. But actually, it was just me. You were just that calm swan [Andy], everyone thought you were coping well with the whole being able to talk well, being able to show your stuff well. Showing you were coping and under control. Handing stuff in on time but actually, I believe you had...spinning plates probably.

(Andy, first interview, section 12)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

In the final interview, his discussion on education does not simply describe the objective problems. This time, his comments include a passionate pitch for change:

I think, personally for me its seeing Senior Management sitting down after we've done a couple more events and we've, having the opportunity to sit down with them and look through the policies of the university and how it handles dyslexia and say, actually, from what we've seen and from what our studies say, this isn't right. This is a good start, a good starting place. However, this is not being effective. And Its not impacting in the right way to ensure our dyslexic...our students with dyslexia have that opportunity to grow and push themselves forward.

(Andy, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *conscientization* – Enters into reality/begins to make the world)

This is continued later in the interview, when he discusses the 'boundaries' put up by the notion of normality and what it means to be considered intelligent in academia. A concept equally explored by Cameron (2017):

... ensuring the boundaries that are in place aren't boundaries because that is how the academic world sees them. Its more the point of the boundaries can be pushed.

(Andy, final interview, section 7)

(Code - *conscientization* – Understands engages in dialectic of consciousness and the world/Perceives social, political, economic contradictions)

With this statement, he shows his understanding of the oppressive nature of academia for dyslexic students and how the normality of academia creates boundaries or barriers for those who do not conform. He also suggests how these boundaries are social constructs of the academic community and that these constructs can be deconstructed. He continues this argument when he states:

We pay a lot of money to come here and have this support. Have this access to information. But if it's not been given to us on a fair playing field, how can we move forward?

(Andy, final interview, section 8)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problimitises reality)

In addition to these rallying cries for change, Andy also makes suggestions for specific changes he believes will transform the system. He discusses Learning Agreements, stating:

And sometimes I feel, especially when it comes to Learning Agreements, with written assignments um, they're not treated as well as they should be.

(Andy, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problimitises reality)

In addition, a discussion on assessment leads to the interesting question:

But who's that to decide what the next step or what the standard of knowledge is.

(Andy, final interview, section 11)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problimitises reality)

Andy's expansion from identifying issues within the education system, to pinpointing areas for transformation, demonstrates that he has engaged in a closer investigation of the world around him, interrogating both his objective reality and the subjective. Freire (1985:169) argues that conscientization cannot develop when we simply reveal the world. Instead, it requires us to 'experience the revelation of the real world as a dynamic and dialectical unity with the actual transformation of reality.'

Andy continues to exemplify this when he says:

I really think the education system needs to shake itself up a little bit and look at itself and ensure that people don't fall through the net. Because it can happen.

(Andy, final interview, section 11)

(Code - *conscientization* – Enters into reality/begins to make the world)

In the analysis interview, these ideas continue to define his view of what the education system should be about:

Cause the British education system, as we know, it's not learning an answer and sitting in a classroom twenty four hours a day, it's getting those skills for emotion,

those personal, interpersonal skills, help you grow as a person and, as I say, we test people for so much on their...[doesn't finish sentence] why don't we start to help people out a bit further?

(Andy, analysis interview, section 10)

(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, political, economic contradictions)

He recognises the contradiction between an education system that values memorisation skills over the development of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence and one that continues to grade.

Assessment

The following comments show Andy's questioning of the assessment practices in most UK universities.

I think, I really do enjoy presentations and being able to speak my mind and sort of...but when it comes down to written assessments and exams, I always hate them 'cause I don't, I feel that sort of lack of being able to explain an argument.

(Andy, first interview, section 9)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny)

but I think perhaps more could be done in the university environment for perhaps putting a bit more weight on presentations and perhaps other ways, like oral exams like a one to one base interview.

(Andy, first interview, section 10)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

Andy is beginning to recognise the injustice of predominantly being assessed through a written form as this approach does not give him the opportunity to show what he knows and reinforces a discourse of lexism (Collinson, 2014)

In the final interview, this argument is developed:

We write essays for a pompous reason really. It's all pretty much a tick in the box, it's a checklist of "yes" this student is matching the level their potential. It's the only way we can present and show, I think, to the best of our abilities a test of time of knowledge, a test of time of understanding. And also, it's just there as evidence of when you've done so why is this a first-class degree?

(Andy, final interview, section 10)

(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, political, economic contradictions)

This sample shows Andy debating the reasoning behind the use of essays, suggesting that they are perceived to provide a measure of the student's knowledge at a fixed point in time. He

argues that this benefits the university as it allows them a fixed record, a snapshot of their students' ability. When asked why he thinks this approach is used, he states:

Well, it's the way it's set up really, unfortunately. The way all education systems are set up is to progress to the next level, you need to get a certain level of grade
(Andy, final interview, section 10)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understands and engages in the dialectic of consciousness and the world)

His response shows the depth of his critical reflection upon the world. He has challenged the equity of the assessment method but also recognises how this approach could benefit those in power. However, his final statement does suggest an element of fatalism, that this is the way it has always been.

He continues his critique by stating:

I really think the education system needs to shake itself up a little bit and look at itself and ensure that people don't fall through the net. Because it can happen. especially when people are seen to be knowledgeable or able to communicate well and they can just disappear. But on your point of question papers, it's really hard to think what other question paper you could set up. Because as much as I'd like to say, an A-Level exam could be multiple choice, it really can't because it's not displaying that next standard of knowledge that you need to move onto the next step. But who's that to decide what the next step or what the standard of knowledge is.
(Andy, final interview, section 11)
(Code - *conscientization* – Continues to question what he knows)

Andy discusses multiple issues. He begins to tackle how the education system perceives intelligence, retelling how he was always perceived to be an able student due to his clarity with spoken language. He makes an interesting analysis when he states how this enables him to remain invisible and 'disappear', a point echoing Riddell & Weedon's (2014) remarks on invisibility. He then critiques the idea of an alternative form of assessment, suggesting that this might not show 'that next level of knowledge'. He recognises that despite the challenges that essay writing brings, it does necessitate that students engage in critical thinking, showing a knowledge 'above' that of pure memorisation.

He expands this analysis in his next statement. He shows that he believes that changing the assessment process, will also require a change in the whole degree system.

so, I think like essays, unfortunately, I still probably hold quite firmly that they are the right way to go. As much as I would like to see module degree programs and making sure there's a variety there, unfortunately, essays will always be the solid answer to go to. I think again, it's that level we're at, and until we look differently at how we look at our degree system itself, and whether we go down the route of whether it's a bit more research based, and it's down to the individual or whether we except this style of traditional system of writing essays
(Andy, final interview, section 15)
(Code - *conscientization* – Problematizing reality)

This analysis suggests that he views essay writing as a necessary component of the degree system. His comments show that his conclusions have been drawn not from a position of fatalism, but from a critical analysis of the situation, employing both subjectivity and objectivity to reflect upon the situation.

Literacy

In this section from the first interview, Andy again discusses assessment.

I recently had an essay back thinking oh that flowed really well but the, obviously my tutor didn't think that was the case, he couldn't follow my argument. Whereas I thought my argument was quite clear. So again, I think one of the differences is the way people write and read and I think it, spelling mistakes was, spelling was quite a key one I think as well ... That sort of thing, so I think it's probably down to myself
(Andy, first interview, section 8)
(Code - *culture of silence* –Echoes dominant culture)

Andy provides an objective description of what happens when his knowledge is assessed through an essay. As an individual with dyslexia he often presents an argument in a format that is clear to him but that neuro-typical lecturers are unable to understand. What is interesting is that he then instantly confesses that the cause of this misunderstanding is his own doing. He blames the way he writes and spells and finishes by saying 'it's probably down to myself'. He reiterates this point further, when he states:

So, one of my key weaknesses is probably my phonics and sometimes it inhibits the ability to communicate well on paper. The grammar, punctuation, spelling is also weak
(1st interview, section 12)
(Code - *culture of silence* - Echoes dominant culture)

Yeah. And I, and not having the best handwriting as well. I don't know if that had an impact as well, perhaps it was a bit scruffy at times.
(1st Interview, section 9)
(Code - *culture of silence* - Echoes dominant culture)

When asked why we write essays, he states:

Yes, um. I suppose it's the best way of having a record of the work that's done in the academic way ... so I'd probably say history, law, English are very written based cause that's how the academic world works
(Andy, first interview, section 10)
(Code - *culture of silence* –Echoes dominant culture)

He again repeats the point discussed in the *Assessment* section, by relating the discussion back to the university needing to record and measure what students are perceived to know. He also uses the term 'academic' as a benchmark, presenting the term as a standard, for which quality is assessed against.

In the final interview, Andy's argument changes.

It's just a really hard thing to think, you know when [pause] someone who's dyslexic, you think you write an essay, you think actually, I've made a really good, this is a really good essay, I know what I'm saying. You get something back and it says, 'I couldn't follow your argument', I couldn't do this' and your like...but that's the best of my abi!...that's the best I could have...that's the best I could have done ... But then that's one of the things this university sells itself on, is being a small university and feeling part of a group and part of a family. So, if that's...if that's what were...the brand we're trying to sell, we've really got to look at things like this and make sure it's working properly.
(Andy, final interview, section 6)
(Code - *conscientization* - Problemitizes reality)

He reiterates the same story but this time, he concludes with an acknowledgement that this approach is not working and a plea for transformation.

He continues this line of thought when he shifts from blaming himself, to offering suggestions to academics on how *they* need to change:

It's just engaging and switching on and being aware that writing is more about the arguments made rather than how you write it, if that makes sense.
(Andy, final interview, section 7)
(Code - *conscientization* - Problemitises reality/Questions what they know)

What is interesting is that as well as recognising the need for the institution to change, in the final interview, Andy is also recognising his own conditioning. He states:

So, I don't know if it's that sort of social standard. That I feel I want to show people that I'm amazing, I'm brilliant all the time. That actually, if you start looking at my written work, it starts to crumble away, what I feel about myself and how proud I am of my education. So, I think it's that sort of fear of people judging and that. So, I've always for a long long time now, the only people who get to see my assignments now are lecturers or occasionally, I'll do a little extract for T. (Andy's dyslexia tutor)
(Andy, final interview, section 13)
(Code - *conscientization* - Recognises they are conditioned)

He describes the need to be perfect, as a way of hiding his dyslexia. He recognises that he has been conditioned to believe that not getting everything 'perfect' with his writing, constitutes failure. He also says how this has led him to hide his writing from many people. This constitutes a form of self-exclusion, a desire to remain invisible so as not to be found out. This again reinforces Riddell & Weedon's (2014) concept of invisibility. In addition, Andy's recognition of his conditioning exemplifies another of Freire's (1985) requirements for conscientization.

Transformation

This theme will be presented in three sections: *dialogue*, *community* and *transformation/action*.

Dialogue

In both the final and analysis interview, Andy shows how he is aware of the need for collective dialogue. In the final interview he discusses the value of bringing people together through the Dyslexics Untie evening.

It was nice to see people engaging and actually wanting to speak and talk about their situation. And I think the fact we picked up a couple of new members as well, was even better.
(Andy, final interview, section 2)
(Code - *conscientization* - Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

I think that networking sense worked as well. So, networking, awareness, um...although we were pushing towards challenging things, it's still at the early days of that sort of challenging area.
(Andy, final interview, section 3)
(Code - *conscientization* - Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

In the analysis interview, when discussing the changes in his comments from the first to the final interviews, he states that he believes it was through dialogue with others that his opinions changed.

That there (pointing at transcript) that instance there, that DSA chat in week five. That's definitely probably what's highlighted that change.

(Andy, analysis interview, section 5)

(Code - *conscientization* - Enters into reality/begins to make the world, Sees the world differently)

Transformation/action

As well as the awareness of community, Andy's comments in the final and analysis interviews were full of calls for transformation:

I think even holding an event like that says a lot [pause] that perhaps something needs to be done about dyslexia at this university

(Andy, final interview, section 3)

(Code - *conscientization* - Enters into reality/begins to make the world)

No, I'd like to think this is a stepping stone, a laying the foundation brick for something else to push on forward. I know we spoke yesterday highly about perhaps doing something in May. I think we've really got to push for that Awareness Week in October (Dyslexia Awareness Week).

(Andy, final interview, section 4)

(Code - *conscientization* - Understands/engages in the dialectic of consciousness and the world)

In the analysis interview, we discussed these changes in his narrative. He commented:

No, no. Now I understand when we see the papers and we see, 'Oh, so and so's turned on what they were saying, its completely happened in what, seven weeks.

(Andy, analysis interview, section 5)

(Code - *conscientization* - Problimitizes reality)

I *honestly* honestly didn't think it was going to be that much of a change ... I, I, I feel like I've genuinely gone round the...do you know what I mean? Like I was on one path and then I just changed into another lane. [laughs] Yeah, it's fascinating.

(Andy, analysis interview, section 13)

(Code - *conscientization* - Enters into reality begins to make the world)

Andy finishes by making a very interesting statement:

I think there is an ability to change. I think it's more about being pragmatic than it is having an ideology base.

(Andy, analysis interview, section 10)

(Code - *conscientization* - Enters into reality begins to make the world)

This final statement could imply that Andy believes the road to change involves a pragmatic, objective approach. However, given his previous statements, challenging the norms or literacy and assessment, it could be concluded that Andy has begun to recognise the balance of subjectivity and objectivity that Freire (1970, 1985) suggests is needed in order to initiate transformation and move away from oppression.

Participant 5 – Debbie

Debbie's conversations focused around dyslexia. She is an undergraduate psychology student who is studying dyslexia for her dissertation. Therefore, her understanding of dyslexia, at the beginning of this process, has primarily been constructed through a medical model lens.

Debbie's analysis will be presented in five themes: *Dyslexia, Education Reading, Community, Workplace*.

Dyslexia

Debbie's discussion begins with general comments around *dyslexia* and then moves on to a more specific discussion on *diagnosis*.

