

**Researching the use of filmmaking techniques for the
representation of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation:
Putting the Papageno Effect into Filmmaking Practice**

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Abstract

This thesis aims to elucidate the theoretical inputs and creative processes behind the development of *JACK*, a practice-based Screen Production Research film that makes an original contribution to knowledge by translating the protective ‘Papageno Effect’ theory from psychology and suicidology into filmmaking practice. The final research film exemplifies a constructive approach to depictions of mental distress and suicidal ideation in film, informed by the principles of the Papageno Effect. The history of mainstream western cinema is littered with negative and damaging portrayals of people with mental illness that have engendered fear and contributed to public stigma around issues of mental health. These cinematic depictions sit at odds with current societal efforts to reduce mental health stigma and as such, expose a gap in the filmmaking research that this study seeks to address by asking “How might we as filmmakers represent issues of mental ill health and suicidality more constructively in our work?” Drawing on contemporary research from a diverse range of disciplines related to mental health and suicide prevention, this project combines the protective Papageno Effect theory from the field of psychology with an autoethnographic methodology based on real lived experience to create a more balanced, considered and sympathetic cinematic depiction of a character struggling with their mental wellbeing, leading to suicidality. This study and the final research film, *JACK*, have demonstrated that an engaging and dramatic piece of film addressing these issues can be created safely within media practice guidelines by implementing the protective theoretical principles of the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. The final research film represents one of many possible approaches to safely tackling issues of mental health and suicide in filmmaking and this thesis explicates both the specific approaches taken to the creation of this film, as well as identifying key strands that could inform future research.

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Glossary

Term

Definition

Papageno Effect

A theory proposed by Thomas Niederkrotenthaler and colleagues in 2010, suggesting that on-screen depictions and news stories of recovery from suicidal ideation could have a protective effect and encourage help-seeking for sufferers

Werther Effect

A term coined by David Philips in 1974 to describe the phenomenon of suicide contagion following excessive or irresponsible media reports of suicide

Practice as Research

A practice-based approach to research, commonly used in the arts to incorporate creative arts practices into the research project as a primary means of revealing and uncovering new knowledge through the process of engaging in creative practice

Screen Production
Research

The emerging film-specific area of practice as research in the arts that the current research project is concerned with, Screen Production Research uses creative practice as a mode of enquiry to discover new forms of knowledge through filmmaking practice

Autoethnography

A qualitative research method in which personal and subjective lived experiences are valued as a source of knowledge

Ontology

A branch of philosophy concerned with existence, being and reality. Grix defines Ontology as ‘what is out there to be understood?’

Epistemology

A branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge and understanding of reality. Grix defines Epistemology as ‘what and how can we know about it?’

Humanism

Humanism is a philosophical way of life that is open to all human beings as an alternative to dogmatic religion, placing emphasis and value on the ability of human beings to work ethically and morally, both individually and collectively to

	solve the problems facing humanity in our world today. The contemporary definition of Humanism is set out in the Amsterdam Declaration of 2002
Humanist Filmmaking	Filmmaking inspired, guided and informed by the fundamental principles of Humanism
Mental Health	Refers to a state of general mental wellbeing, often used more generally to refer to all aspects of our emotional and psychological wellbeing
Mental Disorders	A term representing disturbances to an individual's mental health, often characterised by a combination of troubled thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others
Mental Illness	Mental illness or mental ill health is a broad term covering a wide range of psychological mental health conditions that can affect your mood, thinking and behaviour
Mental Health Struggles	A general term used throughout the thesis to refer to an adverse impact on one's own mental health conditions, brought about by any combination of internal psychological and/or external sociological conditions
Suicide	Suicide is the act of intentionally ending your own life
Suicidology	The scientific study of suicidal behaviour and how to prevent it. Suicidology is a multidisciplinary research area primarily led by experts in the fields of Psychology and Sociology
Suicidality	Suicidality or Suicidal Ideation are terms that refer to serious thoughts about taking one's own life, suicide plans and suicide attempts
Media Guidelines	Guidelines published by several organisations including the World Health Organisation and Samaritans, offering advice on best practice for media professionals when covering stories concerning suicide
Development	The first stage of the filmmaking process where film story ideas are generated, and a script/screenplay is produced
Preproduction	The second stage of the filmmaking process concerning all aspects of planning before shooting the film

Production	The third stage of the filmmaking process concerning the filming of the scenes once preproduction has been completed
Postproduction	The final stage of the filmmaking process involving all aspects of combining and editing your raw footage into a final film
4K Video	4K refers to a camera sensor or display device with a horizontal resolution of approximately 4000 pixels
Bit Depth	The amount of data used to capture colour detail in digital cameras. The higher the bit depth, the more colour information is captured, giving better video quality
Chroma subsampling	Refers to how much colour information is recorded onto the image sensor at a pixel level

1 Introduction

Throughout the history of cinema, people suffering from mental health issues have been depicted as dangerous, unhinged, unreliable and untrustworthy (Hyler, Gabbard and Schneider, 1991; Wahl, 2003). From iconic psychopathic villains to dangerous seductresses, people with mental illness have provided filmmakers with a set of character tropes to scare and excite viewers in the safety of their cinema seat. As exciting and entertaining as these depictions have often been, the resulting impact on public perceptions of people with mental illness cannot be underestimated. Many books have been published on the subject of mental illness in cinema and many conclude that negative media depictions of people with mental illness have had a long lasting and damaging impact on the public psyche in one way or another, generating false, inaccurate, misguided and stigmatizing perceptions of people with mental health problems (Wahl, 1995; Gabbard and Gabbard, 1999; Stack and Bowman, 2012; Young, 2012; Wedding and Niemiec, 2014). In his report for the 'Time to Change' campaign, Dr Peter Byrne notes that public perceptions of people with mental illness have been heavily impacted by the pervasive and persistent negative depictions throughout film history and advocates a radical rethink of the ways in which people with mental illness people are spoken about and portrayed in film (Byrne, 1998, 2003, 2009).

These negative and damaging cinematic depictions have contributed to engendering public fear and mistrust of those suffering with mental health problems, as well as creating significant impediments to recovery and social integration for those suffering with or recovering from mental health issues. The stigma surrounding mental health problems has resulted in many people refusing to seek help when they are struggling due to the fear of being branded or stigmatized, as well as creating substantial barriers to housing, benefits, jobs, and impacting the family and personal lives of sufferers (Stack, 2000a, 2000b; Bianco and Milstrey Wells, 2001; Prince and Prince, 2002; Corrigan, 2004; Stuart, 2006; Wait and Harding, 2006; Tew *et al.*, 2011; Wahl, 2012).

Often closely associated with the pervasive, negative and stigmatising depictions of mental health problems in film are the issues of suicide and suicidality, as Stack and Bowman's book *Suicide Movies: Social Patterns 1900-2009* (Stack and Bowman, 2012) investigated. Using a sample of over 1,500 American and British films containing a suicide, Stack and Bowman discovered that internal psychiatric factors contributing to suicide were present in more than

one in five films (21.5%) and that Psychopathology accounted for a further 18.4% of film suicides (Stack and Bowman, 2011, p250). Stack and Bowman also discovered however, that unlike the majority of the scientific literature examining the internal psychological, psychiatric and neurological factors contributing to suicide, cinematic suicides tended to be portrayed in a manner more consistent with sociological explanations of suicide, taking account of the range of adverse external social factors that may contribute to an individual's suicide (Stack and Bowman, 2011, p250). Film suicides are often linked with, for example, relationship strain (52.6%) or economic strain (16.2%) and are frequently presented as comorbid with internal psychological factors, combining the internal psychological and external sociological factors contributing towards suicide, potentially creating a more holistic and complete depiction of the factors contributing to suicide.

Suicide is often used in film as a plot device or depicted as a solution to a problem including detail of the suicide method on screen. This is particularly concerning, as graphic or descriptive depictions of suicide methods or excessive media coverage of a reported suicide are known to have the potential of triggering imitative 'copycat' suicides, in a phenomenon known as the 'Werther Effect' (Phillips, 1974, 1985). The Werther Effect has been discussed since the 1970s and a systematic review published in 2012 found that the 52 out of 56 studies supported the idea that there is an association between media suicide reporting and suicidality, albeit with a risk of reporting bias (Sisask and Värnik, 2012). Stack and Bowman point to a number of occasions where films containing a suicide were found to have triggered copycat suicides in the population, using a similar method that had been depicted on screen (Stack and Bowman, 2011, p9).

In 2010, Thomas Niederkrotenthaler, Benedikt Till and colleagues at the University of Vienna proposed an alternative framing to the Werther Effect discussion, that they termed the 'Papageno Effect' (Niederkrotenthaler *et al.*, 2010; Till *et al.*, 2017). The Papageno Effect posits that instead of depicting suicide on screen, media depictions of suicidal ideation followed by mastery of crises and recovery from suicidal intentions rather than resulting in suicidal behaviour, such as a completed or attempted suicide, might actually have a protective and preventative effect for those in need. The Papageno Effect suggests that media representations modelling recovery and help-seeking for internal mental struggles and suicidal ideation could encourage others to seek help and recover from their own suicidal crises. Although the Papageno Effect has now become a keenly discussed and well-established current topic in the

world of psychology and suicidology, it has yet to be purposely translated into practical filmmaking, presenting a significant gap in the research between the Papageno Effect theory and the practical application of its principles into filmmaking practice that this project seeks to address. A recent email correspondence with Benedikt Till (2017), located in the [submission folder](#), confirmed that there are still relatively few examples of films that fit with the principles of the Papageno Effect and the current research project is the first of its kind to purposely translate the Papageno Effect into real filmmaking practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project.

Narrative filmmaking provides a more suitable framework for telling stories of mastery of suicidal crises and recovery in line with the principles of the Papageno Effect than traditional news media, as these outlets do not typically focus on stories of recovery from mental health struggles and suicidal thoughts and instead tend to focus on reporting completed suicides after the fact, particularly suicides of prominent public figures and celebrities. Media guidelines published by Samaritans and others are now clear on how to cover such news stories as to limit the potential ‘Werther Effect’ impact these reports may have on others by avoiding descriptive detail on suicide method and including relevant helpline numbers for anyone impacted by the story (Pirkis *et al.*, 2006; Samaritans, 2013; Time to Change, 2019). This represents a positive shift in the news media in recent years, however stories featuring help-seeking and recovery from mental health struggles remain more likely to appear in the storylines of fictional dramatic portrayals where characters and stories can be developed in greater depth than in traditional news reports, presenting an opportunity for the current research project to explore ways in which we as filmmakers might do this more constructively.

The responsibility of telling real, lived stories of recovery and hope, often falls to people in the public eye, including celebrities, royalty and prominent public figures to open up about their own mental health struggles and encourage other people to do the same and to seek help when struggling (Breslin, 2015; Jessel, 2017; Hewit, 2018; BBC, 2019; Gauvain, 2019; Heads Together Campaign, 2019; Time to Change, 2019). This has become an increasingly popular phenomenon in recent years and has been a great help in reducing public stigma surrounding issues of mental health and in highlighting the fact that anyone can experience a mental health problem of one kind or another at some point in their life, regardless of fame, wealth or social standing. Despite these recent improvements in public discourse, there are still many people who are uncomfortable talking about their mental wellbeing and suicide still claims over

800,000 lives a year worldwide (WHO, 2014; Hewit, 2018). Men are particularly vulnerable to suicide and 75% of all suicides are male, with suicide being the number one cause of death in men under 45 in the UK. Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone at any time, but the fear of acknowledging this still presents a significant challenge for mental health charities and sufferers alike, because of the powerful stigma and taboo that still lingers from a time when suicide was illegal. The term ‘committing’ suicide, implying its criminality, is still commonplace today, despite suicide being decriminalised in the UK for almost 60 years.

As a filmmaker and Screen Production Researcher, I believe that filmmaking offers us a powerful set of communicative tools to contribute towards a positive shift in public perceptions of mental health struggles, suicidal ideation, help-seeking and recovery. By employing the range of cinematic tools and techniques available to us as filmmakers more constructively, we can begin to redress the balance of one hundred years of negative and damaging stereotypical film depictions (Byrne, 2009) and start to change the conversation to one of recovery and hope for anyone struggling with their mental wellbeing or suicidal thoughts. By using filmmaking as a tool to contribute positively towards a societal benefit in this way, we can begin to reduce the fear and stigma surrounding our mental wellbeing and the topic of suicide by promoting recovery and wellness for all and putting the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

It is against the backdrop of a long cinematic history of negative and stigmatising depictions of mental ill health and suicide that the current enquiry makes an original contribution to knowledge by being the first of its kind to translate the Papageno Effect into real filmmaking practice within the context of a practice-based Screen Production Research project; offering practical filmmaking solutions and answering the project’s central research question “How might we as filmmakers represent issues of mental ill health and suicidality more constructively in our work?”.

Throughout this thesis, [links](#) are provided where necessary to the corresponding filmmaking practice pieces and additional supporting material within the [submission folder](#), including [film tests](#), [scene-by-scene commentaries](#) and a [video thesis](#) to provide greater context, depth and understanding of this practice-based filmmaking Screen Production Research Project.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The central research question for this Screen Production Research project is ‘How might we as filmmakers represent issues of mental ill health and suicidality more constructively in our work?’ and therefore the primary aim of this research project is to investigate ways in which we as filmmakers might more constructively represent issues of mental ill health in our work, with particular focus on mental distress leading to suicidality.

The primary objective of this project is to translate the Papageno Effect from the world of psychology and suicidology into filmmaking practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project.

In order to achieve the primary aim and objective of this research project, a number of interim objectives needed to be met:

1. Carry out an initial multidisciplinary systematic literature review on the subjects of mental health and suicide prevention in order to develop a deeper understanding of the themes and issues that will be tackled in the filmmaking practice, helping to shape and inform the creative decisions made during the project.
2. Develop an idea, story and [screenplay](#) for a final piece of film that fulfils the primary aims and objectives of the project, by translating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project.
3. Develop and create a [final film piece](#), from concept to completion, that fulfils the aims of the research project by putting the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice and demonstrating how we as filmmakers might represent issues of mental distress and suicidal ideation more constructively in our work.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework for this project is the Papageno Effect (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010; Niederkrötenhaler, 2016), with its origins in the fields of psychology and suicide prevention, which this research project seeks to translate into filmmaking practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project (Batty and Kerrigan, 2017) using an autoethnographic and reflexive methodology. Screen Production Research has recently become established as a distinct area of arts based practice research, focusing primarily on film and screen-based media production research and building upon the foundations laid by practice as research in the arts (Smith and Dean, 2009; Barrett and Bolt, 2010; Sullivan, 2010; Nelson, 2013). As a multidisciplinary creative practitioner, I believe in the primacy of practice in the arts as well as the importance of reflexivity in iteratively improving that practice towards a goal, in what Ross Gibson refers to as a cognitive two-step in his foreword to Batty and Kerrigan's book on Screen Production Research (Gibson, 2017), moving between active filmmaking practice and reflection on that practice to discover and uncover new knowledge.

Screen Production Researchers move between thinking and making in a fluid and reciprocal process allows their creative practice to become 'informed and innovative' (Batty and Berry, 2015). The manifested object, piece or, in this case, film created by the artist is the articulation of all of the research, much in the same way that an artist's painting or sculpture embodies what the artist was trying to capture and convey. The thesis therefore functions as an exegesis on practice, providing explanation and clarification of the internal thought processes, theoretical inputs and technical approaches taken in the practice to create the final film, providing information that should be of particular interest to future filmmaker-researchers hoping to address the subject of mental health struggles leading to suicidal ideation in their research. As a practice based filmmaking Screen Production Research project, the final film remains the primary research artefact, which is further supported by a body of supplementary films, including a full [video thesis](#) and account of the PhD process, a [scene-by-scene](#) video breakdown and commentary, a portfolio of [filming tests](#) and experiments that lead to the development of the final film, video evidence of [screenings, talks and conferences](#), disseminating the research findings, as well as additional supporting materials in the [submission folder](#), listed in the Appendices. This thesis aims to elucidate the working processes behind the creation of the film for both filmmakers and non-filmmakers alike, identifying and

explaining the key creative choices made throughout the filmmaking research process leading to the final film, [*JACK*](#) (Deery, 2019).

The thesis does not aim to be prescriptive and one of the many strengths of filmmaking as an expressive artform is the sheer variety of approaches to storytelling and creative expression it affords. Through the written component, I attempt to explain and contextualise my own chosen approaches to the creation of the final film, rationalising my decisions using a self-reflexive methodology and drawing upon personal lived experience with mental health struggles through an autoethnographic approach, while also acknowledging that another artist/filmmaker/researcher may take an entirely different approach to practice within the same medium and subject matter, bringing their own unique lived experiences to bear on the final film outcome. Moreover, I hope that the approaches taken in this project will encourage other filmmaker-researchers to address how issues of mental health and suicidal ideation might be better represented in their films, building on the foundations laid here to create future films with the protective principles of the Papageno Effect at their core.

1.3 Research Design

This project is situated firmly within the area of Screen Production Research under Cinematic Arts at Ulster but deals with themes of mental ill health and suicidality that connect with a wide range of other areas and disciplines, particularly the sciences including psychology and sociology, which is something that needed careful consideration within the research design so that a wide range of multidisciplinary research could be accessed and used to inform the themes of the project, developing a deeper understanding of the subjects of mental health and suicide that would be addressed in the filmmaking practice, while still retaining the project's identity as a Screen Production Research practice-based filmmaking project. The central research question 'How might we as filmmakers represent issues of mental ill health and suicidality more constructively in our work?' led to the emergence of several other preliminary and interim research questions, including 'How have issues of mental health and suicide traditionally been represented in film?', 'What research exists in relation to more constructive representations of these issues in film?' and 'What media best-practice guidelines exist for filmmakers wishing to address these issues in their work?'. These emerging research questions helped to guide and shape the research design, resulting in the development of a clearly defined three-stage research process that would facilitate the successful completion of the research project and satisfy the project's aims and objectives.

The initial steps of unpacking the broader original project title 'Researching the use of visual media, including filmmaking and narrative techniques to tackle and reduce stigma surrounding issues of mental health' and the subsequent systematic literature review led to the refinement of the project title in order to more accurately reflect the aims and objectives of the research project in the revised title, 'Researching the use of filmmaking techniques for the representation of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation: Putting the Papageno Effect into Filmmaking Practice'. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of much of the literature pertaining to the themes that would be tackled in the filmmaking practice, the research design needed to be carefully constructed and clearly divided into three distinct stages in order to keep the project clearly focused and firmly established as a filmmaking Screen Production Research project. The three distinct stages of the research design are Thematic research, Contextual research and Technical research.

The first of the three stages was defined as Thematic research, which consisted primarily of a systematic literature review of multidisciplinary research on the broader themes of the project, namely mental health and suicide prevention, researching existing media guidelines and best-practice guides, as well as several discussions with professionals in the fields of mental health and suicide prevention, including Professor Siobhan O'Neill and Tom Bradley of Samaritans. This phase of the research concentrated purely on gathering research across the sciences and other relevant areas that would be used to inform and ground the filmmaking practice, both in terms of the academic literature and safe working practice guidelines for filmmaking. The second phase of the research design was Contextual research, which sought to situate the project within the context of my own field of filmmaking and Screen Production Research. The Contextual research stage situated the project in relation to the field of Screen Production Research and established the terms on which the filmmaking practice would take place. The final stage of the research design was the Technical research phase, which consisted of researching the practical and technical filmmaking tools and approaches that might be used to create the final film output. The third and final phase of the research process involved the core filmmaking practice, ranging from tests and experiments to the development of the final film and constituted the primary focus of the research project, where the primary research aims and objectives could be met. Following the creation of the final film, JACK, informed by multidisciplinary research and an autoethnographic methodology, the purpose of this thesis is to critically frame the filmmaking practice and provide further context, definition and explication of the creative decisions and thought processes that went into the creation of the final Screen Production Research practice piece as part of the PhD submission.