Dyslexia

In the first interview, Debbie's opening remarks about dyslexia highlight her initial approach to managing her dyslexia, that of adaption. She states, 'Like over the years I've learnt various ways to work around it' (Debbie, first interview, section 4, Code - *culture of silence* - Adjusts herself to fit oppressors' world). She positions her dyslexia as a defect within herself that she has to adjust to. This is exemplified further in her description of her dad's dyslexia:

We think my dad's probably dyslexic as well. Off course when he was at school, dyslexia wasn't a thing. Um, and he's an accountant now so he very much deals with numbers and not letters. And handwriting's appalling, spelling's not good.

(Debbie, first interview, section 9)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* - Starts to feel something is wrong)

Her description of his dyslexia is an interesting combination of a medical and social constructivist model. Firstly, she asserts that his dyslexia 'was not a thing' when he was at school, suggesting that the label had not been applied to the difference. Secondly, she implies that his dyslexia does not impact his job as he works primarily with numbers, suggesting that

dyslexia is socially constructed by the situation we find ourselves in. However, her final comments reinforce the medical model of dyslexia when she comments on his spelling and handwriting being poor as a result of his dyslexia. Her juxtaposition between the two models suggests she is negotiating her position on dyslexia.

Debbie then goes on to discuss how others around her understand dyslexia, distancing herself from a more personal narrative. She discusses a presentation she gave to her peers about dyslexia:

so many of my friends afterwards were like 'we didn't quite realise exactly how it did effect, dyslexia'.

(Debbie, first interview, section 8)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* - Starts to feel something is wrong)

She is beginning to recognise people's lack of awareness of dyslexia and her actions suggest a desire to change this. She goes onto suggest her frustration at how the topic of dyslexia is often taught by those who lack personal experience.

I think last year, it had been more of a like 'this is the information, this is how you help them, sort of thing.

(Debbie, first interview, section 8)

(Code - *culture of silence* - Begins to question elite)

In the final interview, the focus changes to a recognition of the need to expand people's knowledge of dyslexia. She states:

I think just, with dyslexia, for being like more awareness of it in general, everywhere I think, um, can never be a bad thing. Um, and then that just I think helps the people with dyslexia to be more confident in saying 'yes I do have it. And I do have these issues. But, I'm good at these things.'

(Debbie, final interview, section 9)

(Code - *conscientization* - Understands conscientization can only take pace as a collective)

In discussing the importance of raising awareness within society, Debbie demonstrates an understanding of the necessity of raising consciousness as a collective. Freire (1985:125), comments that '...no one conscientizes anyone else. The educator and the people together conscientize themselves...'. Debbie acknowledges how this not only helps raise awareness as a society, but also how it raises consciousness in those with dyslexia.

Her description of dyslexia is also much more varied, in the final interview.

But it effects, well, pretty much everything ... Because of it being such a broad spectrum ... Um, its generally language focused. But yeah, it's really hard to attach a couple of those deficits to the definition because yes, properly ninety-nine percent of dyslexics have difficulties in their spelling but there's probably a couple that for some reason spelling just clicked but their reading is awful, or their handwriting is atrocious or they have no working memory. So, I think there's always exceptions
(Debbie, final interview, section 11)
(Code - *conscientization* – Sees the world differently)

This shows a quite a change from her previous explanation of her dad's dyslexia. She acknowledges the variation in how the condition affects various individuals, showing a perception that has been constructed through conversation with others.

In the analysis interview, her discussion on dyslexia was sparked by a discussion of the project as a whole. She states:

Yeah, it's been quite nice timing and its things like we'd be talking about like an issue that we might have in the group like the whole balance and coordination thing and then I was reading about the whole cerebellum deficit hypothesis. And I went, oh [laughs], that explains that then. Um, yeah, so it was quite handy.
(Debbie, analysis interview, section 2)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take pace as a collective)

She again discusses the value of group discussions and how this has expanded her understanding. She states how the group discussions have enabled her to bring together her own experience of dyslexia, experiences of her peers and her own studies, to develop her worldview. Freire (1970, 1985) argues that this collective construction of knowledge is, formed in the dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity, is vital to building conscientization.

During the analysis interview, I showed Debbie my preliminary analysis of how her narrative on dyslexia had changed. She responded:

Um I view it [dyslexia] as a lot more complex now than I did before... And having questions from the buddies and having to like answer those. That I'd had to think about that sort of thing already which I think explains why I didn't change as much but I hadn't had the conversations with other dyslexics so much.
(Debbie, analysis interview, section 6)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take pace as a collective)

She acknowledges that she was already engaged in reflection around dyslexia before the project as she has been involved in training others about dyslexia. However, it is interesting to

note that she stresses a difference in the experience of being able to dialogue with other dyslexics (as opposed to simply transmitting information to others as part of a training session). This shows a shift from a purely objective understanding of dyslexia to the beginnings of incorporating subjectivity into her analysis.

Diagnosis

Debbie's discussion of dyslexia diagnosis is informative. She only mentions this during the final interview so there are no comments from the first or analysis interview in which to form a comparison. However, her incites during the final interview, suggests that the culture of silence may still be conditioning. When discussing learning her multiplication tables, she states:

But I just could not get them down fast enough ... But then when I got my diagnosis, I was just like, Oh, so that explains why that... I was just never good at getting my times table down fast enough and mental maths, so it just provides a bit of an explanation to help the student's self-esteem.

(Debbie, final interview, section 5)

(Code – *culture of silence* – Echoes dominant culture)

Her comments suggest that the diagnosis served as an explanation to her for what she perceives as her own failing. This 'explanation' then serves the purpose of pacifying. It is viewed as a finite answer, a scientifically derived explanation that requires no further questioning. Freire (1985:78) discusses how the oppressors will often provide 'superficial transformations' with the aim of pacifying the resistance of the oppressed. Given Debbie's comments on her diagnosis, it could be argued that dyslexia diagnosis is taking a similar role. She states that it serves to help a person's self-esteem by providing a "scientific" reason for their failure. This serves to ensure that the blame is put squarely on the individual and halts any examination of the impact of a system designed only to allow neuro-typical individuals to succeed. Freire (1985:86) also highlights how science can be used to pacify, when he states:

... the right subordinate science and technology to its own ideology, using them to disseminate information and prescriptions in its effort to adjust the people to the reality the "communications" media define as proper.

The pacifying nature of dyslexia diagnosis is becoming a familiar theme within the interviews (see also Katherina and Andy's analysis).

Debbie's next statement reinforces the rigidity of the current support system:

well it [the diagnosis] unlocks a lot of support. Um, and I get because of funding reasons, you do have to have a cut of point as to like who gets supports and who doesn't

(Debbie, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Culture of silence still conditions)

She describes a system where access to an education is essentially 'locked down' until an individual jumps through a series of hoops. A process that will conclude by categorically stating that the cause of their disengagement with education, is the result of their own inadequacies, a result of them being an *other*. No affirmation is given to the idea of teaching individuals with dyslexia in a way that allows them to learn.

However, Debbie begins to highlight the contradiction with this ideology, when she discusses the reluctance of her primary school to offer her an education she could engage with, unless she declared herself an *other*.

But, without saying that I was dyslexic, I couldn't get one to one support in my primary school. They put me in every other support group going [laughs]. I was in the PAT group [a system for teaching phonics] for the PAT sheets and everything they were already doing but they wouldn't say I was dyslexic because then they'd have to give me one to one for, I don't know, half an hour an hour a week or something.

(Debbie, final interview, section 6)

(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, political, economic contradictions)

Interestingly, when Debbie encounters a situation when her school provides a more suitable educational approach (via PAT support), she responds with a desire for individualised support instead. Perhaps this shows a desire for the oppressors' world a phenomenon frequently described by Freire (1970, 1985).

Education

The topic of *Education* will be presented around two themes: *the education system* and *dyslexia in education*.

The Education System

When discussing reading academic texts, Debbie states:

And I don't know if it's just, like, motivation to do it and to keep going, when it's like sometimes they're a bit more dry. Um, but I, yeah, I really struggle with to, like to, to stay on top with that and to just do it in the first place.

(Debbie, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Adjusts herself to fit oppressor’s world)

As with her discussion on diagnosis, Debbie states the cause of her difficulties to be a problem with her, in this case her motivation. She describes many academic texts as being ‘dry’ but rather than questioning why they are written in an uninteresting and inaccessible way, (a point of particular concern when we consider the purpose of academic texts to be to convey information) she instantly looks for a fault within herself.

In the final interview, there is a shift in her perception when she discusses the education system, ‘There are definitely things they should be doing to make learning dyslexia friendly (Debbie, final interview, section 6 - Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Begins to question the elite). She shifts the focus from an analysis of what is ‘wrong’ with her, to a focus on the system and its need to change. However, her use of the term ‘they’ suggest that she feels it is only those in power who are able to make this change, positioning herself as powerless. Freire (2014) counters this by suggesting that oppressors should not be involved in the process of liberation. He suggests that they dare not think ‘with the people’ or their belief in their right to dominate would begin to unravel (Freire, 2014:112). Therefore, they must maintain the discourse that places the responsibility for their failure, on those the system has failed (Freire, 1991).

When asked why she thought she had not received a ‘dyslexia friendly’ education she replies ‘I don't know whether it was because they didn't have the funding or the resources or the time or what it was. Um, but, they...they wouldn't. Um, so, yeah... [tails off]’ (Debbie, final interview, section 6 - Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigate source of oppression) Her response offers an attempt to provide an excuse for her teachers in not providing her with an accessible education. However, her narrative then stops, before questioning why, for example, the resources, funding and time were only directed towards neurotypical students.

Her narrative in this section has transformed from an objective reflection of the barriers in education to beginning to ascertain the reason for these barriers. However, her analysis does not quite go far enough to suggest conscientization, as her responses still echo the ideas of the elite.

Dyslexia in Education

Despite occasionally accepting the prescriptions of the dominant culture, Debbie also showed many examples of questioning the system. When discussing some feedback she had received, she states:

I recently had a comment saying, 'despite your dyslexia its *actually* fairly well written'. That's not really necessary (laughs). If it's fairly well written, you don't need to comment ... So just because I'd put...like cause my sticker was there and cause I'd that I have dyslexia. It doesn't necessarily have to have a comment relating to it. *If* there was a situation where it does, it said well, maybe consider your spelling or grammar whatever, like fair enough but it shouldn't be like the first thing my lecturers go to, comment on (laughs)

(Debbie, first interview, section 2)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

Debbie challenges the practice of being defined by a label. She has picked up on the subtle undertone of her lecturer's comment and challenged this implicit bias. This shows that in this instance, she has moved beyond the culture of silence to a place where she is not just questioning the elite but also calling for change.

Her comments in the final interview continue this narrative of questioning the status quo. However, this time, her discussion shows a wider understanding of the complexity of inclusion.

Um, there are adjustments that can be made up to a certain extent. But dyslexia's such a wide spectrum. It, even if like two people had the level of dyslexia if you like, um, they'd still have different strengths and weaknesses because one of them might have really bad working memory but be slightly better at the processing side of it. Whereas another person could have a major weakness here. So, the same...no one has the same issues. Um, or if they do, ones a really severe issue and one's mild. So, its...there are things that can be done to help all of them...*but*, I think...there must be two dyslexics that have exactly the same issues but, in order to pair them up, yeah, [goes quiet] I think would be a big challenge.

(Debbie, final interview, section 7)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problematizing)

In this narrative, Debbie she shows how she is problematizing the issue, instead of presenting it as a perceived and static fact. Her narrative weaves between different representations of dyslexia as she explores whether an inclusive education is possible. She concludes, not with an objective representation of the truth, but by stating the challenge.

Reading

Debbie's discussion of reading begins from a position of questioning.

I have to read every single word. I can't skip any words really, because I get confused and I have to just read it all again. Um, so it just takes a long time ... I think lecturers don't really appreciate how long it takes *all* students but especially students with additional needs like dyslexia.

(Debbie, first interview, section 6)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates the source of oppression)

She is already questioning the fairness of the established system, where knowledge is assumed to be acquired through reading as a primary source. However, in the final interview, this questioning has been developed into action. Here she discusses something that could transform the reading experience of dyslexic students.

I think like having like a box in the library of um coloured overlays, that sort of thing, which all students could benefit from ... Like, its little things...just having a little box on the library desk, isn't a difficult thing to do. But it would just make everything just more dyslexia friendly.

(Debbie, final interview, section 8)

(Code - *conscientization* – Enters into reality, begins to make the world)

This shift from pointing out the problem to deciding on action shows a gradual move towards conscientization.

Community

As with other participants, Debbie engaged in the theme of community during her final and analysis interviews. In this section, she discusses the impact of conversation with others within the dyslexic student community.

So, yeah, I think my knowledge definitely grew a lot over this semester ... Hearing other people's experience of it, which sometimes are completely opposite of mine. So, I just really think, paired with all of this research into empirical studies, into the biology of it and like brain imaging, all of that sort of thing. Um its, yeah, I've definitely learnt a lot

(Debbie, analysis interview, section 2)

(Code - *conscientization* – Understands/engages in the dialectic of consciousness and the world)

Through her discussion, Debbie exemplifies how she is now employing both objectivity and subjectivity when engaging with the world. She discusses the impact of engaging with other people's subjective perspectives and experiences, widening her view of the world. At the

same time, she discusses how she paired this with the development of her objective understanding of dyslexia through psychology journals and biological research. Although Freire (1985) cautions over the way science can sometimes be a tool for the oppressors, Debbie's use of her scientific knowledge is being applied in conjunction with critical reflection. This process exemplifies Freire's (1970) insistence that the objective and the subjective must be explored in the dialectic, in order to gain true conscientization.

She goes on to discuss a course of action that could continue this transformation.

Um, I think...so it would be really nice to have a...so sort of like what we've done, but go for, have like a dyslexic society ... So, I think that's quite a big thing. And its been really nice this year, like properly getting to know other students ... Um, so I think like having that peer support network, is probably one of the biggest things, um, that I think I would have liked, um, from my time here
(Debbie, final interview, section 8)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understand conscientization can only take place as a collective)

In this statement, Debbie shows her understanding of the necessity of community and collective action for transformation.

Workplace

Although these statements are both from the final interview, and therefore do not show any direct change, they have been included here as they show the continuing transformative process of conscientization.

In this section, Debbie discusses her future in the workplace:

Um, I think I'd be more confident going into the workplace now than I was before university. Partly because my confidence has grown but also, I think partly because of the project that we've been doing. Talking to others, and particularly [a participant who also works]. And he has had, it sounds like, a positive experience of having dyslexia and declaring it so confidently in the workplace
(Debbie, final interview, section 9)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understand conscientization can only take place as a collective)

So, I think going forward, I'm a lot more confident in declaring my dyslexia from the start. Um, and I know from [fellow participant] that they can't like be prejudice or anything because of the, the disability act. So, um, I'm definitely more confident in terms of that
(Debbie, final interview, section 9)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Beginning to see the world differently BUT often oversimplifies)

Debbie's narrative shows how her critical engagement with the world will continue to transform her world on into the workplace. This highlights how conscientization is not a finite destination but a way of thinking about the world that will continue to impact both the individual's life and the transformation of the world (Freire, 1974, 1985).

Participant 6 – Nick

Nick's narrative will be presented in three themes: *School*, *Dyslexia* and *Community*.

School

Nick's discussion on school formed the main topic of the conversation. The results showed an interesting pattern with comments indicative of a transition towards conscientization while still showing signs of the culture of silence. Freire (1985) highlights how the culture of silence can still condition even during the move towards conscientization.

Diagnosis

The topic of diagnosis formed a large part of the discussion around school. Nick describes the challenges he and his parents experienced in trying to get an initial diagnosis:

so, I come from Oxfordshire and the first tests I had we sat down, well, my parents sat down with the Ed Psych and they said, no I'm not dyslexic because Oxford county council don't believe in it. And then a year later I was retested and then Oxford county council had changed their minds and did believe in it. So...
(Nick, first interview, section 3)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

His story shows how his dyslexia is defined and verified by those who hold power. They define the very existence of dyslexia and as a result, become the gatekeepers to an education for dyslexic children.

Nick continues to discuss the barriers to his education. He outlines a further barrier, one that is presented by a lack of knowledge from his teachers.

Well schools, I don't know if it's changed now but lots of teaching staff struggled to understand dyslexia and how it, how it caused problems.
(Nick, first interview, section 4)
(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

What is interesting is that each of these narratives suggests a passive acceptance of the situation. The first story is told as a reflection of objective fact. The ideas presented to him are not challenged and therefore become part of the conditioning process (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1992). Freire (1970:43) suggests that:

One of these characteristics is the previously mentioned existential duality of the oppressed, who are at the same time themselves and the oppressor whose image they have internalised. Accordingly, until they concretely “discover” their oppressor and in turn their own consciousness, they nearly always express fatalistic attitudes towards their situation.

This view is changed in the final interview, when the topic is revisited.

Um [pause] the support... the actual support that the schools gave was, [pause] unless you stated, wasn't very good. And I was close enough told that, unless you were stated you'd struggle to get the support. So...

(Nick, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to question elite)

Here, Nick directly challenges the school by stating how the support he received ‘wasn't very good’. He then extends this by highlighting a barrier to his education. He states how children needed to be stated (a procedure where by a child is evaluated by an educational psychologist) before they were allowed access to an education. This regulation, dictated by those in power, to force the “disabled” individual to accept a label before they will allow them their right to an education, is reflected throughout society. The Equality Act equally demands that the individual accepts the label of ‘disabled’ before they are attributed equality of opportunity under the law. Equally Langørgen & Magnus (2018) argue how disabled students must ask for help before they are deemed entitled to an education. The individual is then expected to “prove” that they are failing because of their disability, an act that reinforces the discourse of disability being a harmful condition (Hanish, 2014; Schramme, 2014). Nick contextualises this issue through his narrative.

When asked why he thought this situation occurred, he succinctly states:

Because its financial. Because if you are stated the school would get money directly from the council.

(Nick, final interview, section 5)

(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social and political contradictions)

His comments again repeat the rhetoric that education can only be provided for some individuals if additional money is received to accommodate this, echoing the comments made by Katherina. Access to this money is then controlled and determined by the elite, and only released once the dyslexic individual accepts a label, a statement of their perceived inadequacies. Nick's awareness of this contradiction highlights his developing conscientization.

This critical reflection is extended later in the interview when Nick remarks:

And it just seemed to be, 'you have dyslexia' and it was just, they didn't look at you as a person it was just 'you have dyslexia so we'll put you in here whatever'
(Nick, final interview, section 9)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social and political contradictions)

Nick exemplifies how the elite use the label of dyslexia, to define and segregate rather than liberate the individual. The label becomes a mechanism for control. He is aware that the label acts as a form of categorisation, a means to justify the exclusion of a particular social group, rather than creating an inclusive education. His statement suggests he is engaging in critical reflection with the world and challenging the prescriptions laid down by those in power.

Interestingly, when revisiting many of these points within the analysis interview, Nick presents a view that is even more critical:

Yeah, we've begun to, we've begun to go backwards nearly. So, I, when I first thought I was dyslexic, Oxfordshire County Council believed it, didn't think it exists. To now we're going to a point that instead of saying it doesn't exist, we're just not, they're just not looking at it at all. They're just ignoring it ... [sighs] yeah, it should be changed. It's not right its being ignored and only picked up at university. If it's being picked up here it should be picked up at school.
(Nick, analysis interview, section 5)
(Code - *conscientization* – Problimitizing reality)

His description of the situation has changed from a report of the objective facts, to a critical analysis of the impact of ignoring dyslexia. He questions why, if it can be assessed at university, dyslexia is not assessed earlier in an individual's education. His combination of critique of the objective reality combined with critical reflection shows a move towards conscientization (Freire, 1970).

However, despite these observations, it is interesting to note that some of the rhetoric of the elite is still conditioning. When asked why he thought his grades were (in his words) low, he suggests that it was because he had not been diagnosed then.

Um, I don't think I'd been diagnosed then because they can't...or we were told they can't diagnose you until year four, something like that. There was like a cut-off date where you could be diagnosed so, I think that's why. And because of that I think they only test you on maths and English then rather than science based, so
(Nick, final interview, section 11)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Echoes dominate culture)

Here the lack of a label is used as a reason why he did not receive an accessible education, reiterating how the label is controlled by the elite as a “ticket” to education. However, Nick’s narrative echoes the rhetoric he has been told, retelling the argument as an objective fact. This shows how the culture of silence is still acting to condition him even during his journey to conscientization (Freire, 1985).

Support

Nick speaks openly about the individualised support he received throughout his education.

I had a, an external dyslexia tutor I went to weekly.
(Nick, first interview, section 3)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

And it was good that I had someone that I... that could help me with my spelling and my reading.
(Nick, first interview, section 4)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Echoes dominate culture)

I don't know, I can't remember from prior to being diagnosed but yes, I've struggled all the way through
(Nick, first interview, section 6)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

Many of these statements describe his perceived failure and present the external support as a necessary way to compensate for this “failure”. This presents another example of the ‘superficial transformations’ that serve to pacify and maintain the culture of silence (Freire, 1985:78). If support is being provided as an external, additional practice, then the education system is alleviated from any responsibility to change in order to include individuals with dyslexia. Nick’s acceptance of this approach reinforces his existence within the culture of silence.

The final interview highlights how strong the culture of silence can be in conditioning perceptions. Nick definitely shows a clear change in his descriptions of support, but these responses are still tarred with a perception of fatalism. His discussion below of the fight his parents went through to get him accommodations for his exams, shows a level of irritation at the situation but still accepts the need for these external mechanisms of support.

Um, I think the school did. Yes, yeah, I think that's what they were going for. A lot of what I got at school, me and my parents had to fight for. So many things like, for my GCSEs and my A-Levels, I had a scribe and a reader and we really had to fight. Both the school and the exam boards for it. I know they had to apply for one of them cause one of the exam boards refused it.

(Nick, final interview, section 7)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Begins to recognise their situation caused by objective reality)

Equally, he discusses how his parents had to pay for additional support. He shows frustration with this but presents this as an objective fact of reality.

because a lot of the, a lot of the support I got was my parents paying for it. So, I had a dyslexia tutor but my parents paid for it outside the school, so I had my weekly dyslexia support.

(Nick, final interview, section 6)

(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – 'Quasi immersion' in reality)

When asked, he suggests a means to challenge this inequality, suggesting the need to train teachers. However, he then finishes with a comment reminiscent of fatalism, when he states a hope that things will improve naturally over time.

Well, I don't know, apart from training and getting people to...hopefully things will improve over time, but...

(Nick, final interview, section 10)

(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Myths remain but investigates the source of oppression)

This remark is reminiscent of Freire's (1970) warnings of how people who live within naïve-transitional consciousness or semi-intrinsic consciousness often rely on myths or fate to free them from oppression, believing that things will change eventually. This is in stark contrast to Nick's reply when discussing the same issue during the analysis interview. This time his response is resolute and calculated.

Certainly, within the university, the best way to do it would be to deal with primary education. Because they're the future teachers. And because we don't teach one module in secondary education. But it's like every course, they're trying to fit everything in. I know they have four years instead of three. But, yeah... [tails off]

(Nick, analysis interview, section 6)

(Code - *conscientization* – Problimitizes reality)

His suggestion that training should be given to trainee teachers, shows his growing confidence in his ability to transform the worlds along with an idea based on both an objective and subjective viewing of the world.

Dyslexia

What is Dyslexia?/Challenging the system

Nick's discussion around dyslexia can be separated into two parts. Firstly, he focuses on a deficit model, as can be seen in these extracts from the first interview.

I'll misread things or miswrite things. Um, instead of using spell checks...um, I'll still have a big problem without a spell check

(1st interview, section 9, culture of silence, Conditioned)

(Nick, first interview, section 9)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

other sort of visual issues so I see an optometrist that specialises in dyslexia and I've seen that all the way through from when I was younger.

(Code - *culture of silence* – Adjusts himself to fit oppressor's world)

so, I have a problem with hearing very low tones and that they tied to my dyslexia.

And things with ah, so, things with balance and catching things and sort of peripheral vision. They tied that to my dyslexia.

(Nick, first interview, section 12)

(Code - *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

All these descriptions focus on things he feels he cannot do. Many of the statements about him, come from things he has been told by those who hold power, often allowing medical specialists and professionals, to define the parameters of his disability (Smith 2009). Nick then repeats these statements as if they are objective facts. Freire (1970:134) argues that for oppression to be successful, the oppressed must 'become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority'.

Conversely, he counteracts these assumptions by discussing the advantages of being dyslexic.

but it shouldn't be seen as a barrier. So, I've got a first-class degree and a distinction and I'm doing a PhD so my dyslexia...OK I'm doing a practical subject within reason but my dyslexia hasn't stopped me on that so your body and your brain will, err, compensate. So, I'm very good at thinking outside of the box and doing very practical things and I've got a photographic memory so I can do things like that very easily
(Nick, first interview, section 14)
(Code - *naïve-transitional consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

Yeah, yeah, being a technician, I can take things, things that people have ideas for and I can build them or strip things apart and be able to put things back together and fix things
(Nick, first interview, section 16)
(Code - *semi-intrinsic consciousness* – Starts to feel something is wrong)

It could be argued that Nick's decision to also highlight his strengths could be a defence against the stigma of the disabled label, which has been deemed undesirable, and a condition of harm by society (Hanish, 2014; Schramme, 2014). Despite the more positive slant, these comments still reflect the impact of the oppressor's words.

Workplace

In the final interview, Nick discusses dyslexia in the workplace. This is the only time he talks about this topic so there are no comments from other interviews to compare this discussion to. However, his narrative has been included here as it exemplifies Freire's theory that the culture of silence still manages to condition throughout the journey towards conscientization.

Within the same discussion, Nick shows many signs of conscientization, while still expressing ideas from the culture of silence. In this example, he is discussing his work as a Scout leader and the barriers thrown up to him by their leadership training:

There is very little out there, very little the scouts [unclear] and that's something I'm at some point, going to pull up with them because its...it's not very helpful. We do all this...we have to do leader training for it and you get something called [unclear] at the end, which I've got but, some of it I didn't...some of the extra stuff I've been put of doing because of my dyslexia and...
(Nick, final interview, section 14)
(Code - *conscientization* – Perceives social, economic and political contradictions)

In this statement, he challenges the processes involved in him gaining additional training. His statement shows that not only has he recognised the inequality but that he intends to challenge the leadership about it. This shows that he recognises his power to transform his

situation. However, later in the same interview, when asked why he has not taken the leadership test yet, he states:

It's my own choice. Um, so there's a training...I've looked at being a training adviser for the scouts and there was a, fifty or sixty page document to go through and read and [laughs] that's not going to happen. And there's a...I've looked in to being an archery instructor but that's got a written exam as part of it. And I don't know, I've never looked...I expect I could enquire as to what the support is, but I don't particularly... [tails off]
(Nick, final interview, section 14)
(Code - *culture of silence* – Conditioned)

In this section, rather than challenging these inequalities, he accepts them as objective facts. This acceptance is also reflected in his deficit description of dyslexia. Freire (1970:27) states 'their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression'. Nick's description of the barriers he has come up against in the workplace, exemplify this conditioning.

Community

As with the discussion around the workplace, Nick's ideas about community are expressed in the final interview. However, although they cannot be used to show progression towards conscientization, their inclusion as a topic of discussion in the final interview, show an emergent understanding of the value of community.