The initial Thematic research stage sought to investigate the themes of mental health and suicide prevention that would be addressed in the final research film, which necessitated a multidisciplinary systematic literature review in order to become better-informed about mental health and suicide from a variety of professional research disciplines, including psychology, social sciences, suicidology, neuroscience and philosophy among others. Although the primary methodology for this Screen Production Research project is an autoethnographic approach, drawing on my own personal lived experience with mental health struggles and suicidal ideation through self-reflection, with the aim of creating a realistic approximation of my own experiences, becoming better informed of the wider professional scientific perspective was essential to the research design in order to ground the practice against a background of contemporary research in the field of mental health and suicide prevention. This Thematic

research phase was essential for several reasons, including; grounding the project within solid, multidisciplinary academic research, drawing information and inspiration from a wide range of literature across several professional areas pertaining to mental health and suicide prevention, ensuring that the filmmaking practice was conducted within safe media guidelines, validating or challenging the intuitions and autoethnographic experiences that I planned to draw upon in the filmmaking practice, uncovering new information and research and discovering current best practice in the areas of mental health and suicide prevention worldwide. The Thematic stage of the research uncovered a wealth of information from a number of diverse areas, ranging from psychology to suicidology, history to sociology, philosophy to theology, literature to law, that I was previously unaware of and would never have encountered outside of the context of the research degree. The diverse collection of papers and articles, books and journals that were gathered at the initial stage of the project went on to inform several key creative decisions in the development and production of the final research film, most notably the discovery of the Papageno Effect, and ensured that the project was well-informed and thoroughly grounded within safe filmmaking practice guidelines from organisations such as the World Health Organisation and Samaritans and within the context of contemporary worldwide efforts to address mental health stigma and reduce suicide.

The Contextual research phase of the research design focused on situating the project in relation to Screen Production Research, film theory, and the historical and contemporary landscape of filmmaking practice. This phase of the project drew together the most pertinent and film-specific aspects of the initial literature review and furthered these within the context of both historical and contemporary film theory (Althusser, 1969, 1971; Metz, 1975, 1982; Nichols, 1976, 1985; Altman, 1984, 1999; Bazin, Renoir and Gray, 1984; Neale, 1999; Žižek and Žižek, 2000; McGowan and Kunkle, 2004; Bazin *et al.*, 2005; Zizek, 2009; Žižek, 2012; McGowan, 2015) and current approaches to Screen Production Research theory (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996; Batty and Kerrigan, 2017; Knudsen, 2018). This phase was important to establish the positioning of the project in relation to film theory; from the now outdated attempts at establishing a Grand Theory of film in the 1970s and 80s that initially helped film to gain academic legitimacy, to the rise of cultural studies that largely subsumed film theory into a wider cultural landscape, the re-emergence of what Bordwell and Carroll called post-theory (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996), encouraging a lively and vibrant culture of theories and theorizing, based on smaller scale film projects and the recent establishment of Screen Production Research as a legitimate research area in its own right (Batty and Kerrigan, 2017).

The third and final stage of the research design was defined as Technical Research. This phase of the process involved research into the filmmaking process itself, from concept to completion, including directing (Mamet, 1992; Rodriguez, 1995; Weston, 2014, 1999; Stern, 2002; Mackendrick, Cronin and Scorsese, 2004; Katz, 2006; Lumet, 2010; Ascher and Pincus, 2012; Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier, 2013; Proferes, 2017), cinematography (Mascelli, 1970, 1998; Alton, 2013; Landau, 2014; Brown, 2016) and editing (Murch, 2001; Chang, 2012; Keast, 2015; Hullfish, 2017; Dancyger, 2019), as well as a cyclical, reciprocal, and reflexive process of testing and experimentation with filmmaking techniques to inform the development of a final research film piece, as will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. This phase of the research process allowed for free exploration of filmmaking techniques, combined with autoethnographic and reflexive approaches to filmmaking practice, encouraging artistic self-expression of concepts and ideas within the context of a well-informed and thoroughly grounded research project. The Technical research phase involved a reflexive process of drawing from my own lived experience of mental health struggles and attempting to create visual representations of these states in film, as well as employing tacit and embodied knowledge from years of artistic and filmmaking practice when it came to shooting and editing. The Technical Research phase prepared the way for the creation of the final research film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019), telling the story of a struggling actor who begins to suffer with his mental wellbeing after a series of setbacks in his life. The film uses a number of novel techniques and approaches to visual storytelling, developed during the Technical Research phase and employs a range of production and postproduction techniques that create a strong visual approximation of the experiences of suicidal ideation and mental health struggles that I sought to portray in the work. By representing suicidal ideation as a result of adverse internal and external influences on the protagonist's mental state, *JACK* (Deery, 2019) embodies the Papageno Effect, by effectively representing and conveying suicidality while avoiding a suicide attempt or any descriptive detail that might be imitated, as well as modelling help-seeking, resilience and recovery as an outcome from suicidal ideation.

1.4 Personal Motivations

Susan Kerrigan states that it is important to declare our ontology as Screen Production Research practitioners (Kerrigan, 2017), helping to situate and contextualise the Screen Production Research practice, as well as stating the philosophical assumptions that constitute the filmmaker-researcher's worldview and subsequent epistemology (see 1.5). I also believe it is an equally integral part of this process to situate the current Screen Production Research project in relation to a personal continuum of creative practice and the sequence of events that led to undertaking a PhD enquiry in the first place, in order to establish the personal motivations and history behind my interest in this area. To this end, below I outline my personal creative practice continuum and experience with mental health struggles leading to suicidality, in order to situate and contextualise the motivations behind the current research enquiry.

I am a multidisciplinary artist and educator, who works across a range of creative disciplines including painting, photography, design, music and filmmaking, with a particular interest in mental health and suicide prevention, having suffered with my own mental health to the point of suicidal crises as a teenager and into my twenties, the ramifications of which I still live with today. I am grateful to have survived these experiences and have used the creative arts as a vehicle for self-expression ever since, channelling my experiences of internal emotional distress into a range of creative art forms that have personal therapeutic benefits as well as the potential to help others. As a qualified creative arts lecturer, I teach the transformative power of the arts daily, as a means of self-expression and a form of therapeutic release for internal mental struggles, having experienced the great benefits of this form of artistic practice first-hand throughout my life. I passionately believe in the importance of learning to think creatively and I teach my students that once a set of creative tools has been learned in one area, they can be adapted and transferred to other areas with relative ease, allowing them to unlock their full creative potential. I believe that every arts discipline can be viewed as inextricably linked and available to everyone as creative vehicles through which to express ideas and find your own unique artistic voice.

I teach within a Humanist ethos and consider Humanism as outlined in the Amsterdam Declaration of 2002 (Humanists International, 2002) to be the closest approximation of my own belief system, building the core tenets and principles of Humanism into all of my life and work. Incorporating the values of Humanism into filmmaking provides an opportunity to model

potential practical solutions to some of humanity's problems in an accessible and engaging way that people can relate to, share and be inspired by to take action. During this PhD Screen Production Research project, taking a Humanist approach to filmmaking on mental health and suicide prevention allows me to focus on conveying the realities of living with internal mental distress in a compassionate and empathetic way, as well as highlighting some of the practical support, advice and deep human kindness that is available to anyone struggling with their mental wellbeing, regardless of their political, financial, cultural, sexual, racial or religious background or social situation. I discuss Humanism within the context of the current Screen Production Research project in greater depth later in the thesis (See 1.6).

I believe that the creative arts allow us to explore perspectives on our shared human condition and our place in the world and the universe. They allow us to tap into the underlying life force that drives all living things and express it in a way that other people can relate to, finding something universal that resonates deeply with others. David Lynch refers to this as the 'infinite unmanifested' that he experiences through transcendental meditation, providing inspiration and ideas for his films and art. Artists are practitioners of the sublime, accessing this infinite well of unmanifested potential and moulding it into discernible form, crystallising and representing some small part of what it is like to be living human being. This infinite well can never be drained nor can it be encapsulated in a single piece of art, and so artists keep striving to create and capture ideas through their artworks, films, photographs, sculptures and images, returning time and time again to take another little piece of inspiration away from the infinite unmanifested and bring it into being through their work. It is impossible to capture everything there is to express in one piece of art or indeed within a lifetime of artistic practice and so artists simply create what they can, adding their small stone to the top of the mountain and leaving a trail of footprints for others to follow behind them.

So too, with filmmaking practice research; it is unrealistic to expect to encapsulate everything that we wish to say in a single film or within the span of a single PhD or filmmaking career, but by defining the project's goals and setting clear parameters for Screen Production Research practice, we can make a valuable contribution to knowledge within the chosen area of focus. For me, that area is mental health and suicide prevention in film and seeking ways in which filmmaking tools can be used to create more constructive, compassionate, hopeful and positive depictions of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation, offering hope of recovery and encouraging help-seeking for those in need. As someone with first-hand experience of the

barriers that stigma creates to help-seeking for those in need, I feel passionately about the use of filmmaking to model and promote help-seeking behaviours for mental health struggles and suicidal ideation. I believe filmmaking can constructively contribute towards reducing the stigma surrounding our mental health and encourage people in need to seek help instead of keeping their emotions bottled up, which if left unchecked can lead to rapidly worsening problems and suicidal ideation, as it did in my own personal experience.

I am particularly concerned with the problem of suicide, suicidal thoughts and self-destructive behaviour in my work. Although I feel very fortunate to have survived my own struggles, I have sadly lost several dear friends and family members to suicide throughout my lifetime and I have been painfully struck every time by a deep sense of loss, grief and total helplessness in the face of the finality of their actions; wishing I could have said or done something differently to help them change their mind before they took their own life. As personally painful as these experiences have been, they have become a driving and motivating force behind much of my life's creative practice, culminating in this PhD project.

I am far from alone in being affected by suicide, as somebody takes their own life every forty seconds, resulting in over 800,000 deaths by suicide worldwide each year. The World Health Organisation believe that every suicide is a preventable death with timely and appropriate intervention (WHO, 2014) and numerous individuals, organisations and charities are working towards the common goal of reducing suicide numbers towards zero. We know that stigma is the single biggest barrier to seeking help for mental health problems and suicidal thoughts (Corrigan, Roe and Tsang, 2011) but we also know as filmmaker-researchers that film and TV depictions of characters with mental illness have played a significant role in creating and reinforcing this stigma (Wahl, 1992, 2012; Byrne, 2009). With increasing awareness and availability of information on the damage that insensitive or irresponsible depictions can cause (Pirkis *et al.*, 2006; Pirkis, 2009; Pirkis and Nordentoft, 2011; Samaritans, 2013; World Health Organisation and IASP, 2017; Time to Change, 2019), we are obligated as filmmakers to endeavour to create more considered and responsible depictions of characters with mental health issues and suicidal thoughts. By choosing to create more rounded, informed, nuanced and sensitive depictions of characters struggling with suicidal thoughts as well as modelling help-seeking and recovery, I believe that filmmakers can make a significant contribution to reducing suicide numbers worldwide. The belief in the powerful and positive impact that filmmaking can have is a key personal motivation for undertaking this current research study.

My previous creative works dealing with mental health and suicide have ranged from writing and recording songs with mental health themed lyrics and contributing to a mental health charity album, to designing, painting and facilitating the creation of a mental health themed double mural for the new Grangewood mental health hospital in Derry with groups of former service users. As a final project for a Master's degree in 2014, I created the short film *DROP* (Deery, 2014), which was shown at several mental health film festivals and ultimately opened the door to the current Screen Production Research project. I believe that film is one of the most versatile and communicative artforms, ideal for tackling mental health and suicide stigma by modelling recovery and help-seeking in an engaging and exciting way utilising the full range of auditory and visual tools available to us as filmmakers.

As a filmmaker-researcher I want to create films that help facilitate that conversation, to provide a starting point and a platform for discussion on ways in which we can look after our own and others' mental health in society. This is just one example of where a Humanist approach to filmmaking can help to address an important human, societal problem like suicide and mental health struggles and provide a practical tool that contributes towards solving the problem. I believe that a film used as a tool for discussion in this way can lead us to question our assumptions and prejudices about those struggling with their mental health and perhaps serve to show us that internal mental struggles are a normal part of life that can affect anyone at any time. It is important to address these problems in an open and honest manner in order to begin to destigmatise them and begin to promote help-seeking and recovery for mental health struggles and suicidal ideation. As outlined in the introduction, the Papageno Effect (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010; Niederkrötenhaler, Tran and Till, 2016) proposes that creating stories that demonstrate suicidal ideation followed by recovery and help-seeking instead of a suicide attempt could have a protective and preventative effect and encourage people to seek help for mental health struggles and suicidal ideation.

A further benefit of creating films modelling help-seeking and recovery in the modern digital age is the ability to share with a wide audience online who may not be willing or able to attend a cinema screening. This greatly increases the potential number of people who might see the film worldwide and question their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours after seeing it. Video hosting platforms like YouTube and Vimeo offer the ability to watch the film privately and for free anywhere in the world, to share with friends or loved ones in order to start what can often

be a difficult conversation, or to screen to a community or share on social media. The potential reach and impact of modelling help-seeking behaviour through filmic representations therefore is exponentially increased by utilising these new online video sharing platforms.

It is within this context that I undertake the current Screen Production Research project, with the firm belief that filmmaking offers one of the most flexible and powerful sets of tools for tackling the issues of mental health stigma and promoting suicide prevention. Having been affected by my own mental health struggles and heavily impacted by suicide in my own life, the personal motivation to pursue this Screen Production Research project is exceptionally strong and therefore salient to acknowledge in terms of the project context, as these personal experiences have guided, informed and shaped the project, from the research design right through to the final outcome. Having outlined and acknowledged my personal motivations it is now important to define my ontology and epistemology in order to further frame the inquiry.

1.5 Ontology and Epistemology

Having a well-defined ontology and epistemology is a fundamental part of any successful research design as it situates the research within a chosen research paradigm and underpins the approaches taken to the enquiry, outlining the basic philosophical assumptions and methodologies used to conduct the research. Grix defines ontology as ‘What is out there to know’ and epistemology as ‘what and how can we know about it?’ (Grix, 2010). As a Screen Production Research project under Cinematic Arts at Ulster, I am working within a qualitative research paradigm, seeking to explore, convey and create meaning through filmmaking practice research related to mental health issues, with particular focus on suicide prevention.

Susan Kerrigan insists that Screen Production Researchers should declare their ontology in their research design as it clearly states the researcher’s world view and influences the nature of the research design and the choice of epistemology (Kerrigan, 2017). I believe that as individuals we learn from our encounters with the world around us and that meaning is subjective and constructed by human beings and as such take a constructivist ontological position in Grix’s terms (Grix, 2010). There are several variations in terminology for this ontological position including constructionism (Bryman, 2016), constructivism (Blaikie, 2010; Grix, 2010) or anti-foundationalist (Marsh, Ercan and Furlong, 2018), that all relate to the same ontological position and a belief that we create meaning in our social reality from our experiences and encounters with the world, as opposed to an objectivist ontological position that believes in and pursues external facts that can be proven or disproven using scientific methods, more typical of a quantitative research paradigm.

A constructivist ontological position defines a particular world view and a belief in the nature of ‘what is out there to know’ (Grix, 2010) that informs and influences epistemology. My epistemological position is interpretivism (Grix, 2010; Bryman, 2016) also known as subjectivism, which is concerned with the ‘empathic understanding of human actions, rather than with the forces that are deemed to act upon it’ (Bryman, 2016). As a filmmaker-researcher I believe that we can create films that have meaning and impact and that the films and media we view can impact upon our opinions, thoughts, beliefs, behaviours and actions.

A constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology situate the current filmmaking practice research project firmly in a qualitative research paradigm that values the emotional

and empathic impact that films can have. This allows for the development of a final research film, informed by multidisciplinary research and primarily based on an autoethnographic methodology, using reflexive filmmaking practice methods to create a final piece of film that contains a realistic and destigmatising portrayal of deteriorating mental health leading to suicidal ideation and encourages help-seeking for those in need.

An interpretivist epistemology is based on the belief that as human beings, we create meaning from social phenomena and our interactions with the world. Meaning is constantly and continually constructed and re-evaluated from the things we see, hear and experience in the world as our social reality. Everyone's experience of life is subjective, and everyone's own life circumstances are nuanced and utterly unique to them. Filmmaking offers us the chance to express our own view of life in a way that is accessible and relatable for others, potentially revealing universal perceptions and connections that are common to us all, despite the subjective and individual nature of each human being's life experiences.

I believe that one of the main reasons that Interpretivism or Subjectivism/Constructionism is a useful epistemology for a filmmaking Screen Production Research project dealing with a societal problem like mental ill health with particular focus on suicide prevention, is the significant potential for social learning and impact made possible through watching a film. From Bandura's social learning theories (Bandura and Walters, 1976; Bandura, 1977) to the Papageno Effect (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010) that posits that seeing preventative and help-seeking representations of recovery from suicidal crises could have a real-world protective effect, there is evidence to suggest that our actions can be informed and influenced by the phenomena that we encounter in our daily lives, including in this case, positive behavioural responses to suicidal crises modelled on screen. Therefore, the approach I have taken in this project to put the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice fits well with the interpretivist epistemological stance, as if the things we see, experience and witness can have an effect on our thoughts and actions, then modelling help-seeking behaviour and recovery from suicidal crisis could have a strong preventative and protective effect for somebody in crisis, a friend or family member of someone struggling, or anyone who has been affected by suicidal thoughts in the past. This is the core tenet of the Papageno Effect and by translating this theory into filmmaking practice in this research project, I aim to crystallize a diverse range of knowledge into an accessible and engaging film artefact that contributes to the de-stigmatisation of mental health issues and models protective factors for suicidal ideation.

I believe that the ‘knowing’ of the filmmaker as artist-researcher is largely tacit and embodied and it is only through engaging in a process of reflexive and iterative filmmaking practice that we can begin to understand and articulate how we as filmmaker-researchers tap into this embodied knowledge in order to make ideas manifest as film. Practice as research recognises the validity of this form of knowledge and affords ample room and opportunity for such practice to take place, revealing previously unknown insights and new knowledge drawn from the artist’s creative practice (Barrett and Bolt, 2010; Sullivan, 2010; Nelson, 2013). As discussed in the previous section (See 1.4), David Lynch refers to the limitless potential creative possibilities available to the artist filmmaker as the Infinite unmanifested (Gaughran, 2011), or the unknowable and inexplicable real as Lacan or McGowan might say (McGowan, 2003, 2007; McGowan and Kunkle, 2004). The artist filmmaker can tap into and engage with this infinitely unknowable unmanifested potential through their practice and create something new in the world that we can experience with our senses, but that ultimately supersedes or even defies explanation. In the context of a Screen Production Research project, it is the task of the filmmaker-researcher to attempt to provide this explanation, creating a reasoned account of the creative processes and decisions that went into the creation of the final film as research artefact. Every filmmaker-researcher is unique, and each has their own unique style and artistic voice, but by providing a clear account of how an individual project was created, we can provide a working example for others to build upon in future Screen Production Research projects of their own.

Acknowledging this uniqueness, this Screen Production Research project is strongly influenced by my own personal set of life events, circumstances and artistic sensibilities and therefore is not intended to be prescriptive or dogmatic in any way. I would expect another filmmaker-researcher to take their own approach to a similar project, drawing on their own life experiences to shape the stories they wanted to tell and the outcomes they aspire to create. Although this project has produced a unique and personal filmmaking outcome, the learning and knowledge uncovered during the practice research process has revealed insights that can be extrapolated and generalised to a certain degree, in line with media guidelines, to suggest approaches one might consider taking to mental health filmmaking practice research projects in future. This Screen Production Research project benefits from extensive research into the approaches taken in the sciences and other disciplines to reduce suicide and mental health stigma, which has helped to inform and ground the project in relation to contemporary research and enabled me

to develop ideas and approaches to filmmaking practice that could be applicable to other filmmakers and media creators hoping to address these issues in their work.