Good, yeah. Interesting to see who turned up and um...talk to other people about what they, what they found with dyslexia and how they found the system and things like that. How they found getting support and the DSA
(Nick, final interview, section 2)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

hopefully they will know that there are other dyslexics around.
(Nick, final interview, section 3)
(Code - *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

So, all my colleagues know I'm dyslexic. Um, and quite a few of the students know I'm dyslexic because I've had conversations with them, and it will come up. I remember sitting, I was teaching two years ago, two undergraduates how to fill in contact sheets and they went...well she asked something, and I said, 'oh I'm dyslexic'. I think it was for a spelling or something, and it turns out she was. And the other student was foreign language or something. So, between the three of us we had no chance. {laugh}
(Nick, final interview, section 8)

(Code - *conscientization* – Understands conscientization can only take place as a collective)

These final statements show recognition that his understanding of dyslexia has expanded beyond his own experience through interaction with others. Freire (1974:137) explains this process when he writes how dialogue with others requires ‘...”re-entering into” the world, the “entering into” of the previous undertakings which may have been arrived at naively because reality was not examined as a whole’.

Conclusion

The analysis of each participant’s interviews has revealed progression towards the development of their conscientization. However, given Freire’s assertion of the dialogical nature of knowledge construction, I do not view this analysis as an end goal, simply a beginning. It is evident that each time my co-researchers or myself discuss this analysis, our interpretations will change as we create knowledge together and via our past reflections. Freire (1982:29) writes ‘Thus in the last analysis, for me, the concrete reality is the connection between subjectivity and objectivity; never objectivity isolated from subjectivity’. Therefore, in order to continue the process of knowledge building as a dialectical co-construction between all co-researchers, the analysis of each co-researcher’s interviews was forwarded to each co-researcher. The co-researchers were asked if they would consent to being contacted after the project to give their opinion on the analysis. All co-researchers were happy to receive the analyse of their interviews, however, as two of the co-researchers had subsequently left the university, only four were contactable.

In the email, I sent to each co-researcher ([Appendix K](#)), I reiterated the process we had previously gone through together when we briefly shared our analysis during the analysis interviews. I then stated how I would value their feedback on my further interpretation. Out of the four co-researchers contacted, three read and responded to the analysis. The feedback received is outlined below:

I think you got my analysis spot on! It was very interesting to read, and I think you’ve nailed it. (Deb)

Just read it all. Wow! I’m really impressed. I have nothing wrong with it at all J The analysis is really well done as well as the links with Freire’s work!’ (Kami)

Just read it through and looks great :D Particularly like the bits on capitalism! It sounds like it fits what I was saying and I agree with everything that you've said 😊
(Jean)

Interestingly, the co-researchers' feedback on the analysis suggests a reluctance to question my interpretation. Deb's use of the phrase 'spot on' and Kami's suggestion that there is 'nothing wrong with it', implies a kindness and generosity towards what I had written. There is also a feeling that this is now a final interpretation, exemplified by Deb's use of the term 'nailed it'.

The co-researchers' final comments raise a few interesting methodological and ethical questions in regards to co-constructing the analysis. The practical challenges of maintaining contact with co-researchers has become evident, as is the ethical concern of essentially asking them to do additional "work" (as evident in the fact that one co-researcher was keen to respond but, due to her beginning a new job, was finding it difficult to find the time to do so). However, despite these challenges, it is still evident that co-construction is a vital element. Without engaging the co-researchers in this step, the interpretation (of the development of their conscientization) becomes an assumption forced upon them by the researcher (Brinkmann and Kavale, 2005). However, as Sullivan (2012:14) comments:

From the point of view of dialogical analysis, however, nobody, including the actor, may know for sure what they are doing. This means that the aim of the interpretation is not to recover a singular meaning, but to make sense of the different and ambiguous ways in which a meaning may be experienced.

Where to Next

After the Dyslexics Untie evening, the group met up for a further meeting before the summer break, to review and evaluate the impact of the evening and to decide where to take the group next. The enthusiasm of the group to continue to initiate change, was a highlight of the project. The co-researchers were already looking ahead to the next event.

It was noted by the co-researchers that the conversations with people at the event went wider than the institution. Many guests discussed issues surrounding dyslexia and employment. Two co-researchers were able to share their experience of this but suggested this could be an area that could be explored further. The group suggested a collaboration with the university's Careers Service and to plan an event that focuses on dyslexia in the

workplace. This observation highlights how the co-researchers' perspectives on dyslexia has expanded beyond education. Their dialogue showed a confidence and recognition that they absolutely can transform their world.

It was also interesting to note that the co-researchers were also beginning to recognize their own knowledge and their responsibility to not assume they know better than other individuals with dyslexia. During the workshop, Andy commented 'when we do it again, we need to think about who is attending, what do they already know? Are we lecturing them on their own dyslexia?'. This desire to build knowledge together is further exemplified in Kami's comment:

We could definitely start with raising awareness. Then I think later on once we've done a few events, we should start challenging some stuff. Cause we need that support first. Cause I think if people aren't aware of it, they aren't going to get behind us
(Kami – Final Meeting)

Kami's comment shows how she recognizes the importance of dialogue, to raise awareness first and then engage in the cycle of action and reflection.

Some within the group wanted to take this further. When discussing how we can change things at the university, I used the term 'challenge' when asking how we could challenge the disabling practices we had discussed. I then reflected that this might have been an incorrect word to use. However, I was quickly pulled up on this by Andy, who clearly stated:

I think challenging *is* the right word. I think awareness [pause] I think that night was the perfect event to raise awareness to get people involved, to get active. But I think, as we've said, we are now looking forward to the next step and I think we are challenging the way that this university looks at dyslexia and ensuring that the proper procedures are in place, ensuring the right support's there.
(Andy – Final Meeting)

Andy recognized before I did, that in order to initiate transformation, the established (often normalized) system must be challenged.

A further observation was how the group's perception of power changed. It was noted by several members within the group how few members of staff (compared to students) attended the evening, despite advertising the event through faculties. Consequently, it was

suggested by the group that they should be involved in staff training to raise awareness among staff and to support staff's understanding of dyslexia. This proposition was interesting as it again shows how the previously perceived differences in power and knowledge between the co-researchers and educators had been dissolved. As Gibson (2006:323-324) highlights we need to 'lift the curtain on the Culture of Silence to enable the education community as a whole to bear witness to its existence'. The group now absolutely viewed themselves as the experts on their own dyslexia and expressed a desire to share that knowledge in order to raise awareness in others. In addition to this, two co-researchers (along with myself) attended the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference and presented our project. The co-researchers ran a workshop and led discussions with other educators and researchers, questioning and challenging many of the views expressed by those deemed as experts.

When the group returned to university in September, we arranged further meetings. We put on an additional, welcome back event for staff and students. A member of the library staff attended this event. This member of staff then requested a further meeting with the group to discuss changes the library could make to ensure it is accessible for dyslexic students. In addition, the group also decided that this year, they would create an additional group in the vein of a Student Union Dyslexia Society. This society would offer a less formal group that would focus on creating a community of dyslexic students and offering social events. The idea was that this group would then feed into the Dyslexics Untie group (as the original group was now being called). The group also gained two new members who had attended the Dyslexic Untie evening. We also discussed whether to continue to debate issues around dyslexia or whether to change the focus of the group. It was decided that the discussions had been helpful, and the group was keen to continue this Freirean approach, even requesting themes to discuss over the coming weeks when I would be taking a leave of absence. The groups desire to continue to meet and grow, even after the summer break, reinforced to me the impact of this project.

Unfortunately, later in semester one, the group experienced a challenge. The institution made the decision that my involvement in the group was incompatible with my position as a dyslexia tutor. Therefore, I was informed that I could no longer facilitate the group during working hours. I discussed this with the group at our next meeting. The group decided to arrange meetings outside of my working day, so that we could continue to meet. However, this proved to create challenges for others in the group (as some members had family

commitments). Sadly, finding a time to meet outside of the working day proved impossible and the institutional interference (at a time of transition) resulted in the Dyslexic Untie group being forced to end.

The involvement of the institution in creating a barrier to the group's continuation was an interesting development. Freire (1985:78) highlights this tactic, when he states:

The elites are anxious to maintain the status quo by allowing only superficial transformations designed to prevent any real change in their power of prescription

The interference of the institution suggests that the group were beginning to challenge the status quo. Perhaps the groups continuation after the initial project and the fact they were beginning to influence the wider university, through the conversations with the library, presented too much of a challenge. Considering the universities mission is that of social justice, this anxiety over the potential transformation being made by a small group of students is interesting. Perhaps this reaction reflects Freire's (1970) discussion on the commonality of paternal support for the oppressed. Adopting this familiar approach to social justice may have resulted in fear over change that has been initiated by the oppressed themselves.

Conclusion

Lincoln & Guba (2013:34) suggest 'there is no final 'reading of any text, but rather that text invites multiple readings depending on the reader(s) of it, the readers' context and standpoint, and the purpose for which the text is to be read'. The construction of this thesis has been a collaboration between myself, my co-researchers and the reader. Therefore, the conclusions drawn throughout, should be considered in this light, not as a finite conclusion, but as Freire (1987) would argue, an invitation to begin a discussion.

In unveiling the process of transformation within praxis, this thesis has enhanced how the development of conscientization is understood. The aim of this thesis was to explore the development of conscientization in students with dyslexia at university. The analysis mapped the students' comments during the first, final and analysis interviews, against Freire's descriptions of the culture of silence, semi-intrinsic consciousness, naïve-transitional consciousness and conscientization. The results showed a clear transformation in the co-researchers' thinking and how they represented their world.

The research questions for this thesis were:

1. How does a Freirean pedagogical approach facilitate students with dyslexia to develop conscientization?
2. What are students' experiences and interpretation of this process?
3. Can engaging in a Freirean approach lead to transformation?

The next section will discuss these questions and show how this thesis has addressed each question.

Question 1: How does a Freirean pedagogical approach facilitate students with dyslexia to develop conscientization?

The methodological approach to this study, which was informed by a Freirean pedagogy, facilitated the process towards conscientization. As Freire repeatedly states, conscientization can only ever be achieved through authentic dialogue (Freire, 1970, 1974, 1985, 1992, 1998). Through the process of engaging in dialogue with others, combined with a critical investigation of the world, all co-researchers began to question their previous objective view of the world and in turn began to recognise their oppression. Through the process of questioning the world combined with taking action upon it, the co-researchers were able to

begin their development towards conscientization. In addition, through engaging in a problem posing rather than banking system approach, the co-researchers have become subjects of their own liberation, furthering their journey towards conscientization. Freire's (1970, 1974) pedagogical approach has been instrumental in facilitating this process.

Question 2: What are students' experiences and interpretation of this process?

As previously stated, Freire (1982) reminds us that we cannot truly know something until we know how those involved in the situation perceive it. Therefore, the second research question framed an essential part of understanding the process of conscientization.

The analysis interviews provided a means to understand the co-researcher's experiences of conscientization. In discussing conscientization with the co-researchers, they were able to comment on changes in their thinking and how this will impact their future actions. Both Andy and Jean were even able to pinpoint the moment they felt their awakening occurred. Andy states 'That there [pointing at transcript]. That instance there, that DSA chat in week five. That's definitely probably what's highlighted that change' (Andy, analysis interview, section 5). Similarly, Jean comments:

I can remember when we did one of the sessions, about the reason we need the English language or like, do we really need it to be like this? And I think it was that sort of, it was that conversation that changed it some more. Because then I was like, that made me think.
(Jean, analysis interview, section 3).

The co-researchers also provide multiple reflections on how conscientization has expanded their perception beyond their immediate world, recognising the impact of society, history and politics. Andy clarifies his understanding of his conscientization when he states, 'My mind has been opened again' (Andy, analysis interview, section 6). In addition, when Katherlina was asked if she has noticed a change in her perception of the world, she remarked:

I feel like it has changed, because I didn't realise how much of an impact outside has. Like what politicians have and educationalists have. And I didn't realise other things to do with dyslexia like memory and things like that. But I hadn't, I hadn't really realised, like not as broad.
(Katherlina, analysis interview, section 15)

Finally, Jean provides a detailed discussion of her experience when she reflects many of Freire's themes of conscientization in this monologue:

I think it's like a combination of both really. Cause, doing the Dyslexics Untie, the meetings before that and meeting new people increases my knowledge of dyslexia, my knowledge of how it is responded to by other people, which then in turn, would impact how I would see it in another person. So, um, if I don't have the knowledge, then I don't have the awareness to then look at other people with dyslexia and kind of understand that a bit better.... I don't know, it's kind of hopeful as well because I guess the, seeing how hopeful they can work. Like how well D can plan and organise and like go through and she's like there. And like K is quite happy to stand up in front of people and she's quite happy to talk to someone, ... It was good to see that like there is so much potential in people even though they might not obviously see that
(Jean, analysis interview, section 6)

Jean discusses how this process has 'expanded' her knowledge but also suggests how this expansion of knowledge will lead to a change in how she then interacts with others. She also recognises the need for hope in maintaining the process of conscientization

Question 3: Can engaging in a Freirean approach lead to transformation?

Although it was evident that each co-researcher began their journey towards conscientization with a different degree of critical awareness, all members of the group developed their understanding and engagement with the world and in turn their agency for transformation. As Freire (1985:169) comments 'It becomes authentic when we experience the revelation of the real world as a dynamic and dialectical unity with the actual transformation of reality.' The next section will recap these transformations highlighting both transformations in the co-researchers' perceptions of the world and how these changes in perception have led to concrete transformations in the co-researchers' world.

A common transformation was shown in the co-researchers' descriptions of dyslexia. Many of the definitions went from a textbook response, echoing the deficit narrative, to descriptions that highlighted the complexity of dyslexia. This is exemplified beautifully in Jean's description when she succinctly states, 'it's complicated'. An additional commonality is in the co-researchers' descriptions of teachers and the transformation in the representation of teacher power. Many of the earlier narratives positioned teachers as holding all the power and often being an additional barrier to the co-researchers' ability to access education. However, in the final interviews, the seemingly unchallengeable power of the teacher is questioned in Kami's decree that teachers need to educate themselves and Andy's recognition that educational boundaries can be pushed. The group expressed a need for better training of teachers, leading

to a change in the education system. Both Nick, Andy and Kami highlighted how there was a lack of understanding amongst teachers, leading to teachers both echoing and reinforcing the negative discourse surrounding dyslexia. These examples demonstrate how engaging in a Freirean approach has led to a transformation of the co-researchers' understanding of the world and how this has led in turn to a drive for change.

Freire's (1970, 1974, 1985) belief on the importance of community and collective action has also been authenticated through the reflection and action cycle of this study. All co-researchers discussed the advantages of engaging in conversation with other dyslexic students. Both Debbie and Andy discuss the importance of developing a dyslexic network and Nick discusses the importance of sharing his experience of being dyslexic with others. In addition, this understanding of the importance of discussion and sharing experience with others has transitioned beyond the university. Jean discusses how she has begun to discuss dyslexia with the children she works with in her job with the local church. She also states how she has developed more confidence in telling her employers what she needs as an individual with dyslexia. She states 'I've started to just say "yeah I'm dyslexic" that isn't going to work. You're going to have to give me like five extra minutes to read that...." Her willingness to share her experiences with both her employers and the children she works with shows the transformative effect of her engagement with the praxis of this study and her subsequent developing conscientization.

In addition, since the end of the study, the co-researchers who have remained in contact have demonstrated how the process of conscientization continues to lead to transformation. Kami has developed a workshop (as part of her course) that engaged students in exploring dyslexia and the education system through the use of Lego to model experiences. Jean has continued her passion for transformation by engaging both colleagues and the young people she now works with in conversations around mental health. In addition, Kami, Debbie and Jean have delivered workshops to education students and education professionals on dyslexia. These have included a lecture at the University of Winchester and a workshop delivered at the British Educational Research Association (BERA). These transformative actions provide further evidence for the how engaging in a Freirean approach has led to transformation.

Additional Themes Unveiled

It was also interesting to note that through the process of developing conscientization, the co-researchers uncovered further insights into the causes of their oppression. This section will provide further reflection on these themes.

The co-researchers' assessment of teachers exemplifies Freire's (1985) description of how oppression is reproduced through ideas and discourses designed to reinforce the culture of silence. These ideas not only become embedded among the oppressed but also condition those who position themselves (however well intentioned) as saviours of the oppressed. Freire (1985: 122-123) reminds us how that in order to march side by side with the oppressed, those who hold positions of authority must 'die as elitists so as to be resurrected on the side of the oppressed'. He continues 'Such a process implies a renunciation of myths that are dear to them: the myth of their superiority, ... and of the absolute ignorance of the oppressed' (Freire, 1985 In order for teachers to walk alongside their students in their fight for freedom, they must also be willing to renounce their own power.

Through this process of critiquing the education system and dyslexia, another familiar theme emerged, the impact of neoliberalism. Jean discusses both the focus on commodification and speed of production, and the focus on accountability and grades. She states how the system narrows teachers' focus to getting all students to a particular grade. It could be argued that this increases the pressure for teachers to maintain power over their students' learning in order to ensure students are "given" the information they need to pass the test (Best, 2020). This pressure on teachers could result in them adopting, what Freire (1989) refers to as, an authoritarian classroom in order in order to maintain this control. This action could further exclude dyslexic students and solidify the barriers they face because, as Jean argues, they cannot perform fast enough. In addition, both Nick and Katherina discuss how they have been told that money is needed for them to gain access to an education, a human right that is automatically provided for neuro-typical individuals. The critique made by the co-researchers has helped to illuminate the impact of neoliberalism on the education system (as suggested in the literature by Cahill & Konings (2017) Ball (2016) and Gibson (2006)) and suggests that the lack of access to education experienced by individuals with dyslexia, may be motivated by economic factors.

The co-researchers' dialogue on dyslexia diagnosis has also revealed an interesting question on the impact of this common practice: is dyslexia diagnosis part of the problem? Both Kami and Debbie describe a situation where they have been fighting for access to education. On

both occasions, the eventual diagnosis and adoption of the dyslexic label, serves to pacify them; as Debbie says 'Oh, so that explains why' (Debbie, final interview, section 5). The diagnosis could be viewed as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it opens up access to "tokenistic support" such as access to the DSA. On the other hand, it placates the fight for an equitable education. In addition, the assumption that individualised 1:1 dyslexia support (as offered in most UK universities) is somehow "curing dyslexia" and alleviating the problem, absolves universities of their responsibility to educate all their students through an inclusive curriculum. Which as Katherina points out, when she states, 'how are they supposed to stand a chance if they don't even realise they have it' (Katherlina, final interview, section 7), means that if individuals are undiagnosed or cannot afford the cost of a diagnostic, they are instantly excluded. This critique of dyslexia diagnosis by the co-researchers of this study brings new relevance to the debate around the social model of disability and highlights the importance of revisiting the work of Mike Oliver.

In engaging in this discussion of community with the co-researchers of this project, I have also found that my own understanding of dyslexia and oppression has evolved as part of this collective dialogue. Freire (1985) argues how our culture is created through our interactions with each other and the world around us. It is through these interactions that occur on a daily basis, that serve to construct and solidify through their re-construction, that cultural "norms" are built. Hearing the voices of the co-researchers throughout this project has been a reminder to me that the oppressor is also involved in this construction and, as Freire (1985) says, the right will only ever create forms of culture for the purpose of domination. This suggests that our current cultural understanding of dyslexia, and how we deal with it, has been constructed predominantly by the oppressors with little input from the dyslexic culture. Just as Freire (1974), enabled the fisherman of Brazil to recognise the importance and value of their culture and history and what their culture has contributed to the culture of Brazil, individuals with dyslexia need to recognise our own cultural value. At present, dyslexic culture has been formed by the prescriptions of the oppressors, creating a culture that is dominated by the deficit model. If dyslexic individuals recognised the power of their own culture; for example, how we have learnt to engage with education and the workplace, our ability to be flexible in our approaches, our imaginative approach to solving tasks and our passion for learning; this could offer a counter culture to the neoliberal educative practises of the oppressors. Only through this action, will we begin to build culture with others (Freire, 1985).

Contribution to Practice

The transformative nature of critical dialogue, illuminated in this thesis, highlights how Freire's pedagogy can be used to inform the practice of teachers working with students with dyslexia. The starting point for any critical educator must always be the students they are working with. Therefore, each teachers' interpretation of Freire's pedagogy will always be unique. However, by encouraging students to question their perceptions of the world, to challenge their belief of their own inability and to instead look further afield at wider educational and societal norms, teachers and students can begin to change the narrative of dyslexia as a deficit. Perhaps, as well, teachers who work with students on a 1:1 basis can also look to include more opportunities for students to engage in group dialogue, an act that would further serve to widen the world view of both students and teachers and challenge the isolation often created by individualised support.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has highlighted Freire's contribution to the field of research methodology. Through the process of developing a methodological approach for this study, a new methodological approach has been highlighted. This methodology was born out of interactions with the co-researchers of this study, the objective reality in which this study took place and a reflective application of Freire's theories. This reflective process was essential as Freire insists that his theories must be '...reinvented and re-created according to the demands – pedagogical and political demands – of the specific situation' (Freire 1997a: 309). In addition, this methodology engaged with Freire's (1982) insistence on the need for both an objective and subjective reading of the world through exploring both the concrete "facts" of the world being investigated with an analysis of how the people involved in this world, view it. It ensured that the co-researchers' involvement in this study was genuine and not paternal or tokenistic by encouraging them to become the experts on their own conscientization. It made sure that the analysis of the object of study was co-operative and dialectic in nature, ensuring that any new knowledge was always in motion, continuing to develop after the project had concluded. This is evident in the transformative impact of the project on all co-researchers, the people they have gone on to interact with and the understanding of both dyslexia and the process of conscientization.

Through combining Freirean methodology with participatory action research, this study has developed a methodological process that not only facilitates change within the concrete

world but also initiates a transformation in how those involved in that world, perceive it. Through this dual transformation, the oppressed can perceive and actively challenge the mechanisms of their oppression from a position of their growing conscientization, ensuring that humanisation not oppression becomes the goal.

It is hoped that other co-researchers will be able to engage with this new methodology to further explore and unveil the social world with others, furthering our ontological goal to become more fully human (Freire, 1970). However, it is vital that any researcher who wishes to emulate this approach does so by critically engaging with Freire's work, their co-researchers and the concrete world in which they are researching in. As Freire (2014:7) says 'If you follow me, you destroy me. The best way for you to understand me is to reinvent me and not to try to become adapted to me'. Instead he suggests that 'The educator is a politician and an artist who must use the science of techniques but must never become a cold, neutral technician' (Freire, 1978:21). Therefore, this new methodological approach is not offered as a fixed framework that must be rigorously applied to a research project but rather a set of principles that must be critically and ethically applied to a study.

In addition to highlighting Freire's contribution to methodology, this study has also enhanced how the development of conscientization is understood. Through situating conscientization within a practical pedagogical setting, combined with thinking about and reflecting upon conscientization, both objectivity and subjectivity have been combined dialectically to create a greater understanding of this phenomenon. This combination of both an objective and subjective exploration of conscientization has served to advance understanding. As Freire (1985:168) says, if knowledge is to be authentic, then 'this act of knowing always requires the unveiling of its object' and this unveiling cannot occur if we view objectivity and subjectivity (as well as reflection and practice) as opposites. This unveiling of conscientization has been made authentic through its engagement with the epistemological circle (Freire, 1998).

Freire (1982:34) declares 'We have to be very clear about the object of this work: it is the people themselves, not the advancement of science.' This project has shown the incredible intelligence, capability, drive and passionate desire for change of students with dyslexia. Most importantly, it has shown that they are the ones who need to be responsible for driving this change. Their unique understanding of the world formed through their real-life experiences, must be the foundation for this transformation. Critical educators, teachers and

tutors need to embrace facilitating critical subjectivity and its dialogical interaction with students' objective experiences. I would like to offer this thesis as a starting point for this engagement. As a text that was written within a certain historical moment, it offers a reflection on a phenomenon in motion. This momentum can be utilized by others who wish to become engaged in facilitating individuals with dyslexia to become active subjects in the creation of their world. As Freire says any text is only complete in the context of when it was written:

When you shift the moment you can begin to see its incompleteness. The reader then has the responsibility for engaging the incompleteness ... The incompleteness of the text can be just as important as the completeness in a certain historical moment, for it is the incompleteness that engages the reader in a process of continued reinvention of the text in his or her own historical context (Freire, 1997a:319)

By engaging in the incompleteness of this text and reinventing it with students with dyslexia, teachers, tutors and students can further the transformation of the social world and challenge the rhetoric of deficit discourses, neoliberal education and authoritarian teachers.

I wish to reiterate the call for action, expressed by many of my co-researchers. The current political climate of austerity, reduced worker rights, the creation of national abjects and the rise of right-wing politics and disability hate crimes suggests a future that threatens to challenge the human rights of people who are already disabled by society. The need to transform, not just systems and structures but also mind-sets, has never been more vital. To rewrite Freire's words used at the beginning of this thesis, our conscious presence in this world necessitates our ethical responsibility to take action against this oppression (Freire, 1998).