This project has also benefitted from the flexible approach of Screen Production Research / arts practice research to adapt and change direction quickly and easily within the flow of creative practice, constantly adapting, interpreting and redirecting the filmmaking practice as circumstances change and happenstances occur. Being open and flexible in the approach to the creative process, without a rigid set of guidelines that must be adhered to is a major advantage when it comes to accessing and expressing tacit knowledge, as it is only through the experience of practice itself does the artist intuit where to go next, rapidly stepping in and out of creative practice in what Gibson calls a cognitive two-step (Gibson, 2017). As mentioned above, the practice as research framework allows for this element of flow within artistic and creative practice to discover, uncover or express tacit knowledge and recognises this relatively new form of knowledge on equal footing as the positivist approaches taken in other fields including the sciences. By engaging in filmmaking practice research in this way, I have been able to uncover certain approaches and express knowledge based on experience that otherwise would not have been accessible to me. The realisations and revelations uncovered during the filmmaking process are discussed in detail in chapter 5, reflecting on the experiences involved in making the final film and articulating a number of key insights and new knowledge learned from the Screen Production Research process.

It is important to acknowledge that while this project draws upon multidisciplinary research pertaining to mental health and suicide prevention, it is firmly situated within filmmaking Screen Production Research under the department of Cinematic Arts and remains within a qualitative research paradigm. The ‘thematic research’ information gathering stage of my research design facilitated an initial stage of reading and research into the relevant literature to expand my own knowledge of the themes I aimed to address in my filmmaking practice, the majority of which was written by professionals and academics within the sciences, using quantitative methods and analyses of data and approaches to research that are not directly applicable to my own project. By collecting pertinent information from the multidisciplinary fields of suicidology, psychology and social sciences, I was able to become better-informed and make better creative decisions in the filmmaking practice as a result. Due to the diverse nature of this initial period of research that included a range of quantitative data and scientific literature, I reiterate that this remains a filmmaking Screen Production Research project within

a qualitative research paradigm, informed by a deeper knowledge of mental health and suicide prevention ascertained from the scientific literature.

This project employs an autoethnographic methodology based on real personal lived experience with mental distress and suicidal ideation, which will be discussed later in the thesis (see 1.6). As such, the primary gauge of the success of the final project outcome will be the degree to which I am satisfied that the film accurately reflects and conveys the personal realities of living with suicidal ideation and mental distress. By utilizing a range of filmmaking tools informed by multidisciplinary research and safe media guidelines, to convey the Papageno Effect through filmmaking practice, I endeavoured to create a piece that is both deeply personal and yet touches upon something universal about our shared human experience.

The filmmaking practice research process has revealed new knowledge and insight about the ways in which we as filmmakers can create films dealing with mental health issues and suicide in a more considered and compassionate way, resulting in suggestions and recommendations for other filmmaker-researchers who wish to explore these themes in their work, as well as identifying areas for further research. The project's conclusions are specifically arts-based, and practitioner focused, with the primary research artefact, the final film, as the manifest evidence and ultimate outcome of the research process. This accompanying thesis or exegesis on practice expands on the knowledge and insights gained and explains in depth the thoughts and creative processes that led to the decisions made through intuition, reflection and insight as the practice developed, as well as summarising the many influences on the research project from areas as diverse as psychology, sociology, neuroscience, philosophy and suicidology. The final research film JACK is accessible online at www.jackthemovie.co.uk and is available for further research in Screen Production Research and other disciplines.

1.6 Humanist Filmmaking

As Screen Production Research practitioners, defining our ontological and epistemological stance is helpful in defining how new knowledge will be discovered and acknowledging our personal motivations behind embarking on a research project further contextualises it in relation to the individual undertaking the research (see 1.3). I feel it is also important to acknowledge the weight that one's own personal belief system can have on the very nature of inquiry and the resulting evidence produced in a given Screen Production Research project (see 1.3). As has often been the case throughout the history of filmmaking, the personal, political or religious beliefs of a director can exert a powerful influence on their choice of subject matter and the very manner in which they create a film, from D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ* (Gibson, 2004). Recognising the significance of our personal belief systems in presupposing certain elements within artistic inquiry is important, as it accounts in large part for any perceived bias regarding given themes, topics or representations within the artwork.

Personally, I consider the contemporary definition of Humanism, as set out in the Amsterdam Declaration of 2002 (Humanists International, 2002), to represent the closest approximation of my own belief system and I aspire to Humanist values in all of my creative work. The Amsterdam Declaration of 2002 sets out the fundamental principles of modern Humanism, spelled with a capital 'H' in order to distinguish it from earlier forms of humanism, and states that modern Humanism is an ethical, rational and democratic belief system and is a way of life that is open to all human beings. Humanism values artistic creativity and imagination and believes in the values of personal liberty tempered with social responsibility and a respect for the natural world. Humanism is a 'response to the widespread demand for an alternative to dogmatic religion' and aspires to 'the maximum possible fulfilment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living', offering an 'ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times' (Humanists International, 2002).

The contemporary definition of Humanism, as set out in the Amsterdam Declaration of 2002 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the original Amsterdam Declaration of 1952, updating it for the 21st century, although many of the core principles of both declarations can trace their roots back to the 'father of Humanistic Psychology' (The Psychology Notes, 2013) Abraham Maslow, whose theory of human motivation and hierarchy of needs model helped to establish

Humanism as a prominent area of psychology that is still relevant today (Maslow, 1943; Mathes, 1981; Datta, 2010; McLeod, 2012). Maslow's original five-stage model of the hierarchy of needs outlines how we as human beings progress through a number of levels of needs in life, starting with basic physiological needs like food, shelter and water, normally represented as the base of a pyramid, then progressing upwards through the need for safety, then love and belongingness, before the need for self-esteem and finally self-actualisation at the top of the pyramid, whereby a human being realises their full potential (McLeod, 2012). Maslow later expanded the model to include cognitive, aesthetic and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970a, 1970b) and his work was influential in establishing Humanism as a modern, rational and ethical way of life available to all human beings (Humanists International, 2002).

Humanism also offers a useful frame for Screen Production Research practice, as it places the onus on the ability of human beings to work together to find solutions to the problems that we face. One of the core tenets of Humanism is the belief that the solutions to many of the world's problems lie in the actions and thoughts of human beings and that we have the power to affect positive change on the world by working together for the common good. Humanism considers all human beings as equal regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political persuasion and is a non-dogmatic belief system that is universal to all human beings. As outlined above, Humanism values creative and artistic expression and recognises the transformative effect that the creative arts can have. These Humanist values have underpinned many of the approaches taken to the creation of the final research film and run throughout the research project. In respect to mental health and suicide prevention, a Humanist approach to filmmaking paves the way for films that recognise the power of human beings to overcome adversity, build mental resilience and recover from suicidal ideation by seeking help and supporting one another.

Filmmaking practice research that is underpinned by Humanist values and principles, what I refer to here as Humanist Filmmaking, ascribes to all of the fundamental tenets of the Humanist world view in a way that has a profound impact on practice, on my ontology and epistemology, as well as the arguments I put forward for responsible depictions of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation in filmmaking. Take for example the core Humanist principle that 'personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility' (Humanists International, 2002); this has a direct impact on my views in the argument about censorship and creative freedom when dealing with mental health issues and suicide in filmmaking. Although I do not advocate censorship in any way nor seek to hinder the creative expression of filmmakers, I do believe

that we have a social responsibility to create more considered and informed depictions of mental health issues and suicidal ideation in film, particularly in light of what is now known about the harmful impact that negative depictions of mental illness and suicide can have. The personal liberty to create and experiment with filmmaking is something that I strongly encourage, but with that personal liberty comes a social responsibility not to knowingly create films that are deliberately offensive or defamatory towards any group in society. Peter Byrne concludes his Screening Madness report with the hope that one day stigmatising portrayals of mental health stereotypes will one day be as rare and as unacceptable as racist or homophobic stereotypes are in film today (Byrne, 2009).

Humanist filmmaking calls upon us all as filmmakers and researchers to become better informed about the ways in which we represent certain subjects, groups or people in our cinematic practice and acknowledge that these representations can have a powerful impact on people in the real world. Filmmaking offers us a formidable set of communicative tools that can create long lasting cinematic depictions of individuals and groups that can either have a detrimental or beneficial real-world impact on those groups in our society. The principles of Humanism when applied to filmmaking advocate for ethical, inclusive, constructive and socially responsible cinematic depictions of any individual or group in our society.

Coupled with and complimentary to Humanism are the teachings of Eckhart Tolle, who has had a profound and literally life-saving impact on me through his two books, *The Power of Now* and *A New Earth* (Tolle, 2016b, 2016a). Tolle is a modern spiritual teacher who recognises the fundamental commonality and shared objectives of all major religious doctrines worldwide. Tolle's teachings can be summarised into two key points: The first is to recognise that the ego has a powerful influence over daily actions, thoughts and unconscious behaviours. The second key point is that once we learn to recognise and stop our automatic, kneejerk, ego-driven reactions, we can begin to make different choices about the ways in which we respond and react to any given situation in every moment of our lives from a more considered and centred place within ourselves; that is what Tolle calls the power of now.

Tolle teaches us how to recognise and separate out the egoic mind from our underlying true nature, our real selves, beyond all of the labels we attach and the stories we tell ourselves to define our social identity. Learning to separate and recognise these two parts of ourselves is an incredibly useful tool for noticing when our egoic mind is in control of our daily lives, whether

it be taking offence or reacting angrily at something someone has said, or believing that your job title, wealth, history, social status or anything else for that matter is who you really are. These are just the labels and stories that the ego builds up and feeds upon and people who are completely controlled by their egoic mind falsely believe that these stories are an intrinsic part of who they really are. Tolle teaches us how to separate ourselves from the egoic mind so that we can break free from this unconscious way of thinking and behaving and return to a more genuine, humble, grounded and centred place within our true selves.

Once we understand the distinction between the egoic mind and our underlying true selves, *The Power of Now* teaches us how we can recognise and control the actions of the egoic mind in the present moment throughout our daily lives, giving us the option to choose our own actions from a more centred, mindful and reflective place. Tolle teaches us that all we ever have is the present moment, the now, and that all past pain, regret, sorrow, depression and so on, arises through focusing too much on the past and what has happened in our lives before this moment. The power of now teaches us that we have a choice about what to do with this past pain; we can either feed the egoic mind's identity by feeling sorry for ourselves and seeking the pity and attention of others, or we can turn that into power and motivation in the present moment to make a positive change in our lives and the lives of others. Similarly, Tolle teaches us that all anxiety, worry and stress about what might happen comes about by focusing too heavily on the future and not living in the present moment. The power of now teaches us to make the most of every day, from a centred and grounded place, free of automatic, unconscious egoic reactions to the external events in everyday life.

Tolle's teachings have played a crucial role in shaping the concepts and narrative choices of the final research film and the character Jack functions as a visual manifestation of Tolle's concept of the egoic mind; the unconsciously controlled part of the character James, as revealed at the end of the film in a dramatic twist as Jack/James is about to take his own life. The actions that 'Jack' takes throughout the film are reactive and uncontrolled, from a place where the egoic mind has taken complete control of James' thoughts and behaviours, and a second viewing of the film reveals the alternate realities between someone who lives unconsciously, controlled by their egoic mind in all aspects of their life (Jack), and somebody who has learned to embrace the power of now (James). In fact, the final recovery sequence of the film features a shot of James sitting outside reading Tolle's *Power of Now*. The concept of Jack a visual representation of the egoic mind is one that I first experimented with in *DROP* (Deery, 2014)

and have been able to pursue and develop much more fully in this project, resulting in the final PhD Research film *JACK* (Deery, 2019).

As well as the teachings of Tolle and the principles of Humanism, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Pirsig, 1974) and his metaphysical concepts of quality provide a background influence on my own personal interpretations of the successes and areas for improvement in the practice. The works of Richard Dawkins (Dawkins, 2007, 2016) and Christopher Hitchens (Hitchens, 2017) offer a useful further contribution by the rejection of religious belief systems and a move towards a more secular Humanist approach to problem solving for the betterment of humanity and the natural world.

While researching the subject of suicide for this research project, I discovered the work of Albert Camus and specifically *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus, 2005), in which Camus uses the story of an ancient king condemned by the gods to push a boulder up a hill every day for all eternity, only to watch it roll back down the hill at the end of each day, to discuss his philosophical position on suicide; rejecting suicide in favour of embracing life despite realising the absurd nature of our existence and the inevitability of our fate. Camus' philosophy shares a number of similarities with the core principles of Tolle's *The Power of Now* and he has had an important influence on my own philosophical stance on suicide within the context of this project. This is further acknowledged by opening the final film with a quote from Camus; 'There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy' (Camus, 2005)

By explicitly stating my own belief system in this way, I am also acknowledging the important role that it has played in the development of this Screen Production Research project, from the creative decisions made during the early development stages, through to the final film. Contextualising the research practice in this manner further acknowledges that future filmmaker-researchers could approach a similar project from a different angle, bringing with them their own beliefs, background and experiences to shape the nature and style of the film's development and final research outcome.

1.7 Methodology

The primary methodology for this Screen Production Research project (Batty and Kerrigan, 2017) is autoethnography based on lived experience with mental health struggles and suicidal ideation, expressed and manifested through reflexive practice-based filmmaking research, supplemented, informed and supported by current research in the fields of mental health and suicide prevention. This filmmaking Screen Production Research project was divided into three clear stages (see 1.3), the first of which was Thematic research, helping to inform the project with the latest research in the fields of mental health and suicide prevention, the second stage was Contextual research that situated the project in relation its own field of Screen Production Research and the third and final stage was Technical research that helped to inform and develop cinematic techniques for the creation of the final research film.

An autoethnographic methodology allowed for my own experiences of mental health struggles and lived experience of suicidal ideation to inform the choice of appropriate filmmaking tools and approaches that accurately represent and convey these internal states for an audience. The resulting film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019), was only be deemed complete once I was satisfied that it accurately conveyed the internal mental state of the character and exemplified the Papageno Effect; representing a strong protective and preventative model for suicidal ideation and making an original contribution to knowledge as an exemplar of how filmmaker-researchers might create safer, more considered and de-stigmatising representations of mental health struggles leading to suicidal ideation in film.

The research design necessitated a systematic literature review (see 1.2) during an initial period of ‘Thematic Research’, gathering pertinent information from a wide range of academic disciplines concerned with suicide prevention and mental health, including but not limited to, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, Neuroscience, Medicine and Suicidology, in order to deepen my knowledge and better inform the filmmaking practice. Using the University library’s database search, I used several key words and terms including ‘Mental Health’, ‘Suicid*’, ‘Film’ and ‘Movie’, to discover a broad range of academic literature pertaining to the subjects and themes of the project. I then refined the searches, limiting to relevant research within the last five years, peer reviewed and with a high citation h-index to refine the search to the most pertinent literature that might help broaden and deepen my understanding of contemporary research in the fields of mental health and suicide prevention. Further detail and

information on the systematic literature review can be found on pages 72-74 of the JACK PhD Blog Year 1 in the [submission folder](#). Following an initial period of thematic research, the knowledge gained from a range of areas could be factored into the filmmaking practice and combined with the autoethnographic methods, reflections and intuitions in a process of reflexive practice to produce a final piece of film with a constructive representation of help-seeking and recovery for suicidal ideation that puts the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. By conducting an initial multidisciplinary systematic literature review into mental health and suicide prevention, I was able to garner relevant information that broadened and deepened my knowledge in these areas and grounded the practice against a background of current scientific thought, directly influencing many of the creative and artistic decisions in the filmmaking practice.

Following the broader Thematic literature review on the subjects that would be tackled within the narrative of the filmmaking practice, the second stage of the project helped to situate the project within its own research context of contemporary filmmaking practice research and Screen Production Research. Using a similar systematic approach to the literature review, the Contextual phase of the literature review helped to firmly establish the project within the context of contemporary practice-based filmmaking research and the newly emerging forms of knowledge that filmmaker-researchers are discovering under Screen Production Research practice. Once I was satisfied that the project had become thoroughly grounded and well informed by the literature, I began the process of writing and developing a screenplay for a final film that would satisfy the aims of the project by translating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice and conveying a strong protective and preventative message for suicidal ideation and mental health struggles. Concurrently to the development of the screenplay, I began a process of testing and exploring cinematic techniques that might be used in the production of the final film and that also helped to inform and clarify ideas for the final screenplay (see 5.1). These short cinematic tests were created to probe and explore a variety of ways in which mental health issues and suicidal ideation might be represented in film and formed part of an iterative, reciprocal, reflexive and intuitive process, in which the testing of ideas flowed freely and were allowed to develop fully before the creation of a final piece of film practice. This period of technical exploration and reflexive practice was a critical component of the methodology, allowing the process of thinking by doing that occurs in arts-based practice research to occur, helping to stimulate the development of ideas and techniques that would have a significant influence on the creation of the final film. There was no set

structure, length or theme for the cinematic experiments, beyond the broad umbrella aims of the project, which allowed for a period of gestation and development of ideas for the final film. After this period of filmmaking exploration and technical testing, the development of the final research film began in earnest, using the ideas and knowledge generated from the testing phase to inspire and influence the creation of the final film. The development of the final film took place in three distinct stages, Development and Preproduction; Production; and Postproduction. The development and preproduction stage included the generation of narrative ideas, screenwriting, script-editing, storyboarding, costuming, prop making, set design, location scouting and assembling a team of cast and crew, which took place over several months before shooting the final research film. The shooting of the final film during the production phase took place over several carefully scheduled weeks, utilising a range of locations, resources, cast and crew. The final postproduction phase which included the editing, assembly of sequences, layering of visual effects, transitions, titles and credits, audio editing and experimental approaches to the overall structure and flow of the final research film, lasted several months and went through a process of iterative editing and refinement based on consultations and test screenings with supervisors and fellow Screen Production Researchers under Cinematic Arts. The final film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019), serves as an expression of the technical, contextual and thematic research carried out throughout the PhD process and is the primary research artefact. This accompanying thesis functions to expand on and elucidate the thoughts and technical decisions made throughout the practice (see 1.2), as well as summarising the key theoretical concepts and frameworks that informed the practice and development of the final film piece.

The final film was created locally in Derry, Northern Ireland, using local actors, crew and locations, using a deliberate low-to-no budget approach, based on what Erik Knudsen refers to as the cinema of poverty (Knudsen, 2010a), where a lack of budget and minimal external influences on creative practice can help to uncover new approaches to filmmaking and cinematic storytelling. This approach, while presenting certain challenges, also provides an opportunity for the filmmaker-researcher to think innovatively and explore creative filmmaking ideas freely, without any external pressures, agendas, requirements or inputs that funders, sponsors or other third parties may have. Another reason for the decision to take a low budget approach is to encourage other filmmakers and creative artists to embrace filmmaking as an affordable, accessible and democratic tool for the creation and expression of concepts and ideas. The final film exists primarily as a piece of filmmaking practice-research and

therefore the ability to work with minimal outside creative and artistic restrictions is important for the discovery of new knowledge through reflexive filmmaking practice and is crucial to retain the integrity of the research project and the ability to satisfy the aims and objectives of the research project. The final film is a 34-minute drama modelling a positive outcome of recovery from suicidal ideation in line with the Papageno Effect, created on a low budget, in order to demonstrate what is possible by embracing filmmaking as an accessible and powerful communicative artform to promote help-seeking and recovery from mental distress and suicidal ideation.

Another important factor in my methodology is the importance of what Erik Knudsen calls the Total filmmaker (Knudsen, 2016), similar to Jerry Lewis' 1971 book of the same name (Lewis, 1971), in which concept development, screenwriting, directing and editing are all seen as parts of one role, allowing the writer-director to have complete control of their vision and crucially to be involved in every step of the process. I feel it is imperative to this filmmaking research project that I am totally involved in every step of the film's creation in order to synergise my own lived experience with the collected research into a final film piece, through a process of autoethnographic inquiry and reflexive filmmaking practice research. Although the final film required a cast and, for some scenes, a small crew, I was responsible for every stage of production, from writing the script, to casting, directing, shooting and editing the final film. This ethos of involvement and exploration at every stage of the process affords the growth of ideas and concepts and the flow of creative practice, making adjustments and changes to practice from inside the filmmaking practice itself. Situating the filmmaker-researcher at the very heart of the creative process provides an important locus for original and innovative approaches to filmmaking, drawing on personal autoethnography, tacit knowledge and embodied cognition gained from previous experience or from a period of testing and experimentation with a particular focus to express ideas and uncover new knowledge. By staying true to an original vision and manifesting a final film through an autoethnographic and reflexive filmmaking practice methodology, this project has been able to make an original contribution to the field of Screen Production Research as the first project to take the concepts and ideas of the Papageno Effect and translate them into real filmmaking practice in the form of the research film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019).

1.8 Methods

This Screen Production Research project is based on an autoethnographic methodology (see 1.7) and exists within a qualitative research paradigm (see 1.5), drawing upon personal lived experience of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation as the primary source for informing and guiding the filmmaking research practice. As previously discussed (see 1.3), due to the themes of mental health and suicidality that would be addressed in the filmmaking practice, the research design necessitated a wide-ranging systematic literature review that gathered multidisciplinary academic literature in order to broaden and deepen understanding of the issues of mental health and suicidality so that the filmmaking practice was grounded against a background of solid academic research and informed media guidelines for filmmaking practice. As a direct result of the research design, the project required methods that were appropriate for the individual stages of the project.

The primary method required during the initial Thematic Research phase of the project (see 1.3) was a systematic literature review pertaining to the themes of the project, using select search criteria (see 1.7) to gather pertinent information on mental health and suicide that would later be factored into the creative filmmaking practice. The systematic literature review helped to uncover a range of significant research for the project, including guidelines for filmmakers and media professionals and most notably the Papageno Effect from the field of Psychology and Suicidology that helped to shape the direction of the research inquiry and had a fundamental impact on the development of the project by identifying a theoretical framework with a clear gap in knowledge that only a Screen Production Research project could address, by translating the Papageno Effect theory into filmmaking practice. A similar method was employed to a systematic literature review concerning film-specific literature during the Contextual Research phase of the project in order to establish the current research project in relation to its own research context of Screen Production Research, as well as in relation to historical film theory and film-based academia.

Both the initial Thematic and subsequent Contextual literature reviews uncovered a broad range of literature across a number of diverse disciplines pertaining to film and to mental health and suicide prevention, primarily from the sciences including Psychology, Psychiatry, Sociology, Suicidology and Neuroscience, but also including History, Philosophy, Healthcare and Law. The broad range of information gathered during the first two stages of the research

project using systematic literature review methods provided a substantial knowledge base from which to progress onto the final stage of the Screen Production Research project, which related to the filmmaking practice itself.

The methods employed during the third ‘Technical’ and practical stage of the research project needed to be different to the methods used in the earlier stages of the project, as the primary aim of the Technical Research stage was to investigate the practical application of filmmaking skills and develop potential approaches for the representation of mental distress and suicidal ideation that the final film would tackle, from the perspective of a Filmmaker and Screen Production Researcher. This third and final stage of the research project consisted of several smaller iterative developmental stages towards the final research project goal of creating a film that demonstrated how we as filmmakers might more constructively represent issues of mental distress and suicidality in our work by putting the principles of the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. Each of these developmental stages required certain methods of their own, including developing, writing and redrafting a screenplay for a final film, experimenting with the practical settings and functions of the filmmaking equipment in order to develop a tacit understanding of the potential applications and limitations of the equipment for creating a final film, and finally the scheduling, recruiting, planning, rehearsing, shooting and editing the final film, all of which required specific methods in order to make the final research film a success. The specific filmmaking methods and approaches employed in the creation of the final research film are discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Through the careful utilisation of multiple appropriate methods at every stage of the research design, this Screen Production Research project has been able to successfully fulfil its aims and objectives by creating a final film that translates the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice within a Screen Production Research project. The project’s autoethnographic methodology ensured that the final film *JACK* (Deery, 2019) is both a deeply personal account reflecting lived experiences of mental distress and suicidality and yet also contains a universally relatable message with regard to help-seeking and recovery, putting the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

1.9 Chapter Outline

Chapter one outlines the research project proposal and the issues I aimed to address in this Screen Production Research project. I outline the theoretical frameworks within which the practice took place, as well as providing a summary of some of the key findings from the multidisciplinary literature review that informed the filmmaking practice.

Chapter two discusses the field of Screen Production Research, its development from practice as research in the arts and how this relatively new form of research has become increasingly established in the academy. This chapter discusses the importance of arts-based practice research and how the creation of a final film artefact serves as a coherent expression of the research undertaken. This chapter also discusses the PhD practice-based research process of acquiring knowledge both through research and literature, then developing a final piece of film inspired by specialist multidisciplinary research pertaining to mental health and suicide prevention and translating it into a form that is widely understandable to an audience. The final research film represents the articulation of all that knowledge in a form that is accessible and relatable to the wider general public, contributing to the breaking down of barriers to help-seeking for those struggling with their mental health and suicidal ideation and putting the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

Chapter three discusses the history of mental illness and suicide in film and how a century of negative and damaging depictions of those suffering with their mental health have influenced and reinforced public stigma and created barriers to help-seeking. This section also outlines trends in contemporary practice in film and TV and the potentially damaging content that is still pervasive in popular media content today. This chapter also discusses the opposing Werther and Papageno effects and describes the impact of what we see in the media can have on our thoughts, beliefs and behaviours, including copycat suicide attempts (Werther Effect) or help-seeking, resilience and recovery from mental health struggles (Papageno Effect). Chapter three ends with current best practice and positive examples from the world of film and TV that model recovery and show mental health struggles and suicidal ideation as phenomena that can affect us all.

Chapter four discusses possible cinematic solutions to the problems set out in chapter three, using the range of tools, techniques and processes that are available to the filmmaker to depict

and conceptualise the internal struggles of a character in a more constructive manner in line with the protective Papageno Effect. These tools include a range of camera settings, lighting equipment and camera movements, as well as postproduction editing techniques that can be combined to create a multi-layered and powerful cinematic depiction, conveying a character's distressed internal state, that would otherwise remain invisible looking at the character from the outside.

Chapter five discusses in depth the filmmaking process of the creation of my final research film entitled *JACK* (Deery, 2019), which tells the story of a struggling actor whose mental health begins to rapidly deteriorate after a number of internal and external adverse circumstances lead him to the brink of suicide. This chapter is organised into three sections, detailing the development and preproduction of the film, the production and shooting of the film and finally the postproduction and editing of the piece, including critical reflections on the production process and the journey to creating the final research film artefact.

Chapter six contains the conclusions of the research project, having successfully translated the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project and laying the groundwork for future research in this area. This section reflects on the aims and objectives of the research project and the process that led to the satisfaction of those aims by synergising multidisciplinary research pertaining to mental health and suicide prevention with reflexive filmmaking practice through an autoethnographic methodology to create a final film that translates the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. The chapter ends with summarising the key lessons learned from this Screen Production Research project and identifying areas for further Screen Production Research that future Filmmakers may wish to pick up on in order to develop their own unique approaches to representing issues of mental health and suicidality in their work with the protective ethos of the Papageno Effect at their core.

1.10 Chapter 1 Conclusions and Interim Findings

This chapter has outlined the primary aims and objectives of the current Screen Production Research project and laid the foundations upon which the research project will develop, including the theoretical frameworks, methods and methodologies employed in the research process to address the primary aims and objectives of the project. There are four key findings in this chapter, as outlined below.

The first key finding was to become aware of the newly emerging academic field of Screen Production Research into which this project fits, as well as the articulation of the methods and methodologies used by filmmaker-researchers in this field of research. Developing from the wider field of Practice as Research in the Arts, Screen Production Research is a film and screen-based media specific area of research that focuses on creative filmmaking practice as a mode of enquiry through which to discover new knowledge and insight and reveal innovative new approaches to filmmaking and media production through practice-based filmmaking research. The current research project contributes to the field of Screen Production Research by using the tools and techniques of filmmaking as the primary mode of inquiry, investigating ways in which filmmakers might better represent issues of mental distress and suicidal ideation in their work, in line with the principles of the Papageno Effect.

The second key finding was the Papageno Effect theory from the world of psychology and suicidology that posits that on-screen modelling of mastery of suicidal crises could have a real-world protective effect for those struggling with suicidal ideation. The Papageno Effect (see 3.4) provides a solid theoretical framework for the current Screen Production Research project to research ways in which to translate the Papageno Effect theory into filmmaking practice.

The third key finding was the importance of declaring your Ontology, Epistemology and personal motivations behind undertaking a particular Screen Production Research enquiry, in order to acknowledge the importance that the personal beliefs and motivations of the filmmaker-researcher have on the very nature and direction of the creative enquiry and the final film outcome of the research project. Screen Production Research, like other practice-based arts research exists in a qualitative research paradigm and such, the beliefs, opinions and personal goals of the artist-filmmaker must be clearly acknowledged as an important factor in shaping the nature of the enquiry. For the current research project, a constructivist ontology

and an interpretivist epistemology inform the development of the filmmaking practice, with an understanding that human beings construct meaning from experiences and interactions with the world around us, including the behaviours we see modelled on screen; a core tenet of the Papageno Effect that will be translated into filmmaking practice in this Screen Production Research project.

The fourth key finding was the importance of acknowledging the influence that one's own philosophical belief systems can have on the nature of the enquiry. By acknowledging the fundamental principles of contemporary Humanism as a close approximation to my own belief system, I have been able to frame the project within the context of my own personal philosophical beliefs and influences, while recognising that another filmmaker-researcher dealing with the same subject would bring their own set of beliefs and life experiences to the project, helping to shape the nature of their enquiry and subsequent research film outcome.

As a direct result of the findings in this first chapter, I have been able to outline the core philosophical assumptions, beliefs and influences that have shaped the nature of this Screen Production Research project, as well as the methods and approaches taken to the filmmaking practice. In the next chapter, I will discuss Screen Production Research as an emerging field of academic research concerned with filmmaking practice and screen-based media that values creative practice as a mode of enquiry, as well as highlighting one of its key proponents, Professor Erik Knudsen, whose work on reflexive and personal filmmaking research has had a significant positive impact on the current Screen Production Research project.

2 Screen Production Research

Screen Production Research has recently become established as a film-specific area of arts-based practice research with its own language, methodologies and approaches to practice that are much more suited to artistic and creative filmmaking practice than traditional scientific approaches to research. Craig Batty and Susan Kerrigan's book on Screen Production Research (Batty and Kerrigan, 2017) firmly establishes filmmaking research practice as a new development in research, where the language of intuition, reflection, insight into practice and verbalisation of tacit and embodied knowledge within the creative artist-filmmaker takes precedence over measures like statistics, surveys, graphs and charts. What we strive for as Screen Production Researchers is to uncover new insights into filmmaking practice, discover new approaches, techniques and applications of filmmaking tools within a research context, adding to knowledge in this newly emerging field with a particular focus or purpose depending on the aims of the specific research project.

Research in the academy has traditionally been measured using scientific methods, measures and methodologies. The long-established conceptualisations of what constitutes research and knowledge are ill-fitted to the arts, where traditional scientific measurements of artistic practice's worth often ask questions that do not fit the type of knowledge being revealed. Much has been written about practice as research in the arts and it is now an established and thriving strand of research and knowledge creation, enabling practitioners in drama, dance, music, photography, painting, filmmaking, sculpture and many more creative arts have their contributions to knowledge acknowledged and respected on an equal footing to knowledge in other fields. Many have written extensively on this relatively new form of research and opened the doors for the discovery of new knowledge through our artistic practice and explorations in the arts (Smith and Dean, 2009; Barrett and Bolt, 2010; Sullivan, 2010; Nelson, 2013). I see film both as an expressive artform and as a practical tool that can be used for a particular purpose to capture and communicate ideas. For me, film belongs to a creative and expressive toolbox, much the same as painting, music and photography do, but for the purposes of this particular inquiry, I strongly believe that filmmaking is the tool most suited to the aims of the project, as it offers a versatile, flexible and communicative set of tools and approaches that can be combined and manipulated to create and convey meaning. The potential to combine any or all of the cinematographic tools available to create a final research film that accurately conveys the experience of mental distress and suicidal ideation to an audience in a manner that

encourages empathy and understanding as well as promoting help-seeking and recovery for suicidal ideation highlights why film is such an important and powerful artform and why it is an ideal artform to address the primary objective of this research project by translating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

Within Screen Production Research and Creative Arts practice research in general, the finished film or art piece is often the primary research artefact that embodies the new knowledge uncovered through the creative practice research process. The accompanying thesis or exegesis on practice serves to elucidate and explain some of the thought processes behind the creation of the piece, but for many artist-practitioners, the final research artefact is always the most important piece of work. I believe the same to be true in filmmaking practice-research as the final research film is the ultimate outcome of the research process and the manifestation of the new knowledge, with the supporting written thesis serving to add context and a written account of the thoughts and processes that led to the creation of the final film piece. As briefly discussed previously (See 1.4 and 1.5), David Lynch speaks of the ‘infinite unmanifest’, ‘transcendental consciousness’ or ‘pure creative intelligence’ (Gaughran, 2011, p. 147) to describe the creative energy and limitless potential that artists tap into when creating their work, manifesting something new in the world, that has never been seen before and seems almost to come from thin air. This infinite source of creative energy can be accessed by the artist and translated through their practice to manifest something real in the world in their artwork. This artwork can never truly encapsulate everything the artist has to say, nor can it ever capture the infinite unmanifested, just enough to express something meaningful and to keep the artist returning to create more art by scooping a cupful from the ocean of Lynch’s infinite unmanifested. Below I have devised a conceptual model of the viewer experience of art and film, based on Lynch’s concepts of the infinite unmanifested to convey the importance of the final research film to the understanding of the aims and outcomes of the Screen Production Research project.

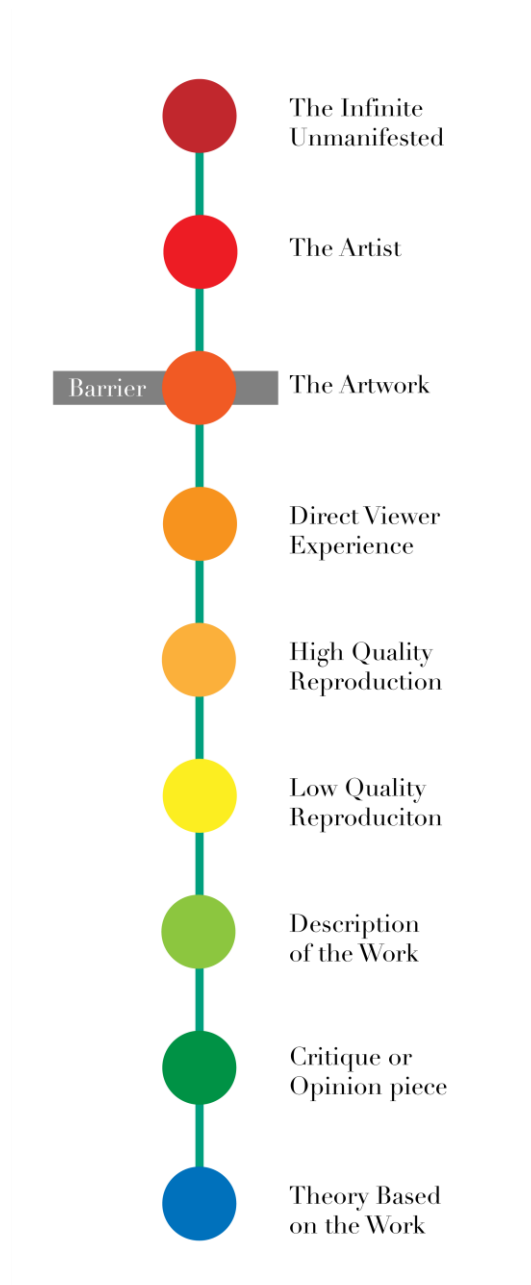


Figure 1 – Conceptual model for the experience of art creation, adapted from David Lynch’s ‘Infinite Unmanifested’

A reading of this model based on David Lynch’s ‘infinite unmanifested’ illustrates how the artwork or film is the outward expression of the artist’s own individual experience with the infinite unmanifested, with the artist acting as the conduit between the infinite well of creative inspiration and the manifest object or artwork that exists in the world as an expression of the infinite unmanifested. Lynch is unflinching in his approach to creating artworks and films that stay true to his own transcendental experiences with the unmanifested and firmly exists in that creative space as an artist. The model then illustrates how the direct viewer experience of the

artwork or film is the closest we can get to experiencing the artists' original vision, with lower quality viewing experiences, descriptions or critiques of the work or theories based on the work, becoming further and further removed from the original work and intention of the artist or filmmaker. That is not to say that theory and critique of artworks are not highly important areas in their own right, simply that they are further removed from the direct viewer experience with the artwork or film and even further removed from the artist's own individual experience with Lynch's 'infinite unmanifested'.

Based on Lynch's thoughts on the infinite unmanifested, directly viewing the artwork or film is as close to the artist's perspective as we can encounter and everything else comes afterwards. In film, watching in the darkness of the cinema with quality sound and picture is the closest we can come to experiencing the filmmaker's vision. Watching on a good TV screen in a darkened room is a second-best option, while watching on a laptop, phone or tablet is a much lower quality viewing experience and further away from the artist-filmmaker's perspective. The experience of viewing the film is always the most important experience. Descriptions and explanations of the work by the filmmaker are secondary to the experience. Descriptions of the work by others, critiques and opinions are external to the work and shaped by any number of socially defined parameters. Although a filmmaker or artist is always conscious of how their work is received and will always hope that it conveys their vision as clearly as possible, these factors should remain ultimately inconsequential to the creation of the artwork itself in order for the creator to stay true to their vision and their experience with the infinite unmanifested. David Lynch is uncompromising in this regard and often creates surreal images that can be difficult to grasp. Lynch stays true to the original vision of what he wanted to create through his artistic filmmaking practice and is less concerned with the critical and popular reception of his pieces.

While I intend to create films that are much clearer in their meaning and deliberately communicate a preventative and protective model of hope for suicidal ideation, modelling alternatives to suicidal behaviours for mental health struggles, I agree with Lynch's view that the film is the result of the artist's vision and a way of making the infinite unmanifested, manifest. The importance of creating a piece of film that works as a tool for opening conversations on mental health and suicide prevention is secondary to the creation of an original piece of film that encapsulates my own artistic vision through reflexive filmmaking-research practice. Through a process of Total Filmmaking practice (Knudsen, 2016), I am able

to be in control of the creative process from concept to completion, making decisions at every stage, based on a process of making, testing, self-reflection and intuition in the flow of creative practice. As previously established, this filmmaking research project has been informed by a wealth of information from a range of sources that helped to inform and ground the project against a background of scientific research outlining safe media practices and guidelines for responsible depictions of mental health struggles and suicide. Most prominent in all of this is the Papageno Effect, which I aim to encapsulate in my work, creating a piece of engaging drama that is entertaining to watch, as well as potentially having a powerful preventative and protective effect for suicidal ideation. I hope that this project serves as an example of how filmmakers can conduct responsible filmmaking within media guidelines and still retain artistic integrity and expressive freedom, creating engaging and exciting pieces of film that are at the same time socially responsible and aiming to affect positive change through filmmaking practice.

Screen Production Research represents a timely advancement in the field of filmmaking research, building on Bordwell and Carroll's Post-theory (Bordwell and Carroll, 1996) advocacy for a lively and energetic culture of theories and theorising, based on individual situations and projects, and a move away from the failed attempts to seek a Grand Theory of film that enjoyed such dominance in the 1970s and 80s that it still has lingering residual effects today. This now outdated mode of thinking about film theory and filmmaking practice has largely been subsumed by broader fields like cultural studies and Grand Theory has all but disappeared. Screen Production Research represents somewhat of a rebirth of thinking about film in project focused terms, using the flexibility and, in the 21st century, relative ubiquity of access to filmmaking equipment, to create films with purpose and impact on more localised and project-centred basis. This renewed focus on filmmaking of purpose places the genus of the idea firmly in the hands of the artist-filmmaker and uses the medium of film as an expressive tool to communicate an idea or concept to an audience, making Screen Production Research a very suitable, current and flexible field of film-based arts practice research within which to conduct this inquiry.