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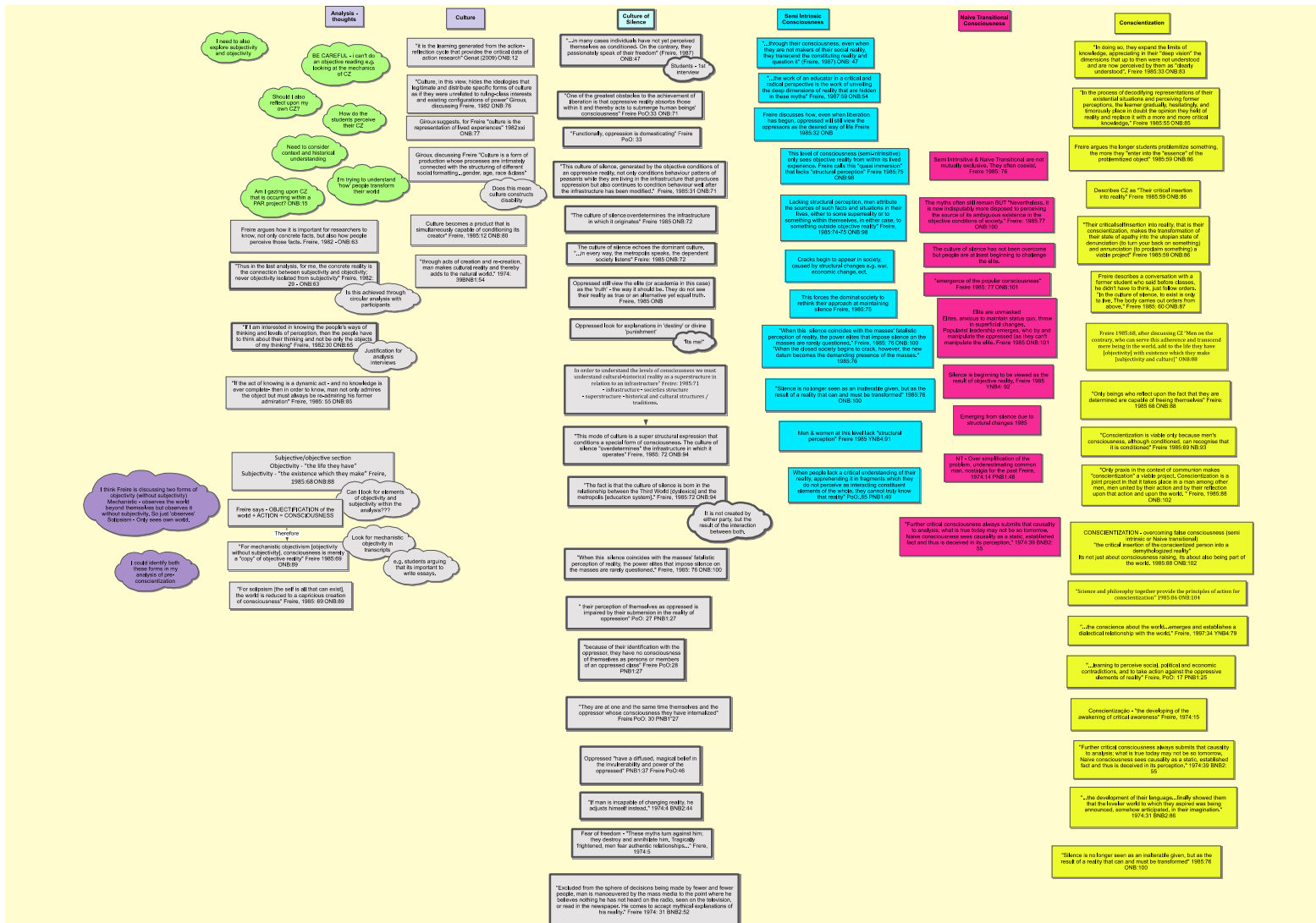
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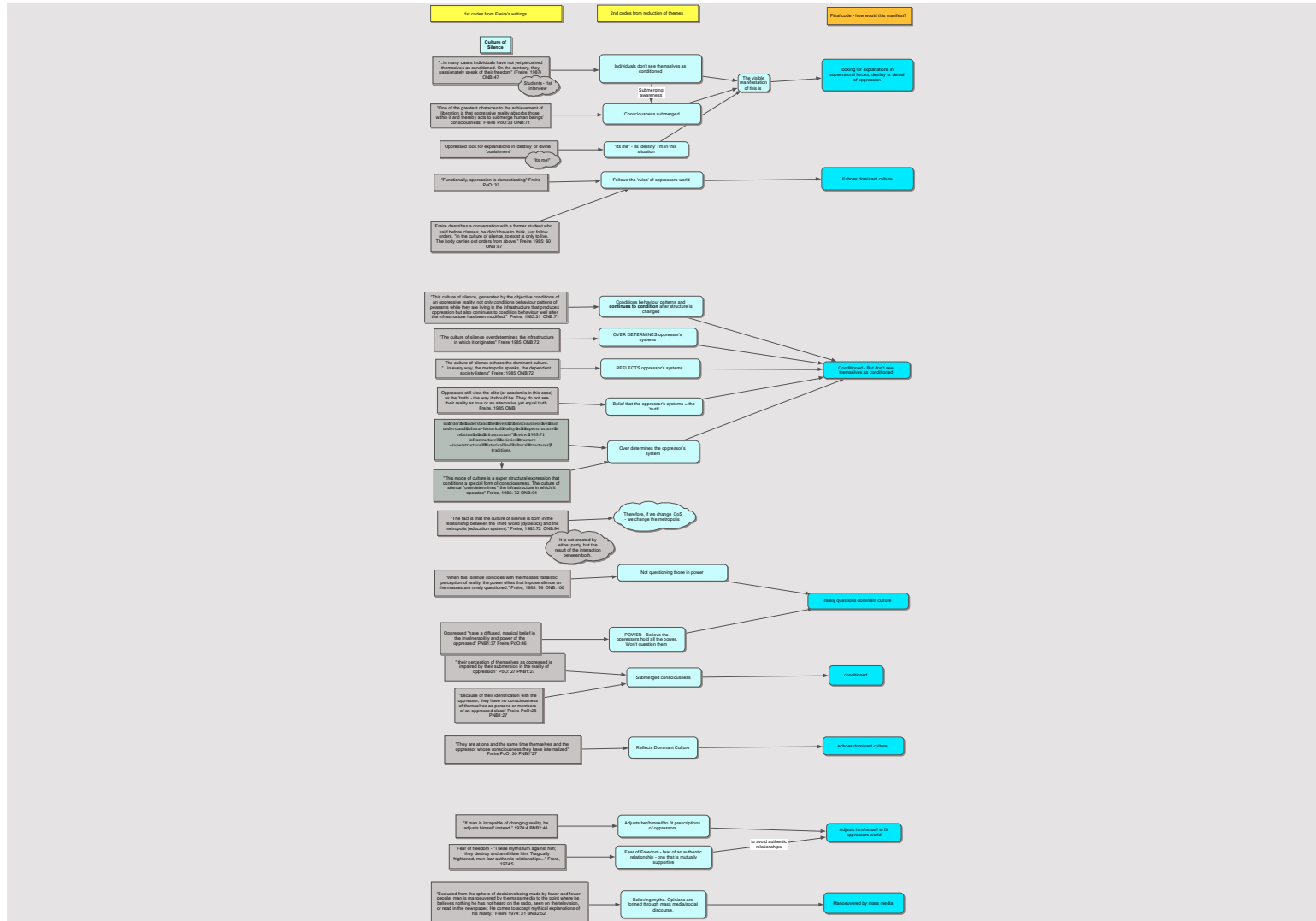
Appendices