2.1 Erik Knudsen: The Total Filmmaker

One significant contributor to Batty and Kerrigan's Screen Production Research book is the filmmaker Erik Knudsen (Knudsen, 2017), whose filmmaking work and academic writing sets out and advances contemporary thinking about filmmaking and the process of creating new knowledge through practice. Knudsen's work focuses on filmmaking practice as a means of expressing ideas and concepts in a way that is both deeply personal to the filmmaker yet engaging and accessible (Knudsen, 2002, 2003, 2018). Knudsen's progressive thinking in this field advocates what he calls the 'Total Filmmaker', in which the filmmaker is involved in the creative process at every stage of a film, working with the resources you have available to you from concept to completion (Knudsen, 2010b, 2010a, 2016).

Knudsen's concept of the Total Filmmaker is a useful framework for filmmaking practice research, as it considers all aspects of the film production process to be part of the same role as a filmmaker, including screenwriting, directing and editing, roles that are traditionally thought of as separate and distinct in the film industry (Knudsen, 2016). By following Knudsen's concept of the Total Filmmaker within the context of the PhD research inquiry, filmmaker-researchers can explore all aspects of the filmmaking process seamlessly and make new discoveries at every stage of production, from novel ideas and original concepts in the screenplay, to decisions on lighting and shooting the film, as well as editing the final piece to match the original vision and concept that the filmmaker-researcher set out to create.

Building on the total filmmaker concept, Knudsen's 2018 book 'Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking' (Knudsen, 2018) advances the idea of using film as an expressive medium to find your own creative and artistic voice, developing an original style and taking film ideas from concept to completion moving past barriers such as denial and fear to express your own unique voice through your filmmaking work (Knudsen, 2018). By adopting autoethnography as a key component of the research design and methodology, I have been able to develop a final research film that is personal, authentic and honest, based on personal lived experience but told through a fictional drama, finding my own personal voice in filmmaking and staying true to the principles and values of the Total Filmmaker (Knudsen, 2016, 2018).

In Knudsen's 'Cinema of Poverty' article (Knudsen, 2010a), he advocates for frugality in filmmaking and how a low budget approach to filmmaking can enhance creative engagement

with the film medium and lead to the development of new and innovative approaches to making films, free from the traditional demands of larger scale films, where the requirements of funders, collaborators and numerous cast and crew can obscure the purity and clarity of the original filmmaking idea. Budget is a key consideration of any filmmaking project and the option of sourcing or raising a budget for this film research project was an option that I considered at the outset of the practice, but ultimately decided against for several pragmatic reasons in keeping with Knudsen's Cinema of Poverty.

One of the primary reasons for deciding against the commercial filmmaking route was that the production then becomes beholden to funders' requirements and agendas, wanting to see results and a return on their investment, as is so often the case in the film industry. Not only could this present a potential conflict of interest from various funding bodies and organisations and the University, but it also restricts the artistic and expressive freedom to explore that is so fundamental to the project; the ability find my own artistic and creative voice through filmmaking tackling the issue of mental health stigma and suicide. Crowdfunding platforms were also an option that I considered, but rejected for similar reasons, in that raising funding from members of the public would take the film production out of the context of the University and the practice research project.

Another reason for the decision not to raise a larger budget was that it would necessitate a larger film production, involving a range of additional people and inputs to the project. Maintaining creative control and the freedom to conduct the inquiry into filmmaking practice research at my own pace was critical for the success of the project as I wanted to be fully involved in every step and decision of the film's creation, from writing to casting to shooting and editing, in keeping with Knudsen's concept of the total filmmaker. The PhD process presented a unique and welcome opportunity to explore filmmaking informed by its research context and free from the commercial and financial pressures of professional studio film production.

A further key aspect of the decision to follow Knudsen's 'Cinema of Poverty' approach, was that I wanted to challenge the perception of filmmaking as a prohibitively expensive or inaccessible artform and demonstrate that good films can be made with very little money to encourage others to pursue filmmaking as an accessible, dynamic and versatile medium for their creative ideas. Taking a low-to-no budget approach to the film in this way means that it

can serve as an example to other independent filmmakers and artists that a powerful film with strong production values can be created with a minimal budget.

In *Finding the Personal Voice in Filmmaking*, Erik Knudsen likens the recent advancements in the availability and ubiquity of filmmaking technology and channels for distribution to the advent of the Gutenberg Press for the printing and distribution of ideas that led to an explosion in literacy across Europe and helped to usher in an Age of Enlightenment (Knudsen, 2018). Recent technological advances have meant that everyone now has a very capable camera in their pocket and the means to distribute worldwide in a matter of minutes. Professional quality cameras that were previously prohibitively expensive and the reserve of high-budget productions have now become accessible to the public at a much lower price point and filmmakers can now shoot professional quality films for a fraction of what it would have cost previously.

The equipment I used to shoot the final research film is a combination of my own equipment and equipment borrowed from the University and the Nerve Centre in Derry. The cast and crew were made up of friends, family and local creatives interested in being part of a film tackling mental health stigma and suicide prevention. The film production worked on a spirit of reciprocity, with actors being able to use the film to enhance their CV and showreel, and the small crew of local independent filmmakers, skill sharing in return for production credits and help with their upcoming productions. This spirit of mutual collaboration and grass roots artistic creation is fundamental to the ethos and philosophy of the DERRYCreatives group, an open network of creative practitioners in Derry who communicate primarily through Facebook and of which I am a founding member and is an ethos that has been carried through in all aspects of this research project.

2.2 Reflexive Practice in Filmmaking Research

Reflexive practice is an essential part of Screen Production Research that allows the filmmaker-researcher to create work and then analyse and reflect on the successes and areas for improvement within that work, in a constant, reciprocal, iterative and evolving process. This critical reflection on filmmaking practice helps to reveal new insights and approaches to the filmmaking research process that otherwise may have been left undiscovered or unexpressed and also crucially identifies any problems as well as the next steps in the creative research filmmaking process. Stepping into and outside of the creative process in what Ross Gibson refers to as a ‘Cognitive Two-Step’ in his foreword for Batty and Kerrigan’s *Screen Production Research* (Gibson, 2017), allows the filmmaker-researcher to move from immersion in creative filmmaking practice to a critical and reflective position, which in turn informs the next piece of filmmaking practice in an iterative and reflexive creative process. Gibson borrows the anthropological terms of moving between the ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ stances, from a ‘participant observer’ in the practice to a ‘detached scrutineer’ (Gibson, 2017). This approach to reflexive filmmaking research practice is particularly useful as it allows filmmaker-researchers to become absorbed in practice and film creation then step back to gain critical distance from the practice in order to retrospectively determine the successes or failures of that practice in order to identify the next steps in the filmmaking practice research.

Middleweek and Tulloch acknowledge the validity of Gibson’s ‘cognitive two-step’ to Screen Production Research and assert that by engaging in reflexive filmmaking research practice in this way a creative practice researcher ‘can make public their tacit knowledge in a way that legitimates their creative endeavour and dual professional identity as researcher and practitioner’ (Middleweek and Tulloch, 2017). Nightingale and Cromby similarly acknowledge the impossibility of remaining outside of one’s chosen subject matter while conducting research and encourage reflexivity as a means of exploring how a researcher’s involvement with a particular study ‘influences, acts upon and informs such research’ (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999; Bell, 2011).

Notions of reflexivity and critical reflection are central to creative arts practice research and the terms are often viewed as synonymous and used interchangeably (Bell, 2011; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2018) to describe the process of creating work and reflecting on that work in order to articulate and elucidate the practice research process, construct and communicate meaning

and stake a claim to an original contribution to knowledge. Reflexive practice has become increasingly established as a crucial component of creative practice research, helping to facilitate the ‘fusion of intellectual and creative activity’ (Aziz, 2009). Established models of reflexivity provide a strong, transferrable and reliable basis for critical reflection on creative practice and the analysis of filmmaking research practice.

Schon’s distinction between reflection *in* practice and reflection *on* practice (Schon, 1982) provides a useful starting point for filmmakers, as the emphasis is placed on practice; on learning by doing. As filmmaking researcher-practitioners it is important to develop practical skills and experience with filmmaking tools in order to gain a tacit understanding of the possibilities and potential limitations of the equipment for filmmaking practice. Schon’s reflection *in* practice is an active and hands-on approach of reflecting and adapting to practice as it happens, readjusting and modifying approaches to filmmaking as necessitated by circumstantial changes in the moment of creation, such as discovering a new camera angle, framing device or composition on set, or making subtle changes to lighting, lens aperture, focus or camera movements based on intuition and active experimentation on set. Reflection *in* practice allows for adaptability in filmmaking practice and affords filmmakers the flexibility to make rapid changes in response to a number of fluid and dynamic circumstances such as weather changes or unexpected changes to cast, crew, props or equipment, improvising and actively responding *in* practice. Reflection *on* practice is evaluative and happens after a period of filmmaking practice has ended, for example after a series of film tests, at the end of a day’s shooting or at the end of a week on set. Reflection on practice asks us to consider the successes and failures of a particular period of filmmaking practice as well as reflecting on how these experiences could help to inform and improve practice in future.

Another useful learning model for Screen Production Research is Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984), that outlines four iterative stages of practice and reflection, improving practice with each cycle. Kolb’s four stages are Concrete Experience, Reflection, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation. This model provides filmmaking research-practitioners with an accessible and practical basis upon which to form reflexive filmmaking practice. The model accounts for the concrete experience of ‘doing’ filmmaking, the physical activity of setting up and recording images on camera, which brings about a wealth of learning experiences that cannot be recreated without the hands-on experience of making, what Schon would term reflection *in* practice (Schon, 1982). Kolb’s second stage, Reflection, allows the

filmmaker to analyse and evaluate the experience of making and capturing footage, making value judgements based on the concrete filmmaking experience. Based on these analyses, the filmmaker research-practitioner can then begin to imagine what could be done differently in future shoots, conceptualising and imagining how to improve practice in what Kolb calls Abstract Conceptualisation. The final stage of Kolb's cycle, Active Experimentation, equates roughly to the preproduction stage of the filmmaking process, in which small scale experiments, equipment tests and planning for the next shoot take place. During this stage the filmmaker has a chance to experiment with the abstract conceptualisations from the previous stage and test new approaches to practice. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, when adapted to Screen Production Research in this way enhances and develops the filmmaker-researcher's tacit understanding of the filmmaking process through reflection, testing and experimentation, which in turn improves the next phase of the filmmaking practice.

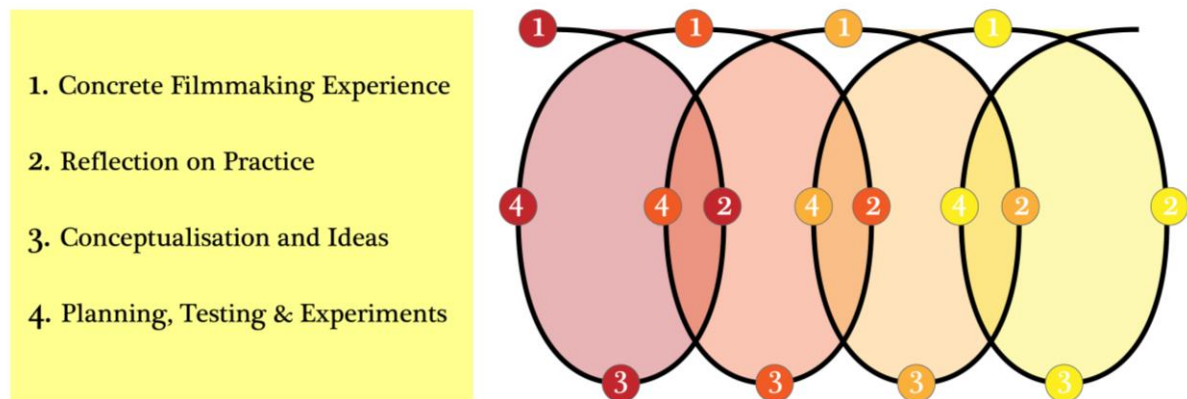


Figure 2 - Adaption of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle for Screen Production Research Filmmaking Practice

By adapting Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, we can see how each iteration of filmmaking practice is informed by the previous cycle, reflecting on previous experience and assimilating any new knowledge gained from practice into our creative and practical approaches to filmmaking in the following stages. This adaption also illustrates the important crossover area between reflection on previous experiences with practice and the ability to plan, test and experiment effectively for future filmmaking practice.

Gibbs' 'Learning by Doing' (Gibbs, 1988), provides us with another useful learning model that can be applied to reflective filmmaking practice, acknowledging the important role that feelings and intuitive 'knowing' play in creative Screen Production Research. These could be

described as gut feelings; our sense of instinctively or intuitively knowing what is right and wrong for the practice and what next steps you feel are necessary for the development of the project. Gibbs' Learning by Doing model accounts for thoughts and feelings on a given experience, in terms of reflective practice as a filmmaker-researcher, this provides a voice to intuition, to a tacit knowledge that exists within the creative practitioner that is often not expressed explicitly, but rather felt and understood intuitively. This can be accomplished through description (what happened?); feelings (what were you thinking and feeling?); evaluation (what was good and bad about the experience?); analysis (what sense can you make of the situation?); conclusion (what conclusions can you draw from this experience?); action plan (what would you do differently in a similar situation in future?). These steps are very useful for filmmaker-researchers, as they facilitate thorough reflection on filmmaking experience and planning for future filmmaking, learning from the mistakes or limitations of previous practice and improving the level of skill towards a mastery of the craft. Reflexivity, thus, can be a vital tool to assess and qualify 'the strength and limitations of any technique in its specific application' (Pauwels, 2012).

'The Four Stages of Competence' model, developed by Noel Burch for Gordon Training International in the 1970's (Adam, 2011), outlines the four stages of mastering any new skill as follows: unconscious incompetence, in which the person is unaware of their lack of competence in demonstrating a new skill and may consider it unimportant or useless; conscious incompetence, in which the person recognises the value in the new skill and becomes aware of their own inability to perform that skill or task; conscious competence, in which a new skill has been learned and can be demonstrated with concentration and effort; and unconscious competence, in which the new skill becomes automatic and 'second nature' and can be demonstrated with ease and without much conscious effort. In the context of a Screen Production Research project, Burch's model provides a useful frame within which to master any of the more technical aspects of the filmmaking process, from adjusting camera settings and lens control, to recording sound or controlling lighting, working on a new skill until it becomes an intuitive and unconsciously competent part of your filmmaking practice.

The iterative and reflexive processes outlined by these models allows for the development of unconsciously competent filmmaking practice, nurturing an intuitive and unspoken knowing of what to do next and making the implicit explicit through critical reflection and writing. Often the filmmaker will make these decisions on set and in the flow of practice and it is the reflection

on practice afterwards that further develops knowledge and understanding. My own approach to reflective filmmaking practice for the purposes of this project works within the models outlined above, with the aim of building towards mastery of cinematographic and filmmaking techniques for the representation of mental health issues in film.

Table 1 – Adaption of the learning models of Gibbs, Kolb, Schon and Burch for Filmmaking and Screen Production Research Practice

GIBBS	KOLB	SCHON	BURCH
'Doing' (making) a piece of film practice	Concrete Experience Filmmaking	Reflection in Practice	Unconscious Incompetence
Description of technical factors and settings	Reflective Observation Reflection on Practice		Conscious Incompetence
Feelings and Intuitions about the practice		Reflection on Practice	
Evaluation of the practice and the piece of film	Abstract Conceptualisation Ideas and Planning		Conscious Competence
Analysis of the final artefact and what it means			
Conclusion – what has been learned in this piece	Active Experimentation Film Experiments	Reflection in Practice	Unconscious Competence
Action plan – What are the next steps? Preproduction			
'Doing' (making) the next piece of film practice			

Commonalities between the reflective processes of Gibbs, Kolb, Burch and Schon's models can be seen in the progressive and iterative process of practice, reflection, conceptualising, and planning for the next piece of practice, with the ultimate goal of achieving a state of what Burch calls unconscious competence in filmmaking. Below is an example of how these models for reflexive practice might work in terms of the filmmaking research project. This example uses Gibbs' *Learning by Doing* model (Gibbs, 1988) to denote stages of critical reflection, from initial thoughts and feelings about a particular shot, to a critical analysis and evaluation of the technical merits of the shot and then conclusions about the degree of success of the particular approach or technique. This is then followed by an action plan for the next steps in the creative practice process.

Example of Reflective Practice in Filmmaking - JACK Screen Test



Figure 3 – Film Still from JACK Screen Test

Table 2 – Camera Technical Information for Screen Test example

Technical Information	
Camera	Panasonic Lumix GH5
Lens	12-35mm
Resolution	4K AllI 10 Bit 422
Frame Rate	24 fps Cinematic
Shutter Speed	1/50
Aperture	F5.6
Focal Length	24mm
White Balance	Auto
Focus	Manual
Lighting	Natural
Equipment Used	Tripod

My initial thoughts on this shot are positive and I like the shot overall. It was created using natural light from a window, with the subject lit from behind with shadows falling towards the camera. The composition and lighting in this shot, combined with the actor's expression create a sense of intensity and a dramatic mood to the shot. The choice of camera angle and the

direction of the actor's gaze off camera conceals the eyes and aims to engage the viewer in the narrative of the scene.

The technical factors affecting this shot included the use of appropriate settings for filming, as outlined in Table 2, lighting with natural light from behind, which can cause issues with sensors, particularly in the shadows. The Lumix GH5 retained a lot of detail in the shadows and looked very cinematic overall without having to do excessive processing in post. The shot is technically good, with focus, exposure and contrast exactly how I wanted them. DOF is controlled, with focus softening in the shirt and retaining detail in the features of the face. Overall, I am pleased with this how this shot looks and feel that the style of framing and lighting could work well in a final piece. Some further post processing and colour grading could help to emphasise mood and atmosphere. I would also like to shoot a series of this type of shot using both natural and artificial lighting sources.

This is an example of how reflexive filmmaking can work based on the combination of the learning models outlined in Table 1. Gibbs' model for example follows the same underlying structure of initial thoughts, followed by critical evaluation, then conclusions and next actions, which provides a useful and flexible structure for the filmmaker researcher to outline their initial thoughts and gut feelings about a shot, scene or sequence, then further analyse it for positives and areas for improvement before drawing conclusions and identifying next steps in the creative filmmaking practice. This example illustrates how reflective practice might look in the context of filmmaking practice research and how the structures of Gibbs, Schon and Kolb can be adapted and applied to a Screen Production Research project.

2.3 Chapter 2 Conclusions and Interim Findings

This chapter has investigated the academic field of Screen Production Research to which the current research project contributes, outlining the core principles and methodologies of this emerging field of practice-based research. This chapter has also discussed some of the field's key proponents including Susa Kerrigan, Craig Batty and, most significantly for the current research project, Professor Erik Knudsen. There are three key findings in this chapter, as outlined below.

The first key finding was to discover that Screen Production Research has emerged from practice-based research in the arts as a distinct research discipline dedicated to filmmaking and screen-based media production research. This timely advancement in the academic discourse on practice-based filmmaking research has helped to establish a set of approaches and methodologies to the creation of the final research film that will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5.

The second key finding was the work of Erik Knudsen and his forward-thinking approaches to filmmaking practice-research that have had a significant influence on the field of Screen Production Research, helping to shape how we think about filmmaking practice research and encouraging us as filmmaker-researchers to find our own personal voice through filmmaking practice and by being involved in every step of the film production process.

The third key interim finding was the use of reflective practice models to provide a notional and flexible structure for reflexive filmmaking practice to iteratively improve the filmmaking towards satisfying the project's aims. The reflective models of Gibbs, Kolb, Schon and Burch each offer their own specific approaches to reflective practice, but when combined can act as a broad set of flexible and useful guides for advancing filmmaking practice. Within the context of a Screen Production Research project these models offer filmmaker-researchers a useful framework within which to develop ideas and practical filmmaking skills in an iterative, logical, reflexive and progressive manner, through active experimentation and adjustments during the flow of filmmaking (the 'emic' stance), and from without, through a process of critical reflection on the filmmaking process (the 'etic' stance). By adapting established learning models to suit the needs of Screen Production Research, filmmaker-researchers can

progressively develop their ideas and acquire the practical skills required to bring these ideas to life on screen to fulfil their research goals.