Appendix A: The Stages Towards Conscientization

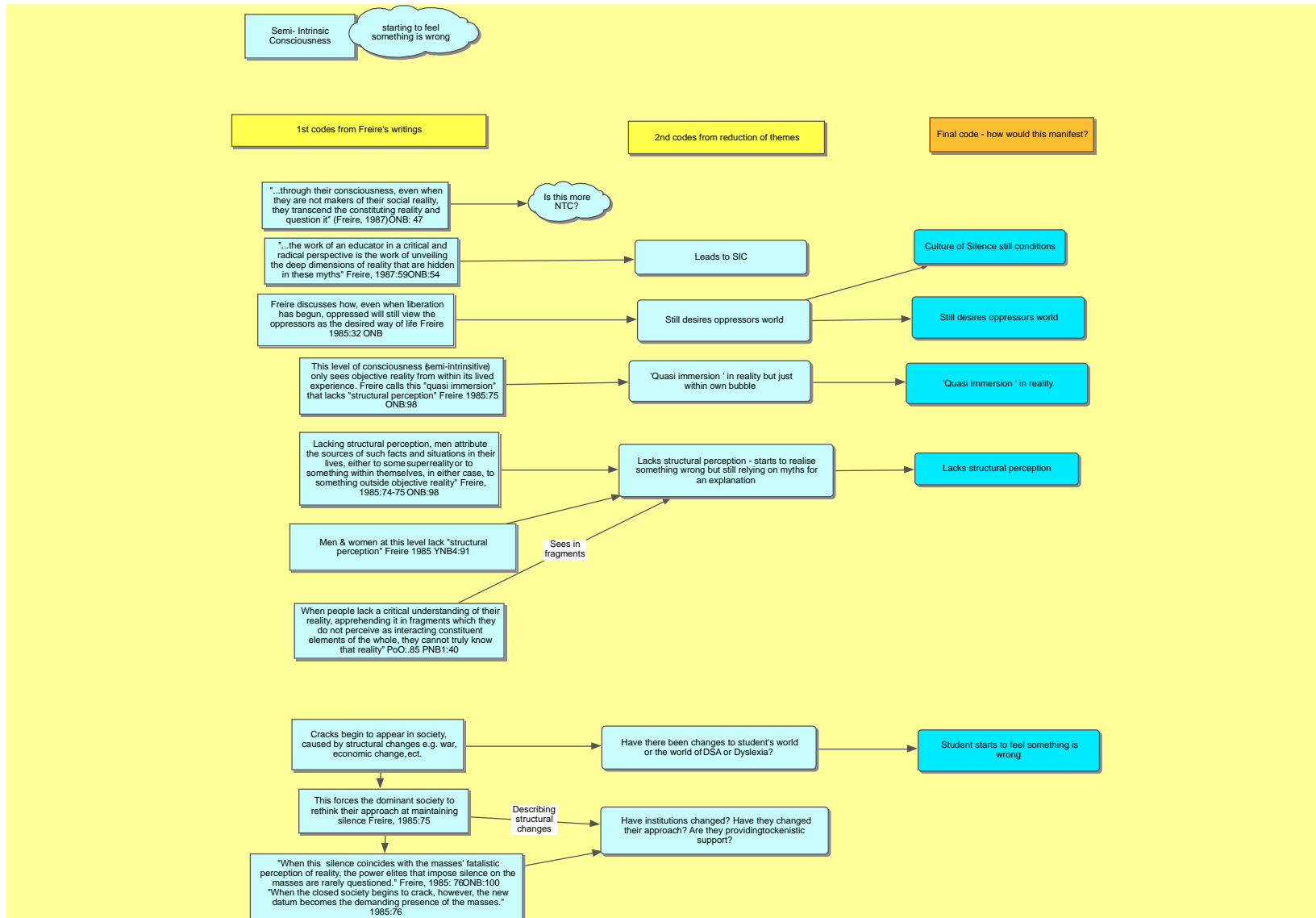


Appendix B – Key Themes of Each Stage

B1: Culture of Silence



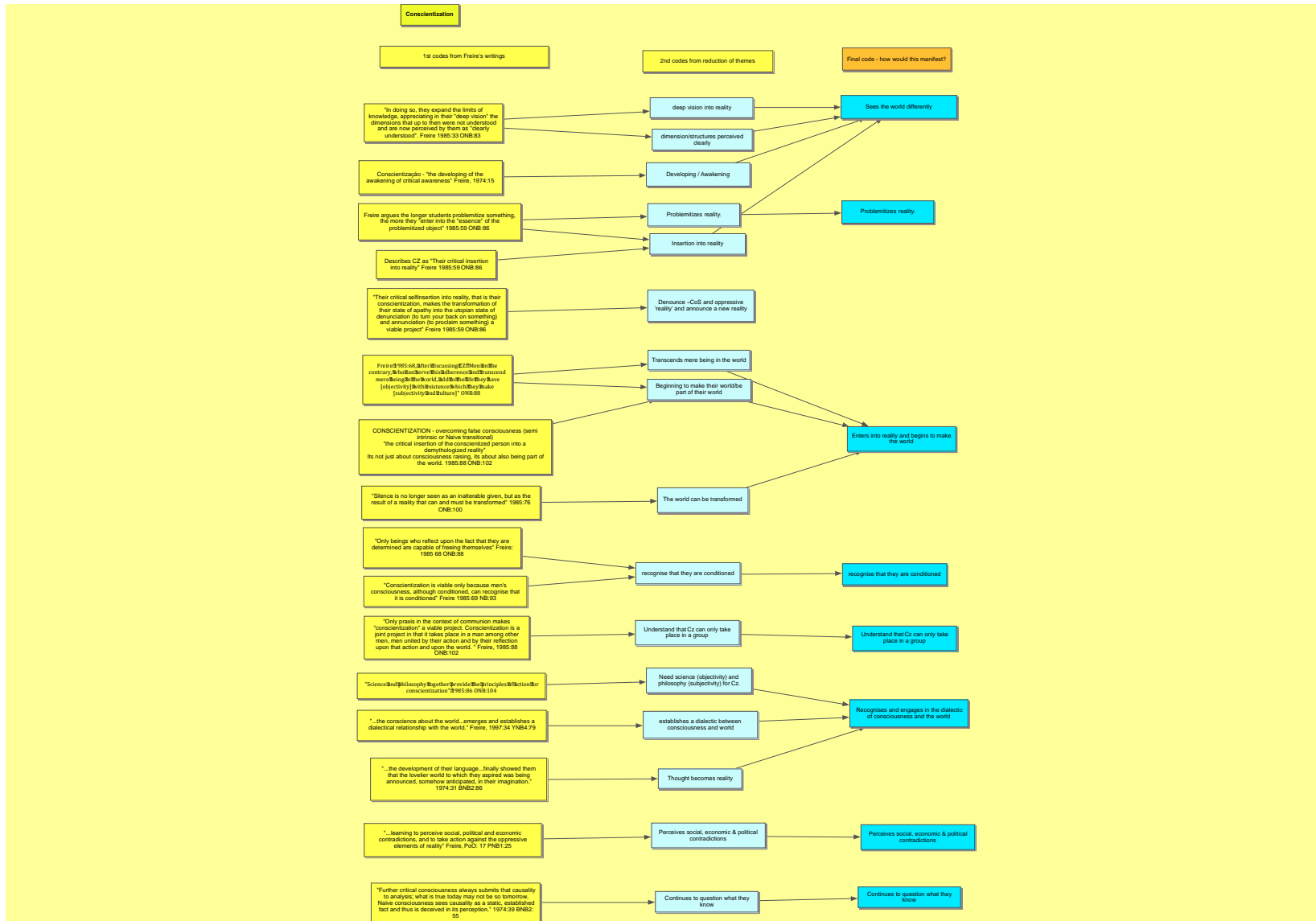
B2: Semi-Intrinsic Consciousness



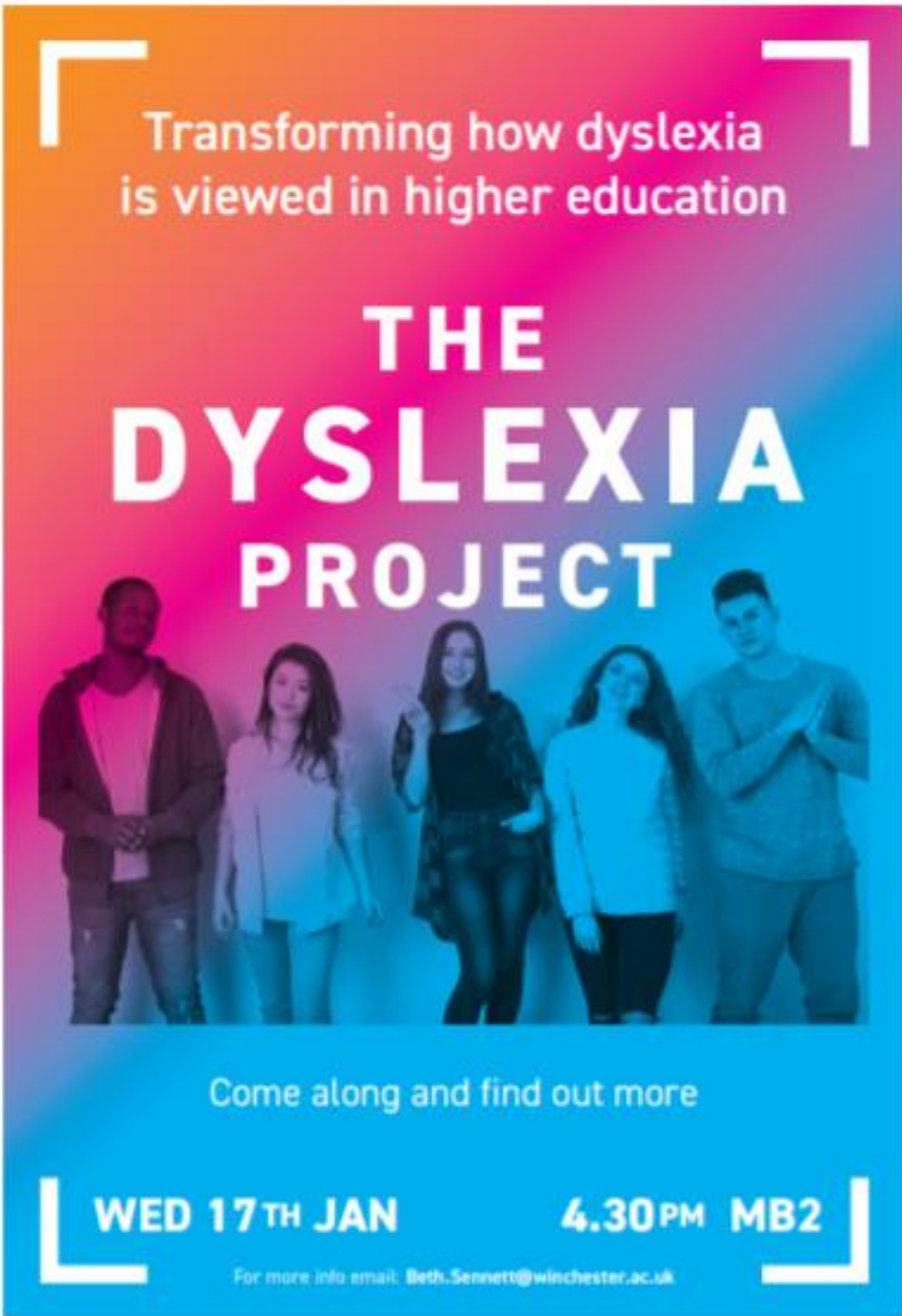
B3: Naïve-Transitional Consciousness



B4: Conscientization



Appendix C – Advertising Poster



Transforming how dyslexia
is viewed in higher education

THE DYSLEXIA PROJECT


Come along and find out more

WED 17TH JAN **4.30 PM MB2**


For more info email: Beth.Sennett@winchester.ac.uk

Appendix D – Codifications for Workshops


D1: Codification for Workshop 1 - A Social Understanding of Dyslexia

Theme	Key Codification
<p>A Social Understanding of Dyslexia</p>	

D2: Codification for Workshop 2 - Obstacles

Theme	Key Codification
<p>Obstacles</p>	<div data-bbox="582 1321 1268 1780" style="border: 2px solid blue; border-radius: 20px; padding: 10px;"> <p>Case Study 1 – Carol's Exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol was diagnosed with mild dyslexia and visual stress • Parents requested reasonable adjustments for Carol during her exams. • School refused • Court found in favour of the school and decided that Carol's dyslexia did not have a substantial effect on her as she was achieving similar grades to her peers. <p style="font-size: small;">(PP (2) SP v LEICESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL TRUSTEES (2014))</p>  </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: large; font-weight: bold; color: blue;">What were the obstacles?</p>



D3: Codification for Workshop 3 - Stigmatisation

Theme	Key Codification
<p>Stigmatisation</p>	<p>“...dyslexia is not a thing but an inability to meet social expectations.” (Collinson, 2017:7)</p>  <p>The collage includes three news snippets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Telegraph: "Ofsted: English standards in primary schools 'too low' because too many pupils start secondary education with poor reading and writing skills, Ofsted warned today." Below this is a sub-headline: "Standards of English in primary schools should be dramatically raised because too many pupils start secondary education with poor reading and writing skills, Ofsted warned today." BBC NEWS: "Figures show drop in Scottish pupil literacy rates" BBC NEWS: "Low literacy cannot be tolerated or excused any longer. There are a number of key reasons why Australian students are not getting the best possible literacy teaching - and funding is not one of them, writes Jennifer Buckingham." </p>

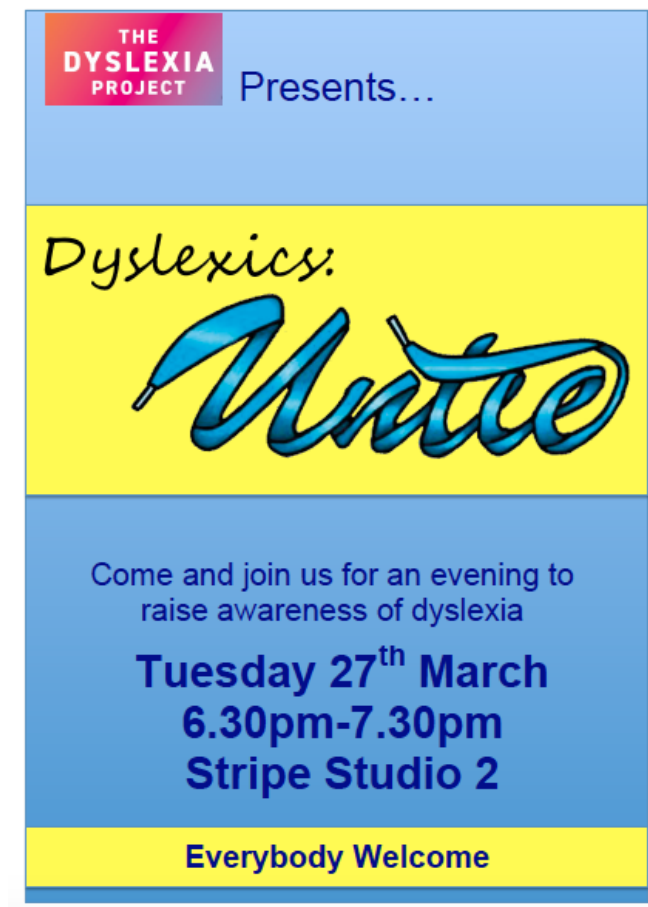
D4: Codification for Workshop 4 - An Academic Understanding

Theme	Key Codification
<p>An Academic Understanding of Dyslexia (Hartley, 2017)</p>	 <p>Rupturing the Cycles of Shame in Education Jessica Hartley TEDxRoyalCentralSchool</p>

D5: Codification for Workshop 5 - Politics

Theme	Key Codification
Politics	  <p>I am announcing a number of changes aimed at modernising the current system, subject to the Equality Impact Assessment. This will ensure that the limited public funding available for DSAs is targeted in the best way and to achieve value for money, whilst ensuring those most in need get the help they require. (Willets, 2014)</p>

Appendix E – Poster and Photograph from Dyslexics Untie Evening



Appendix F – Second Interview Questions

Final Interview Kami	Final Interview Andy	Final Interview Debbie
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have you found the workshops and the Dyslexics Untie evening? 2. You mentioned in your 1st interview that you tried to talk to your secondary school teachers about your dyslexia and got told that you needed to concentrate more in lessons. What would you say to that teacher now? 3. What would you like to see happening in schools? 4. You mentioned you found your dyslexia 'frustrating'. What causes this frustration? 5. Do you prefer individual with dyslexia or dyslexic? 6. What is dyslexia? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have you found the workshops and the Dyslexics Untie evening? 2. You mentioned in the first interview that your AS results were a little lower than you had hoped. What caused these lower grades? 3. You said you felt 'a little bit let down by the system'. Do you think the system could change? What needs to change? 4. You mentioned an embarrassment around others seeing your writing/spelling. Why do we feel that way? Should we? 5. Why do we write essays? 6. We talked last time about writing essays and you suggested that universities could put more emphasis on presentations, etc. How do you think that could happen? 7. Do you prefer individual with dyslexia or dyslexic? 8. What is dyslexia? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have you found the workshops and the Dyslexics Untie evening? 2. You mentioned that your dyslexia diagnosis had more of an impact on your parents than it did yourself. So why do we diagnose? Who is it for? What's the point? 3. What would you like to see happening at the university for students with dyslexia? 4. What do you think would make things better for you as an adult with dyslexia? 5. Do you prefer individual with dyslexia or dyslexic? 6. What is dyslexia?

Final Interview Nick	Final Interview Katherina	Final Interview Jean
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have you found the workshops and the Dyslexics Untie evening? 2. I'd like to revisit some of the things we discussed during the first interview. You mentioned that you had a rather mixed experience at school. Firstly, the school denied existence of dyslexia do then you received 1:1 support. Looking back, how do you view your experience at school? 3. You mentioned that your SATS results were quite low in Yr 3. What do you think was the reason for this? 4. We discussed your experiences of dyslexia as an adult. Is there anything that you think would make your experience better? 5. Do you prefer individual with dyslexia or dyslexic? 6. What is dyslexia? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have you found the workshops and the Dyslexics Untie evening? 2. You discussed, in first interview, how you didn't feel you got the grades you would have liked. What do grades tell us? Why do we need good grades? 3. You mentioned you didn't think you would get into uni. Do you think other people with dyslexia might feel this way? What would be the impact of this? 4. You discussed academic writing and how nobody writes like that outside academia. So why are we expected to write like this? who are we writing for? 5. Do you prefer individual with dyslexia or dyslexic? 6. What is dyslexia? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How have you found the workshops and the Dyslexics Untie evening? 2. When you were diagnosed last year you said it never crossed your mind that you might actually be dyslexic. So why do you think this was, that you hadn't made that connection. 3. Imagine if you were going through the school system now. What do you think might be needed to make things better? 4. You said there's kind of an overlap to mental health and dyslexia. How do you see that overlap? 5. You mentioned in a previous interview about there's no funding in schools. Why do you think the government doesn't fund support for students with dyslexia or other neurodiverse conditions? 6. Do you prefer individual with dyslexia or dyslexic? 7. What is dyslexia?

Appendix G – Example of Transcription Coding for Jeans First Interview

Transcript	Theme	Notes
<p>Section 1: 0:00 - 1:28 (1:28.4) Intro</p> <p>Section 2: 1:28 - 2:56 (1:27.5) B - Nice easy question to start with. Can you tell me what you're studying?</p> <p>J - I'm studying education and psychology</p> <p>B- Superb, so what made you choose those two?</p> <p>J - Um, well I choose education cause its the special and exclusive pathway. And I think only a couple of unis do it. Um, so I picked that one first and then while I was on my gap year I kind of decided I would like to continue psychology and combine it so, in the first week here I combined dual honors, education and psychology.</p> <p>B - Fantastic</p> <p>J - Um, so I do enjoy it.</p>		

B- That's so cool. So, did you do psychology at A-Level as well?

J - Yes, yeah. I got like an E though. So I mean, I don't know how I got on the course, but I did. So it's good.

B - That's impressive though. So, what was the...is there a big difference between would you say, like A-Level psychology and what you're doing here.

J - Um, there's a little bit cause I mean like with the, with A-Level psychology you learn about like the um psychologists, so like Freud and things like that. Um we do learn similar things here but like there's a heavy focus on statistics and stuff once you're at uni. Whereas you learn a bit but not like, not any, anywhere near like the extent we've done here. And then like more in-depth. A lot of its just like statistics to be honest.

Section 3: 2:56 - 4:29 (1:33.6)

B - So its a different sort of approach and everything? You mentioned for your A-Level psychology, you got an E for it. Um, why do you think that was cause clearly you're really good at psychology cause of what you're doing now.

<p>J - Um, I got B, E at A-Level. I did English Lit, ah biology and psychology. And the biology and psychology are the ones I got Es in. And the English Literature was alright. I think that's because you can kind of write anything as long as you can justify it and it's fine. Um, so that one was OK and that one had course work as well. Um, whereas the other two were exams. And I'm not very good at exams but you don't really get a choice when you do A-Levels, whether you do exams or not so, yeah, I didn't do too well on those ones.</p>	<p>Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny Conditioned</p>	<p>'I'm not very good at exams' - the problem is with me.</p>
<p>B - Mmm, what do you think about using exams for assessment?</p>		
<p>J - Um, I think they're alright, I just don't think they're OK, like on their own. So, personally I think it depends on the individual really cause some people are good at exams and some people aren't. Um, if you want to measure the content of a subject with an exam, that's OK but then I think you've got to like add in some course work as well cause people, in like any normal situation, aren't going to perform one day, the same as they perform the entire year. So um, it'll probably be alright but just not on its own I think really.</p>	<p>Conditioned Starts to feel something's wrong Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny Myths remain but investigating the source of oppression</p>	<p>Individuals are to blame – not the approach to assessment Still feeling current structure is OK but is beginning to investigate what is causing the challenges.</p>
<p>B - Hmm, I wonder why we use exams then?</p>		

<p>J - When it's quick and easy [laughs]</p> <p>B- good point [laughs]</p> <p>J - efficiency.</p> <p>B - that's a very good point.</p> <p>Section 4: 4:29 - 5:27 (0:57.8)</p> <p>B - OK, so one of my first questions I want to ask, is a little bit of strange one, bear with me on this. I'm quite, I'm getting quite interested in the language we use around dyslexia. So, I've got two phrases and I'd like to tell me which one you prefer. So, do you prefer the phrase students with dyslexia, or do you prefer the phrase dyslexic students?</p> <p>J - Um [pause] students with dyslexia. And I think it's just my education background here because its um like the kid comes, or the student or the person comes before the diagnosis kind of thing. So, um so [pause], I don't know. I think if you put the diagnosis first it almost defines it but like, it depends cause some people say ah, dyslexic X but like you can tell they mean it in a like, they don't mean it as a...it just depends on how you use it. But I prefer, I prefer with dyslexia really.</p>	<p>Elites unmasked</p>	
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<p>like Oh yeah, I kind of understand a bit better now but, yeah, it was like last year.</p> <p>B- Did it sort of 'make sense' when you were diagnosed. How did you feel about that diagnosis?</p> <p>J - It kind of, it did kind of make sense 'cause I mean like some of the things I was having difficulties with I didn't realise. I thought everyone was the same. And then, I guess it was kind of reassuring that it wasn't just me being stupid. It was like, there was actually something, like, in my brain. So um, it was kind of reassuring, then, I think...[pause] um but yeah... [tails off]</p> <p>Section 6: 7:14 - 9:12 (1:57.6)</p> <p>B- Good point. OK so um, you mentioned that you were having certain difficulties and that was why it um, you went for the diagnosis, and thinking back, you talked about the exam as well. So, what do you think causes those difficulties?</p> <p>J - Um [pause] well I mean some of its like being dyslexic [laughs] um, and then some of its stuff that came from not knowing that I was dyslexic so like I mean from with before I was like diagnosed with dyslexic, um, it was, it is difficult</p>	<p>Looks for explanations in supernatural forces or destiny</p>	<p>'there was something in my brain' – but diagnosis does seem to give comfort. Does it condition further e.g. we have now <i>scientifically</i> proven that the problem is with you. Is this akin to someone who is living in poverty being told that there is a scientific reason they are living in poverty. There is something wrong with <i>them</i>. Therefore, the true causes of their poverty can be ignored.</p>
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<p>to organise information and process information and things. Um, and I thought that was like me being slow and I was like, OK, cool. Um, and like my friends did and now my friends, like I said, when I said, 'oh yeah, I got tested for dyslexia' and that sort of thing. They were like, I can't believe we didn't know [laughs]. Cause they were like 'you literally, when we were doing experiments in biology, you <i>couldn't</i> read the instructions and like we would get them in such a random order. And my experiment would never look like anyone else's. Like chemistry at GCSE like my chemicals would like...you know, I could have really done some damage. Um, cause I just read the instructions backwards or something and just get them everywhere. So...and I don't know how my teachers didn't pick up on it up either. Cause I was doing some <i>daft</i> stuff. But it was like yeah, the only like sentence structure and things for English. Like one of my teachers, he read my essay and he was like, 'this doesn't make sense.' And I was like 'what'. And he was like 'this bit here, this is totally irrelevant to your subject' and I was like 'no cause I mean this' And he was like 'oh, it's because all your words are in the wrong order. Here right'. And then I got it looking back. But even then, right, they didn't really pick up on it. So, it was just <i>funny</i>. But yeah, my friends were just like 'yeah,</p>	<p>Starts to feel something is wrong</p> <p>Starts to feel something is wrong Lacks structural perception</p>	<p>Challenging teachers</p> <p>Is definitely challenging their teachers but is making light of it.</p>
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<p>I don't know how we just didn't know'.</p> <p>Section 7: 9:12 - 10:16 (1:04.0)</p> <p>B- That's so funny</p> <p>B - So why do you think your teachers didn't pick up on that?</p> <p>J - I don't, I don't think my school is funded to do it. Or I don't think they allocate funding to do it.</p> <p>B - Ah</p> <p>J - Cause my brother's the same. He went, we went to this...well all three of us, I've got two brothers, all three of us went to the same school. And once we'd left, me and Jamie both got picked up on dyslexia. And he, he got picked up at collage. I finished sixth form and then got in here. Um, but he can't spell like at all. And I think that's when my misconception had also come in, with my brother. h...his dyslexia's completely different to mine. Um so we kind of knew that my brother would be cause he couldn't spell anything, so we were like yeah, yeah OK, he's <i>probably</i> dyslexic. Um but like my mum was equally as shocked when I was like, oh yeah, I'm also getting screened for it as well. And she was like. 'Oh' Um but I think that's</p>	<p>Lacks structural perception</p> <p>'Quasi immersion' in reality</p>	<p>Is recognising misconceptions around dyslexia but no attempt to look for causes</p>
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<p>understanding and trying to simplify things really.</p> <p>B - Yeah, absolutely.</p> <p>Section 9: 11:20 - 13:18 (1:58.0)</p> <p>B – That’s interesting, what you say. As you say, it is fascinating this idea of what we have, these misconceptions. This general social understanding we have of it. OK, so could you...OK my very last question...OK it’s a slightly odd one, but if I say to you ‘what is dyslexia?’ how would you respond?</p> <p>J - Um, well I can tell you what dyslexia is for me. Um, but what...cause its covered so many bases...</p> <p>B - [laughs] it does...</p> <p>J - ...so like trying to answer that...[pause]</p> <p>B - Yeah, you could write an essay on that couldn’t you?</p> <p>J - I could write three [laughs]. Um, I think...I can answer it like what it is for me. So, like...and still, I’m still learning what that is, cause it’s so new. Um, so I can still only say like a couple of things what it is for me anyway. There’s</p>	<p>Starts to feel something is wrong</p>	<p>Interesting that co-researcher instantly recognises that it is different for everyone. She specifies that she can talk about her dyslexia but no-one else’s</p>
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probably like ten other things it effects but like, I don't know yet. Um, so I guess it just depends on the individual cause like my brother, it would be completely different. Um, but I guess it's something to do with like the way we process like information and that can be like through the English language, like verbally or auditory or different... reading it as well so. **It's just the way we process information isn't always as efficient or as normalised as anyone...as other people.**

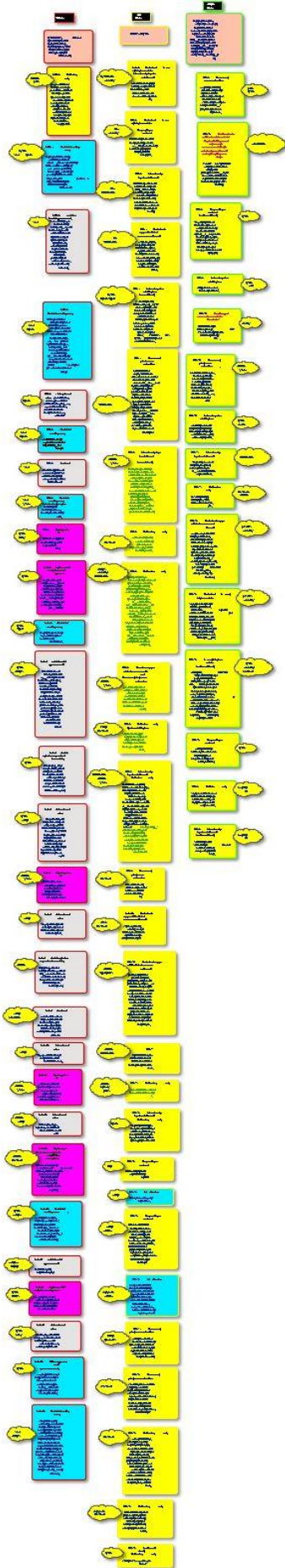
B - Mmm, I can tell you are doing Education [laughs] Such a good explanation. Thank you very much. That was all the questions I wanted to ask. Was there anything else you wanted to add?

J - Um, no I don't think so.

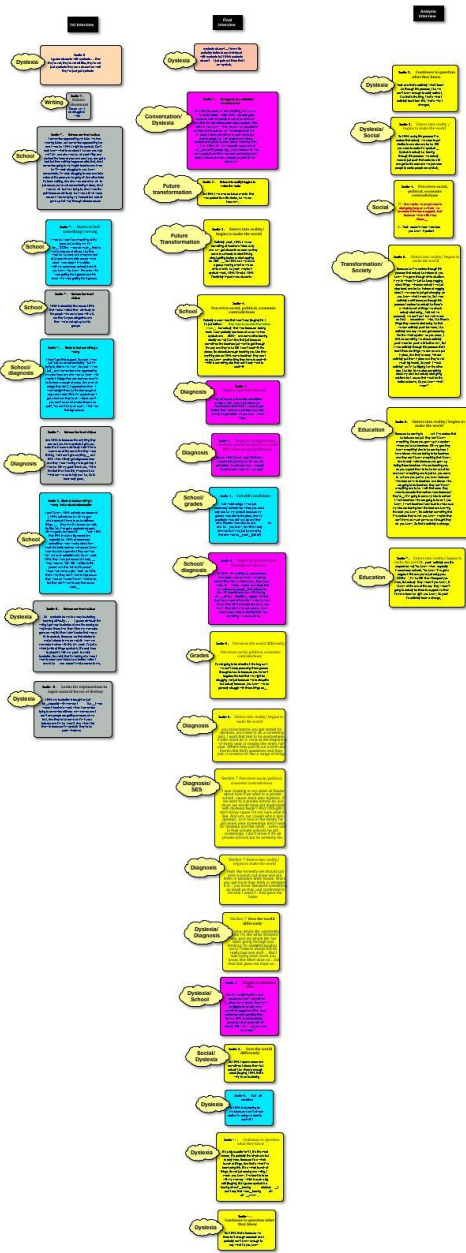
B - Superb. Thank you so much J. That's really helpful.

Section 10: 13:18 - 29:49 (16:31.3)

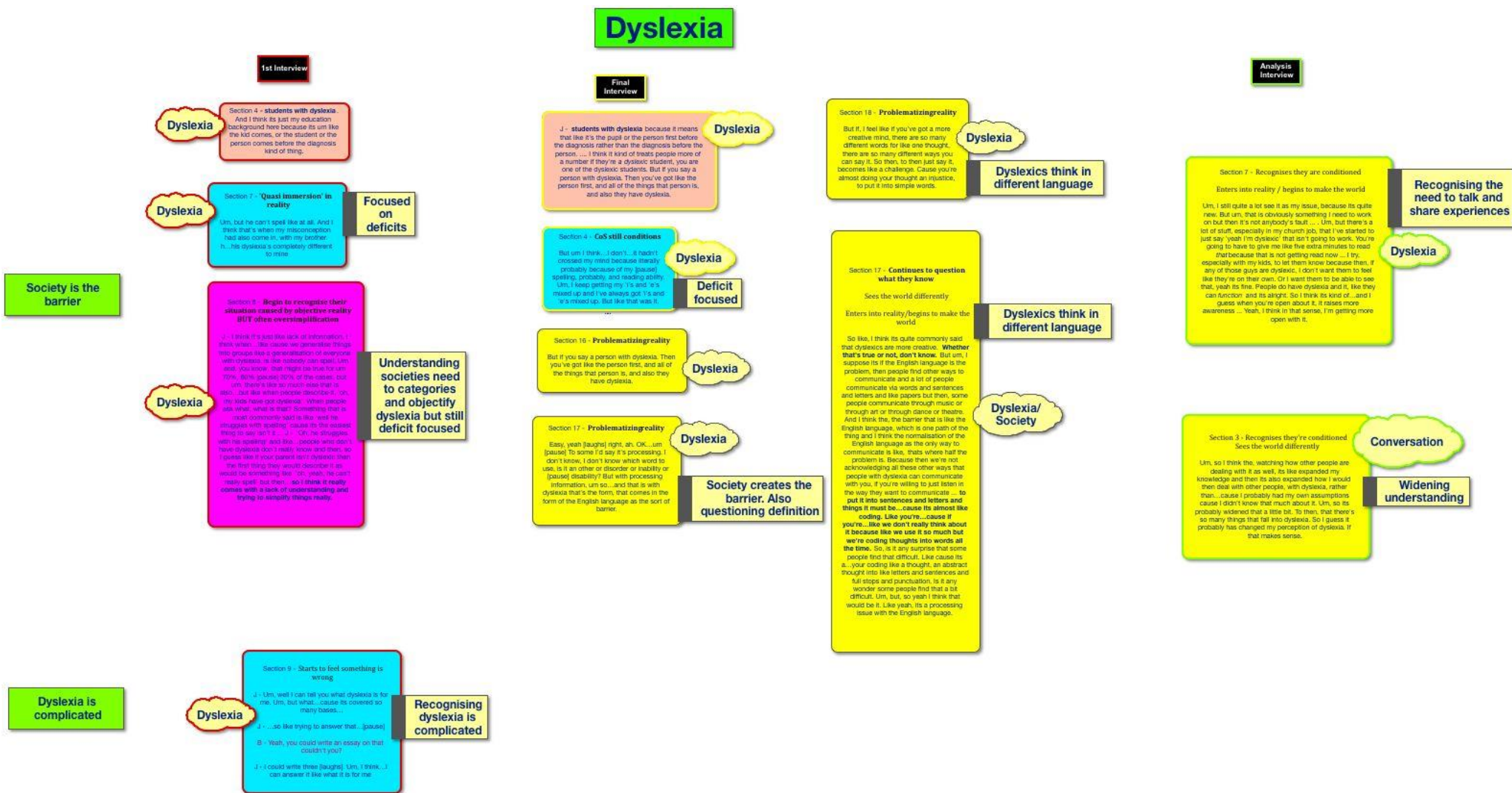
Andy



Kami



Appendix J – Example of a Theme from Jean's Interviews



Appendix K – Email Sent to Participants Inviting Feedback on Analysis

From: Beth.Sennett
Sent: Sunday, July 28, 2019 4:23 PM
To: Jean@gmail.com
Subject: Dyslexia Project - Analysis

Hi Jean

Thank you so much for looking through this for me. There is no rush on this.

Just to give you an overview, I've analysed the interviews by trying to connect comments to Freire's stages of critical awakening from 'the culture of silence' (where we accept the bias or discrimination we experience in life) to conscientization (where we challenge oppression).

A large part of Freire's ideas is that we construct knowledge in stages and through conversation with each other. That's why we did a brief analysis together (in the analysis interview), I then analysed that analysis and then you comment on my analysis.

With that in mind, please do feel free to contradict or question what I've written (or completely disagree with it). That's all part of the process. I'm going to add another few paragraphs on the end of everyone's analysis section, where I outline participant's reflections on this analysis, so your thoughts will be really helpful.

Also, please do let me know if there is anything I have written that you are not happy with me publishing and would like me to remove or alter.

Finally, I've given everyone temporary nicknames for anonymity but I thought it would be fun to let people choose their own nicknames, so let me know if you want me to change 'Jean' to anything different 😊

Thanks again

Beth

ps. I've also included my (very) rough draft of the lit review and methodology, in case you want any context.