The next chapter will discuss cinematic representations of mental illness and suicide, highlighting the problems caused by a long history of negative, damaging and misleading representations of mental illness in film and how these representations have contributed to negative public perceptions of people with mental illness, increased stigma and discrimination and created barriers to help-seeking for those in need. Chapter 3 will also investigate the issues caused by representations of suicide and discuss both the potentially harmful Werther effect that descriptive depictions of suicide can have by triggering imitative suicides in vulnerable people and the opposing Papageno Effect that this project aims to translate into filmmaking practice, that posits that depictions of survival and recovery from suicidal ideation could have a protective effect on those at risk.

3 The Problem: Representations of Mental Illness and Suicide in Film

This chapter discusses the problem with how mental illness has typically been represented in film and the media and how these representations have had an adverse effect on public perceptions of people with mental health issues, enhancing stigma and creating barriers to help-seeking for those in need. As well as addressing the problems created by years of negative and damaging media portrayals of people with mental illness, this chapter also discusses the harmful effects that excessive, graphic or descriptive representations of suicide can have, potentially triggering imitative ‘copycat’ suicides in an effect known as the Werther Effect (Phillips, 1974). This chapter also then discusses possible solutions to the problems caused by adverse representations of people with mental illness and the potentially harmful Werther Effect, in the form of the protective Papageno Effect (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010) which proposes that representations of recovery from suicidal ideation and mastery of crises may have protective factors for those in need. The Werther Effect and the Papageno Effect will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter (see 3.4). It is the primary objective of this project to investigate ways in which the Papageno Effect might be translated into filmmaking practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project to create filmic depictions of characters that recover from suicidal crises and that have the potential to encourage help-seeking for suicidal ideation and mental health struggles.

3.1 History of Mental Illness in Film

In 2009, Dr Peter Byrne published a report for the Time to Change campaign entitled ‘Screening Madness: A century of negative movie stereotypes of mental illness’ (Byrne, 2009), calling for a radical reconsideration of the way that mental health issues are portrayed in the media, with particular focus on the popular film portrayals of mental illness that have contributed to public mental health stigma. Byrne’s report points to the wealth of popular films that contain negative, misguided and stigmatising depictions of people with mental illness characters who are routinely portrayed as the villain, as unhinged, untrustworthy or unpredictable and while these may include many of Hollywood’s most enduring and popular characters, Byrne argues that the one-hundred year history of negative film depictions has significantly contributed to misapprehension, fear and distrust of people with mental health issues in the world outside of the cinema.

Byrne lists over seventy film examples that fit into four broad stereotypical uses of mental illness in film: for comedy, violence, pity or as faking and indulgent. He argues that while progress has been made to eliminate negative stereotypes in other areas, such as racist and homophobic stereotypes since the 1970’s, mental health stereotypes remain as prevalent as they were fifty years ago. Making it clear that he is not advocating censorship or restrictions on filmmakers, Byrne calls for a move towards more considered and responsible portrayals of characters with a mental illness, examining characters with integrity and imagination to promote understanding and reduce stigma (Byrne, 2009). Byrne’s report concludes with recommendations for anyone making or watching films concerned with mental health that include talking to real people with lived mental health experience, being careful about the language used when referring to issues of mental health to avoid the use of stigmatizing or derogatory language and to abandon clichés of people with mental illness, seeking instead to create characters with depth, complexity and contradiction that more accurately reflect the realities of living with a mental health condition. Byrne’s hopes and aspirations are that for the next generation of filmmakers, stereotypes of people with mental illness will become as rare and unacceptable as racist and homophobic stereotypes are today.

Depictions of characters with mental illness have existed in film as long as the medium has existed, with *Dr Dippy’s Sanitarium* (American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., 1906) and *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Wiene, 1919) among some of the earliest examples of the well-worn

mad scientist trope. In 1916, Hugo Munsterberg wrote *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (Munsterberg, 1916) and the academic interest in the relationship between psychology and film has grown ever since. Skip Dine Young's 2012 book *Psychology at the Movies* was written with the explicit goal of creating a "directory for the mythical International Library of Psychology and Film" (Young, 2012) and outlines the long history of links between psychological academia and film. *Psychology at the Movies* takes a broad view of psychology ranging from traditional psychoanalytical interpretations of film based on Freud and Lacan to pop-psychology and neuroscience in order to synergise a range of scientific inquiry on the psychological implications and interpretations of film. Harvey R. Greenberg's 1975 book *The Movies on Your Mind* (Greenberg, 1975) took a psychoanalytical view of several popular film characters including Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, helping to explain their motives and situations through a psychoanalytical lens.

Irving Schneider's 1987 article *The Theory and Practice of Movie Psychiatry* in the American Journal of Psychiatry (Schneider, 1987) examined the close relationship between the development of professional psychiatry at the beginning of the twentieth century and the concurrent emergence of film, which included the first depictions of psychiatrists and patients in film. Schneider identifies three psychiatrist stereotypes in the movies; Dr Dippy, Dr Wonderful and Dr Evil, listing several films that have portrayed psychiatrists as incompetent or silly, unrealistically gifted or sinister. Schneider notes that although film had depicted psychiatric patients in *Maniac Barber* (American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., 1899), *The Escaped Lunatic* (American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., 1904), *Maniac Chase* (Edison Mfg. Co., 1904) and George Melies' *Escappes de Charenton* (Melies, 1901), the first depiction of a psychiatrist in film appeared in *Dr Dippy's Sanitarium* (American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., 1906), a silent-era comedy which involves a group of psychiatric patients chasing one of the doctor's new employees out of the hospital, only to end up back in the hospital and subdued with pies. 'Dr Wonderful' started to appear in the late 1930's and early 1940's as film developed the capacity for sound and dialogue and filmmakers started to create scenes with character speech, including talking therapy between the patient and the doctor. 'Dr Evil' first appeared in one of film's earliest horror movies, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Wiene, 1919) and has become one of film's best-known archetypes with an abundance of examples throughout film history (Schneider, 1987). A recent review of 21st century film depictions of psychotherapy between 2000 and 2013 found that although many of the recent depictions of therapists were more positive, displaying characteristics like intelligence, kindness and

compassion, more than half were portrayed as unethical and more than a third were manipulative (Wahl, Reiss and Thompson, 2018).

In 1988 Steven E. Hyler published a paper in *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, entitled ‘DSM-III at the Cinema: Madness at the Movies’ (Hyler, 1988) that examined a range of TV and film depictions of people with mental illness against the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) and found that a number of films were reasonably accurate in their depictions of mental disorders and some could even be considered prototypal (Hyler, 1988). Hyler, Gabbard and Schneider’s article ‘Homicidal Maniacs and Narcissistic Parasites: Stigmatization of mentally ill persons in the movies’ (Hyler, Gabbard and Schneider, 1991) outlines a taxonomy of stereotypes of people with mental illness in film, including the rebellious free spirit, seductress, enlightened member of society, zoo specimen, homicidal maniac and narcissistic parasite and advocates for greater collaboration and concerted efforts between health professionals, advocacy groups and media professionals to reduce the number and frequency of stigmatising portrayals of mental illness film stereotypes.

Dr Otto Wahl’s widely cited book ‘Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness’ (Wahl, 1995), examines the prevalence of stigmatising language and imagery in film and other media, including newspapers, books, comic books, magazines and radio. The book has become established as one of the most comprehensive and wide-ranging studies in the field of mental illness and the media, and as noted in the preface to the 2003 edition, Eli Lilly described the book as ‘the bible for those combating stigma in the entertainment industry’ (Wahl, 2003). Wahl also acknowledges the efforts of an increased number of advocacy groups taking positive steps towards de-stigmatising mental health issues in the media but noted that there was still significant work to be done in challenging and changing stigmatising imagery in the media (Wahl, 2003).

Stephen Harper (Harper, 2005) questioned the ‘methodological and argumentational weaknesses’ of aspects of the anti-stigma media discourse, citing both Wahl’s *Media Madness* (Wahl, 1995) and Greg Philo’s UK equivalent ‘Media and Mental Distress’ (Philo, 1996) as examples of established and successful texts in this area that have some methodological flaws, including the influence of the author’s conservative views and the broad dismissal of slasher films as a sub-genre and failure to consider when the use of violence might be appropriate. Although Harper raises some reservations about some aspects of the anti-stigma discourse,

there remains much in the literature to suggest that the history of pervasive and negative mental health stereotypes in film have contributed to a lasting stigma surrounding issues of mental health and suicide. From a Humanist filmmaking perspective, the choice is clear; even if there is empirical evidence to suggest that these types of representations have the potential to cause harm or contribute to stigma, then our personal liberty to create any depictions we choose is tempered with a social responsibility to do no harm and to attempt to contribute a solution rather than continuing to create potentially harmful filmic depictions. In terms of this research project, the argument is best summarised by Peter Byrne's hope that one day mental health stereotypes become as rare or at least as unacceptable as racial and homophobic stereotypes have become (Byrne, 2009).

Building on Stephen Harper's observations, Craig Middleton identifies that the majority of studies into media representations of mental illness have been conducted within the sciences and are normally from a medical, psychological or sociological background (Middleton, 2016). The perspective of artists and filmmakers that use their lived mental health experience to inform their practice is underrepresented in the literature. The current study hopes to contribute to the debate from the perspective of a filmmaker-researcher and cinematic arts practitioner drawing on lived experience with mental health struggles and suicidal ideation to inform practice.

Gabbard and Gabbard's *Psychiatry and the Cinema* (Gabbard and Gabbard, 1999) investigates how the field of psychiatry, doctors and patients have been categorised and represented in film and the clinical implications of such depictions, including the creation of misconceptions and fear about the realities of psychiatric treatment for patients and the creation of barriers to seeking treatment. Gabbard and Gabbard identify several cinematic stereotypes, as outlined in Table 3, that can be broadly split into depictions of the 'good' and the 'bad' psychiatrist, ranging from psychiatric miracle workers who heal by their mere presence malevolent, manipulative, criminal and sexually exploitative psychiatrists (Gabbard and Gabbard, 1992, 1999; Gabbard, 2001).

Table 3 – Replicated from Gabbard and Gabbard's *Table of Cinematic Psychiatry Stereotypes* (1999)

Cinematic Stereotypes of the Psychiatrist		
Attribute	Good Psychiatrist	Bad Psychiatrist
Faceless	Cures by presence	Ineffectual
Active	Effective and caring	Manipulative, criminal, or vindictive
Oracular	Omniscient; good detective	Arrogant but Misguided
Social Agent	Reconciling	Repressive and malevolent
Eccentric	Human and fallible	Neurotic and ridiculous
Emotional	Compassionate	Psychotic
Sexual	Healing Lover	Exploitative lecher or libidinous clown

Niemiec and Wedding use films as a teaching aid for psychology students and their books 'Movies and Mental Illness' (Wedding and Niemiec, 2014) and *Positive Psychology at the Movies* (Niemiec and Wedding, 2014) identify films that demonstrate and portray psychological conditions with varying degrees of verisimilitude that can be used as models and examples of psychological symptoms and behaviours for psychology students. Niemiec and Wedding's books validate the use of film as a teaching aide and further strengthens the argument that filmmakers should use film to create stories and characters that promote open discussion and encourage help-seeking for mental health struggles and suicidal ideation.

Skip Dine Young's book *Psychology at The Movies* (Young, 2012) reveals a history of film that is littered with examples of characters with a range of mental health issues, creating both some of Hollywood's most iconic characters but also contributing to public fear and stigma surrounding issues of mental health. Dine Young illustrates how Hollywood has painted these characters as unhinged, dangerous, untrustworthy and evil; from Hannibal Lecter in *Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) to Norman Bates in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), from *The Joker* in several *Batman* movies (Burton, 1989; Nolan, 2008; Ayer, 2016; Phillips *et al.*, 2019) to Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* (Harron, 2000) and many others.

Extreme characters have always fascinated audiences and fictional portrayals of the darkest possibilities and manifestations of the human mind undoubtedly make for great drama. People

enjoy watching these exciting and dramatic portrayals, understanding that the characters are not intended to be real and are created for entertainment purposes. However, these extreme characters are often an audience's only experience of a supposed mental health condition and the exaggerated and negative fictional portrayals can become merged with a person's understanding and perceptions of what a particular mental health condition is actually like in reality, often creating a misinformed and exaggerated negative opinion that creates stigma. If a cinematic depiction paints a character as dangerous, unpredictable and volatile, this can become fused with an audience's beliefs and create fear, mistrust and apprehension surrounding people living with mental health problems in the real world. This fear and stigma can lead to real consequences for people suffering with mental health issues, including social isolation and barriers to social integration, such as access to housing and employment (Corrigan, 2000; Stuart, 2006; Overton and Medina, 2008; Krupa *et al.*, 2009; Corrigan, Roe and Tsang, 2011; Tew *et al.*, 2011). Hollywood has created a history of powerful images that linger long in the public conscious, becoming a frame of reference for conversations on themes of mental illness. Much in the same way Spielberg's *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975) entered the public consciousness and created a disproportionate fear of sharks and swimming in open water, extreme versions of mental illness portrayed on screen can influence public beliefs and stigma about mental health conditions.

In the decades since Wahl's seminal book was first published, there have been considerable improvements in the way mental health issues are portrayed in the media, as both creators and the public become more aware of the negative impact that stigmatising representations can have on people with mental health conditions. With increased media awareness, informed by new media guidelines (Pirkis *et al.*, 2006; Pirkis and Nordentoft, 2011; Samaritans, 2013; World Health Organisation and IASP, 2017; Time to Change, 2019) and an increase in high-profile anti-stigma campaigns, endorsed by prominent celebrities and royalty (BBC, 2019; Heads Together Campaign, 2019), the conversation has started to shift to a more constructive conversation. As we become increasingly well-informed about the scale, impact and frequency of mental health problems through prominent media campaigns, we are also encouraged to question our own prejudices and reconsider how we talk, act and feel about issues of mental health. Following the release of *Silver Linings Playbook* (Russell, 2012), Dr Jeffrey Lieberman wrote an article praising the film and calling for an urgent re-examination of our unwarranted fears and prejudice against people with mental illness, as they are not strange, foreign or other, 'they are us' (Lieberman, 2013).

Since the publication of Peter Byrne's report in 2009, there have been a number of further improvements in cinematic depictions of mental illness, with films like the aforementioned *Silver Linings Playbook* (Russell, 2012) and *Infinitely Polar Bear* (Forbes, 2014), serving as outstanding examples of more nuanced and sympathetic portrayals of people living with a mental health condition; putting the person before the condition and revealing the common humanity we all share with those living with a mental health condition and the family and friends around them. Both of these films are good examples of Humanist filmmaking, in which the subject of mental wellbeing is considered even-handedly and compassionately, putting the character's humanity before any stigmatising labels surrounding a particular mental health condition.

It is particularly salient to note that both *Silver Linings Playbook* (Russell, 2012) and *Infinitely Polar Bear* (Forbes, 2014) were based on the real-life experiences of their writer-directors, which has undoubtedly contributed to the authenticity and poignancy of these films when dealing with mental health issues. By channelling their lived experience, both David O. Russell and Maya Forbes respectively have created films that are nuanced and caring, with a more rounded and well-informed depiction of the realities of living with a mental health condition, avoiding mental health stereotypes and revealing the human being beyond the condition or mental health label. These films provide some evidence to suggest that creating films based on real, lived experience with mental ill health coming from a place of deep understanding and human empathy could provide hope for future cinematic depictions of mental illness and help to reduce stigmatizing portrayals. This is one of my primary concerns as a filmmaker-researcher, to be able to use my own tacit, embodied knowledge of mental health struggles and my practical knowledge of filmmaking techniques to guide the practice in a reflexive process and create cinematic stories and characters that are nuanced, authentic and sympathetic, at once deeply personal but also universally relatable.

The recent improvements in cinematic depictions of mental health conditions are a positive contribution to diminishing stigma, but their efforts are somewhat tempered by the regular stream of stigmatising portrayals and film titles that come out of Hollywood each year, from *Seven Psychopaths* (McDonagh, 2012) to *Suicide Squad* (Ayer, 2016) and *Spilt* (Shyamalan, 2016), a film that not only links Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) to kidnapping of a minor and intimidation, ultimately ending with physically transforming into an terrifying monster. It

may take some time yet before we see the widespread changes in mainstream cinema that Peter Byrne hoped for (Byrne, 2009), but slow and steady progress is being made and it will undoubtedly continue to improve as individuals, organisations and society move towards greater understanding and empathy for people suffering with mental health struggles.

Despite the relatively slow progress in mainstream commercial filmmaking, the world of smaller-scale independent filmmaking offers some hope of more rapid and impactful change, with a lively and burgeoning number of filmmakers creating work aimed at reducing mental health stigma. Recent technological advancements and the falling price of filmmaking equipment have removed barriers to entry for many creators and an increasing number of dedicated mental health film festivals worldwide has led to a surge of films now being created by individuals who are passionate about filmmaking and mental health. The Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival, established in 2007, is now the world's biggest and longest-running mental health arts festival and in 2019, considered hundreds of submitted films from independent filmmakers around the world and had to whittle them down to a final forty films to be screened across three days as part of the month-long mental health arts programme across Scotland. There are now several mental health film festivals held in cities worldwide each year, including Lisbon's Festival Mental, Toronto's Au Contraire Festival, Miami's Reel Minds and Canberra's Mental Health Film Festival and a growing number of filmmakers want to make films based on a variety of mental health issues, from living with mental health conditions to treatment and medication, journeys of recovery and hope to poignant representations of grief and loss to suicide. As an independent filmmaker-researcher, this practice research project adds a valuable contribution to this new wave of independent filmmaking concerned with mental health, informed and supported by the latest multidisciplinary mental health academic research.

3.2 Suicide in Film

Steven Stack and Barbara Bowman's comprehensive study of suicide in film, 'Suicide Movies; Social Patterns 1900-2009'(Stack and Bowman, 2012), analysed over 1500 films that contained a completed suicide from over 100 years of cinema history and found that in contrast to the published scientific research on suicide, of which over 90% of papers originate from journals that focus on individual centred causes of suicidal behaviour, (Stack and Bowman, 2012, p250), focusing primarily on the internal psychological factors that contribute to suicide, films tended instead to favour and include the external social factors that can contribute to suicide, such as a relationship breakdown, financial hardship or the death of a loved one, even when psychological factors are also present. The study of suicidal behaviour and its causes within the multidisciplinary field of Suicidology is a complex and multifarious issue that defies a straightforward causal link between one defined set of psychological preconditions and suicidal behaviour. Stack and Bowman note that while psychiatric disorders do present increased risk for suicide, most people living with psychiatric disorders do not die by suicide (Stack and Bowman, 2012, p250). The World Health Organization notes that the majority of deaths linked with psychological disorders are not due to one specific cause like suicide, but rather psychological disorders are linked reciprocally to a wide range of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer and that risk factors for these diseases including sedentary behaviour and misuse of alcohol are also strongly linked to mental disorders (World Health Organization, 2019). Similarly, many people die by suicide having previously shown no signs of psychological distress, symptoms of a diagnosable psychological disorder or exhibited known risk factors for suicide like a previous suicide attempt. Stack and Bowman note that film affords creators a medium through which to present a combination of both the internal psychological factors and the external sociological factors that can contribute to suicide and offers us as filmmakers an opportunity to represent aspects of this complex and multifarious relationship in our work.

Stack and Bowman also discovered that movie suicides could be broadly split into two Master Categories which considered the suicide as either a positive or a negative event. Suicides could be considered 'Positive' either when the antagonist dies by suicide as a form of justice for harming or murdering others, or when the suicide is altruistic and of benefit to others, for example a protagonist giving their life to save the world; 37.1% of all film suicides studied fall into this category (Stack and Bowman, 2012). The remaining 62.9% of film suicides studied

fall into the second Master Category of ‘Negative’ suicides, whereby a character’s death by suicide serves little purpose or is of no benefit to anyone else. The reasons for these suicides range from internal psychological struggles to external social circumstances and are often co-present as factors contributing to a character’s suicide, although film tends to place greater emphasis on the social factors contributing to suicide in contrast to the scientific literature (Stack and Bowman, 2012).

Suicide has often been romanticised throughout our cultural history, portrayed as a poetic or poignant way to die; from Greek mythology (Forlag and Parada, 1997) to Shakespeare (Shakespeare, 1992, 2016), the deaths of Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath (Daldry, 2002; Willson Gordon, 2005; Hurcombe, 2014; Gordon, 2016) to Goethe’s *Werther* (Goethe *et al.*, 2013), from whom the Werther Effect takes its name (Phillips, 1974). This is a particularly dangerous association that can have an impact on vulnerable viewers, particularly if it is further linked with ideas of revenge or justice for someone who has been wronged in some way, as it is in *13 Reasons Why* (Netflix, 2017). Romanticising suicide presents a number of complex problems for the contemporary storyteller or filmmaker for several reasons. Romanticised tales of suicide belie the reality of what is often a painful, gruesome, horrific and ultimately unnecessary and regrettable way to die. The World Health Organisation and the international suicide prevention community strongly believe that every death by suicide is a preventable death and that portrayals of suicide as a favourable, acceptable or inevitable cause of death in film must be avoided to reverse the tide of negative, triggering or damaging portrayals of suicide in the media (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010; Sisask and Värnik, 2012; Samaritans, 2013; WHO, 2014; Time to Change, 2019).

Media guidelines published by Samaritans and others offer a wealth of advice when dealing with suicide in dramatic film or news coverage that can help inform more responsible media content creation (see 3.3). The guidelines advise avoiding sensationalised or romanticised stories of suicide, eschewing any descriptive details of suicide method or describing any suicide method as preferable, such as describing a death as quick, easy or painless. Insensitive, descriptive, excessive and irresponsible depictions or coverage of suicide are known to be potentially triggering, particularly for vulnerable individuals and can cause copycat imitative suicides, known as the Werther Effect (Phillips, 1974). By staying within media guidelines and consciously striving to create more responsible and ethical stories about suicide, we can limit the potentially harmful effects of dealing with suicide in filmmaking. By going one step further

and actively discouraging suicide and creating films that model help-seeking and recovery as a realistic, viable and favourable alternative to suicidal behaviour, content creators can begin to put the Papageno Effect into practice (Niederkrötenenthaler *et al.*, 2010; Niederkrötenenthaler, Tran and Till, 2016) in their filmmaking, which could have a preventative and protective effect on viewers, encouraging them to seek help or to reach out to a friend in need before they reach a suicidal crisis point.

Despite the availability of media guidelines for dealing with suicide, potentially harmful and triggering depictions of suicide are still common in TV and Film. Netflix's popular 2017 series *13 Reasons Why* (Netflix, 2017) features an extremely graphic and descriptive suicide of a teenage girl who takes her own life after a series of adverse events in her school and personal life. The graphic nature of the suicide is antithetical to all available media guidelines and is potentially dangerous with a risk of triggering Werther Effect imitative suicides. The character who dies by suicide, Hannah, places the blame for her death firmly on other people, leaving behind a set of audio tapes outlining the 13 reasons why she took her own life. By blaming others for her death, the show's creators missed the chance to model character resilience and agency, or to offer any hope of recovery from the personal, social and mental struggles that the character faces, instead opting for a graphic and unnecessary suicide that conveys a sense of hopelessness and helplessness to the viewer. The show's producers have rushed to defend the graphic depiction, arguing that this type of graphic portrayal is necessary to get across the harsh realities of suicide and open doors to debate. I strongly disagree with this viewpoint however and believe that the Papageno Effect offers filmmakers the best frame within which to create work on suicidal ideation, being candid about the desperation and hopelessness of mental health struggles for the sufferer but offering hope and modelling recovery from suicidal thoughts through help-seeking in order to encourage others to spot when they are struggling and seek help for their own suicidal ideation, rather than attempting suicide. By staying within safe media guidelines and following the principles of the Papageno Effect in filmmaking, I aim to create work that avoids all descriptive detail of suicide method or attempt, but clearly conveys suicidal ideation followed by recovery through help-seeking and character agency. By modelling this type of behaviour in response to extreme mental distress and suicidal thoughts, filmmakers have the potential to encourage those in need to seek help, as well as avoiding any potential risk of 'copycat' Werther Effect suicides.

Following the release of *13 Reasons Why*, a study showed that suicide related web searches spiked and, although many of these searches were considered positive, such as seeking suicide helpline numbers or advice on what to do if you or someone else is suicidal, the majority of searches were negative, such as seeking methods and means of suicide and containing search terms such as easy, quick or painless ways to die by suicide (Ayers *et al.*, 2017). This negative pattern of suicide search results is another example of the potential risks of Werther Effect imitative suicides following a descriptive or excessive depiction of a suicide. The character's death by suicide in *13 Reasons Why* contains descriptive detail that could easily be replicated, including detailing access to means and specific method of suicide, going against all safe media guidelines and creating a dangerous and irresponsible TV depiction that one study found had triggered a 28.9% increase in adolescent suicides between the ages of 10-17 in America in the month after release (Bridge *et al.*, 2019).

This alarming recent example of the Werther Effect is yet another reminder to all filmmakers and TV professionals that the way in which we handle suicide in the content we create is important and can have potentially devastating effects if handled irresponsibly. The debate around the impact of the Werther Effect has been established since the 1970's (Phillips, 1974), and the contemporary conversation among professionals in the field of suicide prevention research has shifted towards the Papageno Effect and the ways in which we might represent mental health struggles and suicide in a more constructive fashion by staying within safe media practice guidelines for the responsible handling and depiction of suicide (Niederkrotenthaler *et al.*, 2010, 2019, 2019; Niederkrotenthaler, Tran and Till, 2016). Reconsidering how we represent mental health struggles and suicide as filmmakers and creators of media content is vital, in order to limit the potentially damaging effects of reckless and irresponsible depictions of suicide like *13 Reasons Why*.

In contrast to *13 Reasons Why* (Netflix, 2017), Amy Weber's *A Girl Like Her* (Weber, 2015) arguably offers a more nuanced treatment of the same themes, telling the story of a 16 year old girl called Jessica, who attempts suicide after persistent bullying in school. The film uses the premise of a film crew entering the school to make a documentary after it became the only public school to earn a place in the top ten schools in the country. The film crew quickly discover that one student, Jessica has attempted to take her own life and begin to investigate allegations of bullying, allowing the accused bully, Avery, to tell her side of the story and reveal more about her dysfunctional family life and the pressures of trying to be popular in

school. Meanwhile, it is also revealed that Jessica, with the help of her friend Brian, had been secretly filming the bullying for months to prove that she was being tormented in school. The combination of Jessica's secret film footage and the documentary crew's filming in the school, allows the story to be told from both sides and develops a fuller and more nuanced depiction of the complexities of teenage social relationships and school life. Later in the film, when the director of the documentary film crew decides to show Jessica's secret footage to Avery, she is confronted with her own bullying in stark and unflinching terms, which leads her to break down and record a distraught and remorseful apology to Jessica on camera and the realisation of the devastating impact that her actions have had. The film is a powerful anti-bullying piece and is successful in showing the multifarious nature of teenage social relationships and encouraging reflection on the impact that our actions can have on others.

Although this depiction of the social and emotional factors contributing to suicide is arguably more rounded and nuanced than *13 Reasons Why*, it is also potentially problematic in that it descriptively depicts a suicide attempt by pill overdose, which could be imitated by others, particularly vulnerable individuals who relate to and identify with the protagonist and could potentially trigger Werther Effect imitative suicides. The final shot of the film shows Jessica waking up and looking around the room and then directly into the camera. This final shot is also potentially problematic, as it is ambiguous in isolation and could be interpreted in a number of ways, including that Jessica has died and woken up in the 'afterlife', or is 'at peace'. Because this apparent waking up has occurred so closely after the harrowing scenes of her parents grieving as Jessica suffers organ failure in a coma, there is no further context on which to base presumptions of Jessica's recovery or otherwise, which leaves viewers with a question, rather than a model of hope, prevention or recovery. This type of ambiguous ending is not uncommon in film and television, from the spinning totem in Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (Nolan, 2010) to the infamous cut to black at the end of *The Sopranos* (Chase, 2007), however ending a harrowing film about teenage bullying and suicide ambiguously misses the chance to model recovery or offer hope for those in a similar situation. When coupled with the descriptive depiction of the suicide method used, the film could potentially trigger Werther Effect copycat suicides, despite its many positive aspects.

Moving beyond the Werther Effect debate, the Papageno Effect reframes the argument in such a way that we no longer need to get embroiled in a discussion about the degree to which graphic or excessive depictions can cause harm, but instead shift the focus of the conversation towards

what film and TV depictions can do to help. The Papageno effect proposes that showing a character who is clearly struggling with their mental health and suffering with suicidal thoughts, but instead of ending their own life by suicide, they survive, recover and thrive, could model hope for a better future following an episode of suicidal ideation and have a protective effect. This positive, protective and preventative representation of suicidal ideation could potentially encourage someone in need to seek help and is something that contemporary filmmakers and media creators should be striving and aspiring to do. There are numerous historical examples of a suicide being used as a plot device in films (over 1500 used in Stack and Bowman's Book alone), not to mention in hundreds of years of storytelling before that, but by using the principles of the Papageno Effect in filmmaking practice, I hope to advocate for a new type of filmmaking, where suicide is never the only option, where there is always hope of recovery and someone to support you in your recovery, putting the Papageno Effect into Filmmaking Research Practice.

3.3 Media Guidelines

Time to Change, Samaritans, World Health Organisation and the International Association for the Prevention of Suicide Media Guidelines (Pirkis *et al.*, 2006; Samaritans, 2013; World Health Organisation, 2015; World Health Organisation and IASP, 2017; Time to Change, 2019) cover both news media coverage of a suicide, as well as guidelines on dramatic portrayals of suicide. The media guidelines contain practical advice on how to talk about a suicide using no descriptive language and without sensationalising or glamourizing suicide. Samaritans dramatic portrayal guidelines (Samaritans, 2012) are clear on avoiding details of a suicide attempt or including any descriptive detail on means of suicide that might be copied by others, triggering imitative Werther Effect suicides (see 3.4). The use of well-known suicide ‘hotspots’ is to be avoided, as is describing suicide in any kind of favourable way, for example, describing a method of suicide as quick, easy or painless, as these descriptions could encourage vulnerable people to imitate the shown or described method.

Presenting suicide as a regrettable act is to be encouraged, as is showing the devastating impact a suicide can have on friends and family left behind. However, when coupled with the Papageno Effect, it is suggested that avoiding suicidal behaviour as an outcome for suicidal ideation could be the best outcome of all, illustrating adopting coping mechanisms and modelling alternative behaviours to suicide, such as seeking help, speaking to others and building character resilience after a period of suicidal ideation. One of the challenges that these guidelines present to filmmakers and creators of dramatic content is to address the issue of suicide and suicidal ideation in a way that avoids any descriptive detail of suicide method, modelling hope and recovery instead and encouraging help-seeking for those in crisis or those who may be concerned about a friend or family member.

3.4 The Werther Effect and The Papageno Effect

As outlined in the previous sections, the role that the media can play in public perceptions of mental health issues and suicide has been thoroughly discussed for a number of years, with particular focus on the debate around whether repeated or sensationalized media reports of a suicide can trigger imitative ‘copycat’ suicides, which David Phillips coined as The Werther Effect in the 1970s (Phillips, 1974). The Werther Effect has become a focal point and a byword for debates on the effects that media reports of suicide and dramatic portrayals can play in triggering copycat suicides. Many found evidence to support Phillips’ hypothesis (Schmidtke and Häfner, 1988; Jonas, 1992; Pirkis and Blood, 2001a; Pirkis and Blood, 2001b; Pirkis and Nordentoft, 2011; Kim *et al.*, 2013), while others questioned the veracity and extent of the Werther Effect (Wasserman, 1984; Stack, 1987; Hittner, 2005). The majority of evidence provided at least partial support for the existence of the Werther Effect (Sisask and Värnik, 2012) and helped to inform media guidelines for the reporting and representation of stories about suicide, set out to minimize potentially harmful effects.

The Werther Effect debate rose to prominence again most recently when Netflix released their highly popular drama *13 Reasons Why* in 2017, based on the suicide of a teenager and featuring a graphic suicide scene that shocked viewers by depicting in explicit detail the protagonist slitting her wrists with a razor blade in a bath of water, due to thirteen ‘reasons’ why she took her own life. The reasons were spelled out in a series of audiotapes left behind by the protagonist for the people who supposedly contributed to her suicide and give the series its title. Producers of the show defended it as the harsh reality that young people needed to see in order to generate the necessary discussions about suicide and there is evidence to show that there was an increase in searches for suicide prevention strategies and suicide helpline numbers in the immediate wake of the show being aired (Ayers *et al.*, 2017). The same report also showed a substantial increase in negatively associated suicide searches, including instructions and guidelines for the easiest way to take your own life. A recent study in the *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* found that suicide between the ages of 10 and 17 in America increased by 28.9% in the month immediately following the release of *13 Reasons Why* (Bridge *et al.*, 2019), providing further evidence for the dangerous effects of irresponsible media depictions of suicide.

The Werther Effect states that media depictions of suicide have the potential to trigger suicidal behaviour in the general population and the advice to filmmakers is to err on the side of caution by avoiding any graphic or detailed portrayals of suicide that could have potentially triggering effects. *13 Reasons Why* has enjoyed a great deal of popular success and became Netflix's most tweeted about show in 2017 (Bruner, 2017). The show's popularity has single-handedly put the debate about media representations of suicide back into the spotlight, with many campaigners and groups boycotting the show and opposing its irresponsible handling of suicide. Although the controversy has generated public interest and so in many ways could be seen as successful, the flagrant disregard for established media guidelines constitutes a reckless, risky and irresponsible example of a television depiction of suicide, that typifies the potentially harmful Werther Effect.

Proposed as an alternative contemporary discourse to the Werther Effect debate, The Papageno Effect, proposed by Thomas Niederkrotenthaler and colleagues at the University of Vienna (Niederkrotenthaler *et al.*, 2010) proposes that an increase in media reports and stories with positive, help-seeking content for those suffering with suicidal ideation could have a preventative and protective effect against suicide. The Papageno Effect attempts to reframe the debate on the Werther Effect and shift the focus of debate away from the harm that media depictions of suicide can cause and towards the potentially protective effects that media depictions might have by telling stories of coping against adverse life circumstances and help-seeking and recovery for suicidal ideation. This is a useful step in moving the debate forward and allows filmmakers and content creators to begin to tell stories of those struggling with suicidal thoughts who developed personal resilience against adverse life circumstances and sought help for suicidal ideation and mental health struggles. An increase in films that reframe thinking on suicide and mental health struggles by modelling examples of coping, resilience and help-seeking for suicidal ideation would make a valuable contribution to worldwide efforts to reduce suicide and help to decrease in stigma around talking about our mental health and the issue of suicide.

The Papageno Effect appears to provide a unique and specific opportunity for dramatic filmmakers within the wider context of the media industry, as traditional news media and reportage tends to report on completed suicides, especially those of celebrities, rather than telling stories of suffering with mental distress and subsequently recovering. Stories of this nature would not typically be considered 'newsworthy' and despite their potentially protective

Papageno Effect would be unlikely to be covered within the context of the news media. This gap presents an opportunity for filmmakers to create dramatic films that tell compelling stories of prevention and recovery from suicidal ideation that could have a protective, positive and preventative effect on viewers. Responsible dramatic portrayals of suicidal ideation followed by resilience and recovery could do much to reverse the damaging impact that traditional media depictions of suicide have done, or at the very least begin to question and change the way suicide is portrayed in the media.

As a filmmaker-researcher interested in mental health and suicide prevention, I have found that the majority of the research on representations of mental health issues and suicide in the media originates from the scientific fields of sociology and psychology, and not from arts-based film practitioners or creators. This represents a significant gap in knowledge and in the literature that this project addresses, by producing a Screen Production Research project based on lived experience, using autoethnographic filmmaking practice as the primary methodology. The current inquiry constitutes a positive contribution to the debate on media depictions of mental health struggles and suicide from the perspective of a filmmaker-researcher with lived experience of mental health struggles that puts the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

3.5 Current Best Practice

In the conclusions of *Suicide Movies: Social Patterns 1900-2009* (Stack and Bowman, 2010, p.274), Stack and Bowman suggest that further research into attempted suicides in film that do not result in death would be useful in creating a fuller picture of film suicidality, in addition to the 1500+ completed movie suicides used in their study. They identify several strands that might be investigated, including whether attempted suicides fall into the same categories that they used in their study, or if new categories would need to be identified, whether traditional psychological causes or social causes were more prominent in depictions of attempted suicide, what the gender balance was in these depictions and how recovery from a suicide attempt or lack thereof is portrayed in film (Stack and Bowman, 2012). Many of these questions match my own research concerns as a filmmaker-research practitioner and I would certainly welcome a rigorous and comprehensive study on attempted suicides in film, akin to that of Stack and Bowman's book. I would expect, however, that given the long history of completed suicide being used as a plot device in film, that attempted suicides might not be as abundantly represented in cinematic history, particularly those depictions that then go on to model resilience, help-seeking and recovery from suicidal ideation.

When considering these questions within the context of my own research practice, I could recall only a handful of films that I had seen that model this type of recovery from attempted suicide or suicidal ideation, most notable among them Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946), *The Odd Couple* (Saks, 1968) and more recently *Swiss Army Man* (Scheinert and Kwan, 2016). These three dramatic comedy films show a character's suicide attempt being halted by divine intervention, hopeless incompetence and the discovery of a corpse on a beach respectively and range from heart-warming to utterly bizarre. Upon discovering the concept of the Papageno Effect (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010), which encourages stories of suicidal ideation followed by help-seeking and recovery instead of an attempted or completed suicide, I became interested in discovering what films epitomised the Papageno Effect and asked Drs Niederkrötenhaler and Till for films they would recommend. In an [email correspondence](#), Dr Benedikt Till (2017) replied that in his experience, there were very few fictional films that focus on coping with suicidal crises and could only suggest two such films; *Elizabethtown* (Crowe, 2005), which was used in a previous study (Till *et al.*, 2015) and features an elaborately improvised suicide machine that the protagonist is spared from by an unexpected phone call, and *A Long Way Down* (Chaumeil, 2014), based on the Nick Hornby novel that

tells the story of four strangers who meet on a rooftop on New Year's Eve, each with the intention of suicide. The group make a pact to stay alive and go on to live fulfilling lives with each other's friendship and support. It is interesting to note that all of these examples of attempted or avoided suicide in film are comedies or comedy-dramas and realistic dramatic portrayals of suicidal ideation and subsequent recovery would initially appear rarer.

Subsequent research revealed films such as *A Girl Like Her* (Weber, 2015) and *Cyberbully* (Binamé, 2011), which both feature an attempted suicide by a teenage girl after being bullied. As discussed previously, the slightly ambiguous ending to *A Girl Like Her* (Weber, 2015) leaves question marks over the meaning of the film and the suicide attempt by the same method (pill overdose) in *Cyberbully* (Binamé, 2011) is thwarted by the protagonist's best friend. In both cases, the primary concern of the film is bullying, and the attempted suicides of the characters are portrayed as the result of the bullying, rather than being the primary focus of the films.

In addition to addressing suicide specifically, there are calls for a radical rethink of the ways in which film represents issues of mental health more generally and for the creation of more compassionate and rounded representations of mental health issues from prominent public health professionals (Byrne, 2009; Pirkis, 2009; Lieberman, 2013), imploring us as filmmakers and researchers to consider more carefully the stories we tell and how we tell them. Recent, more rounded depictions of mental health conditions in film include *Silver Linings Playbook* (Russell, 2012) and *Infinitely Polar Bear* (Forbes, 2014), as well as *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (Boden and Fleck, 2010), which tells the story of a teenage boy, Craig, who decides to seek help at a hospital after contemplating jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge. The film tells the story of his stay in the psychiatric ward and the connections he finds with other people there that give him perspective and remind him of the many reasons he has to be thankful and live a full and happy life. The film ends with Craig leaving the hospital and saying that although the stay in hospital didn't cure his condition, it helped him to realise that he can face the challenges life throws at him with the support of his friends and family. All three of these films are based on the real-life experiences of their writers and creators and stand as excellent examples of the more compassionate and considered filmmaking made possible with an autoethnographic approach to creation and a desire to portray the humanity and realities of lived mental health experiences with verisimilitude and compassion.

3.6 Chapter 3 Conclusion and Interim Findings

This chapter has investigated representations of mental illness and suicide in film and has drawn several interim findings pertinent to the current Screen Production Research project from the literature. There are five key interim findings in this chapter, as detailed below.

The first interim finding has been to discover the negative impact and damaging influence that the long history of unfavourable cinematic representations of people with mental illness has had on real public perceptions of these issues; misinforming public discourse and enhancing stigma around issues of mental health by reinforcing unfavourable, inaccurate and misguided perceptions of the realities of living with any one of a range of mental health issues.

The second key finding was that according to Stack and Bowman, over 90% of the scientific literature on the study of suicide originates from fields with a focus on individual centred and internal causes of suicide, including psychiatry, psychology and neuroscience, whereas films tend to take account of the social factors that can also contribute to a suicide, such as relationship breakdown, economic strain or the death of a loved one, even when these factors are co-present with internal psychological struggles. This gives filmmaking a distinct advantage when presenting a more holistic account of the multifarious nature of the factors that might contribute to an individual's decision to end their own life, as well as an opportunity to model help-seeking and recovery from suicidal ideation in line with the Papageno Effect through on-screen modelling of social connections such as speaking to a doctor or calling helplines, speaking to a therapist or making meaningful contact with loved ones, family and friends to get help.

The third interim finding was the discovery of published advice and guidelines for media content creators seeking to address suicide in their work, from several organisations including Samaritans, the World Health Organisation and the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP). These guidelines have been informed by the world's leading experts on the study of suicide and suicide prevention, known as suicidology, operating under the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) and offering sage advice on how to deal with suicide in both media reporting and fictional portrayals of suicide. It is from this particular area of research that I first discovered the Papageno Effect, that would go on to become so fundamental to this research project.

The fourth interim finding was to discover the concepts of the Werther Effect for copycat suicides and the opposing Papageno Effect for modelling help-seeking and recovery from suicidal crises. These findings had a profound impact on the research project and helped to steer the development of the Screen Production Research filmmaking practice, helping to set out clear boundaries on both the types of content that should be avoided in order to minimise the risk of imitative Werther Effect suicides, as well as the type of content that filmmakers can include to promote help-seeking for those in need by modelling mastery of suicidal crises and recovery from suicidal ideation in line with the Papageno Effect.

The fifth interim finding was the discovery of a number of examples of current best practice in representing issues of mental health and suicidality in film, including some examples of films that fit with the protective principles of the Papageno Effect and others that represent more rounded and compassionate depictions of mental health struggles based on autoethnographic lived experience, adopting a similar approach to filmmaking as the current Screen Production Research project.

Following on from the interim findings of this chapter, chapter 4 will discuss potential cinematic solutions to the problems posed by the long history of stigmatising portrayals of mental health issues and suicidality. Building upon the examples of current best practice outlined above by using an autoethnographic methodology based on lived experience with mental health struggles and suicidal ideation, chapter 4 will develop concepts and ideas that will be used to inform the creation of the final research film.

4 Cinematic Solutions: Techniques to Tackle the Problem

Having established the damage that a long history of stigmatizing depictions of mental illness in film and the media have had in the previous chapter and the potentially harmful effects that irresponsible depictions of suicide can have, this chapter outlines potential solutions to these problems. Drawing upon multidisciplinary research and personal lived experience, this chapter discusses how cinematic techniques can be used to elicit empathy and understanding for characters struggling with their mental health and how filmmakers can effectively incorporate the principles of the protective Papageno Effect into their filmmaking practice, by avoiding descriptive detail of a suicide and modelling help-seeking, resilience and recovery from suicidal ideation. Finally, this chapter also discusses some of the key philosophical concepts and visual metaphors that were developed from a combination of multidisciplinary research and reflective writing and that form some of the fundamental components of the story told in the final research practice film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019).

4.1 Eliciting an Empathetic Response to Film using Cinematic Techniques

In film, as in art, creators often strive to create an empathetic response to their work through the characters and stories that their artworks and films depict. The degree to which viewers empathise and identify with a film's characters and their stories has been a central concern for many film theory discussions since the 1970's, for example Screen Theory based on Lacan's 'Mirror Stage' (Metz, 1975; Lacan, 2014), the point at which a toddler recognises themselves in the mirror and begins to define notions of self, to Marxist and Althusserian interpretations of the cinema as ideological apparatus, rendering viewers as subjects to dominant ideology through interpellation (Althusser, 1969, 1971). Berys Gaut (Berys Gaut, 2010) notes that there is little consensus among theorists about the nature of identification and empathy in film, with some arguing that identification and empathy are important factors in our emotional engagement with on-screen characters (Smith, 1995, 1997; Neill, 1996; Gaut, 1999; Grodal, 1999; Coplan, 2004, 2009; Berys. Gaut, 2010), while others argue that empathy and identification hardly ever occur, preferring to frame the discussion in terms of sympathy and antipathy for characters (Carroll, 1998, 2004, 2007, 2008; Plantinga, 1999, 2009). Gaut distinguishes the differences between identification, empathy and sympathy and argues that identification is *aspectual*, in that we identify with certain elements of a character's story and perspective in order to emotionally engage with the film (Berys Gaut, 2010).

Richard Allen rejects Gaut's identification theory in favour of the combination of favourable character traits and 'character focalization' used to prompt a greater emotional engagement with film characters (Allen, 2012). The philosophical debate about the nature and degree of empathy, sympathy, identification and imagination when watching films continues to present a spectrum of opinions and arguments and terminology often becomes conflated. From a Humanist filmmaking perspective for the purposes of this inquiry, I am primarily interested in the cinematic techniques that can be used to depict and convey a character's internal mental suffering in a way that speaks to the common humanity in us all and engages an audience, prompting reflection and discussion on issues of mental health and suicidal ideation.

Since the invention of cinema, filmmakers have sought engage the audience through the use of cinematic language and techniques, conveying the emotional states of the characters and telling stories that engross and excite the viewer; from the exhilarating adventure of Georges Méliès' *Voyage Dans la Lune* (Melies, 1902), in which a group of astronomers travel to the moon in a

capsule shot out of a cannon, or Freder's nightmarish and prophetic hallucinations of the destruction of the city in Fritz Lang's futuristic science fiction masterpiece *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), to the modern day blockbuster, the use of the formal cinematic elements such as lighting, framing, close-ups, movement, mise-en-scene and cinematography, have helped to create countless characters and convey a range of complex emotional states that the audience 'feels into' and gains deeper understanding through their empathic engagement with the work. Through careful selection and utilization of formal cinematic elements, this Screen Production Practice research project aims to create filmic depictions of characters and situations that elicit an empathetic response from an audience, encouraging understanding and prompting reflection on the realities of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation, as well as how these can be experienced by anyone at any time.

Empathy can be defined as 'fellow feeling' with another, understanding their emotional state and their experiences, thoughts and feelings from their perspective in a deep and meaningful way. Empathy allows us to imagine ourselves in another person's position in order to better understand their motivations, behaviours, beliefs and attitudes from a frame of reference other than our own. The Oxford English Dictionary defines empathy as 'the ability to understand and share the feelings of another', a word that first entered the English language in the early 20th century, translated from the German word '*Einfühlung*', meaning 'feeling into', coined by Robert Vischer in 1873 in his doctoral thesis on aesthetics (Vischer, 1873). *Einfühlung* was originally used to describe the feeling viewers experienced when appreciating a work of art, such as a painting or sculpture or a beautiful vista.

There is much debate and little consensus on the precise nature and definition of empathy from a philosophical standpoint, but broadly speaking empathy can be split into two categories: Cognitive empathy and Affective empathy. Cognitive empathy or Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith, 1985), involves using our intellectual ability to imagine what another person is thinking, feeling or experiencing; understanding a given situation from another person's viewpoint and gaining a deeper understanding of their thoughts, feelings and motivations through seeing things from their perspective. Cognitive empathy is a more cerebral form of empathetic response, relying on our intellect and imagination to perceive how another person might feel in the circumstances depicted on screen. Affective empathy on the other hand denotes a range of instinctively 'felt' emotional responses to others and can be split into four sub-categories: affective empathy (proper), sympathy (empathic concern), emotional

contagion and personal distress. There is very little consensus on the degree to which each of these four ‘deeply interconnected’ factors contribute to affective empathy, but the key to understanding affective empathy is to appreciate how it is connected to, yet different from other affective states (Maibom, 2017).

Another form of affective empathetic response is Embodied Simulation, which is an automatic bodily response, linked to and controlled by mirror neurons in the brain that trigger the same neural pathways when observing a given task as would activate when doing the task ourselves. These mirror neurons are thought to be responsible for how we learn from others as well as why we spontaneously wince or flinch when we see another person get hurt or fall, reacting almost as if their pain was our own (Gallese, 2005, 2009). These embodied mirror neuron responses can be triggered when we see something painful happen to another person for instance, triggering an automatic and corporeally felt bodily reaction, such as when we see a woman’s eyeball being sliced with a razor blade in Salvador Dali and Louis Bunel’s *Un Chien Andalou* (Bunuel and Dali, 1928), or a policeman getting his ear cut off with a knife in *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1992). This physically felt reaction to visual stimuli is one that filmmakers can use to their advantage to create a visceral fellow-feeling reaction from an audience that can help to build empathy for a character, as will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Both cognitive and affective forms of empathy are closely related and are increasingly being seen as interconnected parts of a spectrum of responses to film and art that create empathy rather than two distinct forms. As an artist and filmmaker-researcher I am interested in the creation of work that elicits empathetic responses and deeper understanding in the viewer, whether that be strictly cognitive, affective or somewhere on the sliding scale in between.

Empathy is crucial to our understanding of a character’s motivations, thoughts and actions and is critically important to our reading and interpretation of film. As visual storytellers, filmmakers strive to create characters that connect with the viewer in a way that drives the story forward, with the audience fully engaged in the film. This is achieved through the use of the visual, auditory and narrative elements of cinema and by employing the vast range of cinematic tools at the filmmakers’ disposal. These tools include the use of camera techniques, shot choices, lighting, movement and sound to control the audience’s viewpoint both physically and psychologically, offering an almost infinite range of choices and possibilities for how the viewer experiences the story. Filmmakers can also engage an audience on an emotional level

through the creation of relatable characters and captivating narrative situations, involving jeopardy, risk, opportunity or threat, provoking responses ranging from tears of sadness to tears of laughter, from fear and terror to joy and elation in the audience. Through the combination of cinematic and narrative elements of the filmmaking process, filmmaker-researchers can tackle and explore universal moral themes and value conflicts such as good vs. evil, or right vs. wrong, in a way that is collectively understood by audiences everywhere, regardless of any one character's individual traits or specific characteristics. These overarching narrative themes and moral conflicts are universal to us all as human beings and have been told in stories throughout our history.

Stories that speak to universal themes have the ability to transcend cultural barriers and time, being developed, reworked and retold throughout human history, from Plato, to Shakespeare and through to the modern day. There is a wealth of literature concerning the stories we tell and how we tell them, with works like Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell, 2008) and Robert McKee's *Story: Substance, Structure, Style* (McKee, 1997) among the most pertinent and relevant to filmmakers and screenwriters, identifying some of the key themes and core building blocks of the stories that have been told since time immemorial. In *The Seven Basic Plots* (Booker, 2004), Christopher Booker points out the similarities between the underlying stories of the tenth century *Beowulf* (Donoghue and Heaney, 2001) and *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975) and goes on to outline how most of the stories told throughout history fall into the same seven overarching plots; Overcoming the Monster, Rags to Riches, The Quest, Voyage and Return, Comedy, Tragedy and Rebirth.

These basic plots provide a structure, within which filmmakers can explore the full range of human experience, from our best to our worst aspects; universal moral themes of good and evil, right and wrong, love and hate, gain and loss, struggle and triumph among others, allow us to confront our own moral choices in our lives and through empathetic understanding of the character's journey, we can begin to understand our own choices, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in greater depth. The ability of film to act as a mirror or a prism for our own life experience can impart to us significant wisdom and help us develop greater emotional awareness of ourselves and of other people in our lives. By presenting characters that are flawed and imperfect, containing both positive and negative elements, filmmakers are able to explore the full diverse range of elements and experiences that make us all human.

Many of cinema's most popular protagonists are imperfect rebels, who reflect something of our own flaws and imperfections and therefore become instantly more relatable. They do not always have to be likeable and very often are not, but if we understand what motivates their character; their desires and goals, we can care about them and want them to succeed in their goals throughout the film (Yorke, 2013). This level of empathetic engagement is important for the audience to buy into the story of a film; if we fail to connect empathetically with a protagonist's overall goals and motivations, we find it difficult to care about the outcome of their story. Characters that engage an audience on a universal level of empathy, combined with a strong story, containing elements of jeopardy, struggle and unexpected twists and turns, helps an audience to stay engaged in the film and to care about how the plot develops, how the character's story unfolds and ultimately how the story ends.

Quite often it isn't only the protagonist that creates an empathetic connection with the audience; the antagonist can also quickly become one of the audience's favourite characters. In an interview in 2000, Peter Bogdanovich says that one of the things you can characterize about Alfred Hitchcock is his 'Empathy for the Devil' (Bouzereau, 2000) and his ability to create complex and intriguing antagonists that resonate and connect strongly with the audience. John Yorke states that 'We don't *like* Satan in *Paradise Lost* – we *love* him. And we love him because he's the perfect gleeful embodiment of evil' (Yorke, 2013). We are drawn to darker characters because they present conflict, intrigue and contradiction, resonating with a deep fascination within us all and as John Yorke points out, we empathise with such characters just as we feel empathy for Adolf Hitler at the end of *Downfall* (Hirschbiegel, 2004). Heath Ledger's portrayal of the Joker in *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008) and more recently, Joaquin Phoenix's rendition of the same character in the eponymous *Joker* (Phillips *et al.*, 2019) have become two of the most iconic film antagonists of recent times and the Joker character possesses many of the same character traits that Yorke says make us 'love' Satan in *Paradise Lost* (Milton, 1667); the joyful embodiment of the darker aspects of human nature, representing something that is common to many of our most enduring and best-loved antagonists.

The power of film lies in its ability to make the audience empathise with *any* character through the use of cinematic techniques such as lighting, composition, movement, editing and narrative; unveiling more about a character's thoughts, feelings, emotions and underlying motivations, as well as how their situation, environment, culture, upbringing and life circumstances could have informed their actions. An example of this might be how the Joker's abusive childhood

and subsequently traumatic life could lead him to become the villain we meet in *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, 2008) or *Joker* (Phillips *et al.*, 2019). The audience develops and empathetic connection with the character and is encouraged to understand how they would feel in that situation or how they could be driven to the same decisions as the character. The flexibility of film as a medium allows the creator to employ a range of cinematic techniques to highlight the external and internal motivational factors for a character's actions, encouraging empathy and prompting us to draw the same conclusions as the characters on screen; for example, how a desperate mother could be driven to shoplifting and prostitution to provide for her children, as with Katie in *I, Daniel Blake* (Loach, 2016) or how a retired CIA operative would be forced to take revenge on the gang that abducted his daughter in order to get her back, as Liam Neeson's character must in *Taken* (Morel, 2008).

Empathy with the characters on screen, the good and the bad, allow us to engage with the story that unfolds through the film narrative and to care about what happens on screen. This 'caring' about the fate of the characters bears many similarities with the original meaning of *Einfühlung* and its' function as a means of developing our own emotional awareness through the understanding the views of others. Film can help us see the 'other' more clearly, by conveying the thoughts, actions and mental states of characters in a way that is understandable and relatable for us all. In *Into the Woods*, John Yorke tells us that the key to empathy does not solely lie in the understanding of motive, as is often claimed, but in the ability to access and bond with our subconscious (Yorke, 2013). This ability of storytellers and filmmakers to bond with our subconscious relies on accessing our primal fears and desires through stories that contain a universal theme, life and death, good and evil, darkness and light, struggle and triumph, joy and pain, hidden or unacknowledged fears, desires and fantasies. Yorke points to the maverick protagonists that feature in so many of our most popular films and stories, tapping into a shared desire to stand up to our own antagonists, whether in the form of an oppressive boss or an impending existential threat, such as a disease, death or an alien invasion. The protagonists allow us to see the world through their eyes as they face their own demons and through empathetic understanding of their struggles, we can relate the stories and lessons contained within the film to our own lives.

In filmmaking there are several factors to be considered when trying to elicit empathetic responses from an audience, including narrative, structure, form, genre, technique, and cinematography among others. Filmmakers have a range of cinematic tools at their disposal

that allow them to manipulate the audience's experience, controlling their viewpoint literally and metaphorically through the choice of camera angles, lighting, sound and editing. By careful control of the basic cinematic elements, filmmakers have the potential to provoke powerful empathetic responses from the audience; from tears of joy to tears of sorrow, from laughing out loud to recoiling in horror. There are a number of key components to this process from story and characters to cinematography and editing.

As visual storytellers, filmmakers must consider the story first and foremost. The story is at the very centre of every decision the filmmaker takes, from preproduction decisions on casting, props, costumes and locations, through to production decisions on lighting, mise-en-scene, cinematography and movement, to postproduction choices on colour grading and editing, are all guided by the story we are trying to tell. The characters are central to the story and are the vehicle through which the story unfolds and so it is crucial that the characters are relatable and have depth, as discussed earlier. Without a strong narrative structure and relatable characters, the audience struggles to connect with a film and may lose interest in the story, the fate of the protagonist and the related characters within the film. A film's characters should be well drawn, with strengths and weaknesses that an audience can relate to and empathise with. Once the main characters are established, there is often a clear goal or desire that the protagonist must strive towards in order to drive the story forward. This can be the result of a pleasant or unpleasant trigger, such as finding a treasure map or losing a job. If a film has a strong story featuring a relatable protagonist with a clear goal, the audience are more likely to engage with the film, empathise with the characters involved and want to see the film through to the end.

Filmmakers can work towards encouraging an empathetic response at every stage of production, such as writing relatable and stories and characters during the Development stage; making careful and deliberate choices during Preproduction with regards to props, costumes, locations and mise-en-scene; choices of lighting, camera movement, blocking, framing and composition during the Production phase; choices of editing style, cuts, transitions, pacing, colour grading and use of montage in the Postproduction stage and the choice of promotional imagery, marketing materials, straplines or taglines, log lines and promotional strategies during the Distribution stage. The techniques that filmmakers can employ to foster empathy in the viewer, range from preproduction decisions on sets, locations, props and costumes that affect the aesthetic of the film, to technical cinematographic choices including camera angles, movement and lighting, and the ability to control narrative and structural elements through

postproduction and editing choices. These creative filmmaking decisions can construct a variety of visual and auditory experiences that can be used to evoke two distinct but closely related forms of empathetic response in the viewer: Theory of Mind (Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith, 1985) and Embodied Simulation (Gallese, 2005).

Theory of Mind refers to a form of cognitive empathetic response that is the result of cerebral and imaginative processing of film, imagining what it would be like to be in a character's position and empathising with their story, as well as being able to relate it to your own values and beliefs. Embodied Simulation refers to the pre-cognitive, affective form of empathy; an immediate bodily empathetic response triggered by an event on screen. Theory of Mind can be seen as 'feeling for' a particular character or story, such as learning that a character has discovered they have a terminal illness, whereas Embodied Simulation is a more immediate 'feeling with' response, such as when a character is in immediate danger and is trying to escape and we corporally feel panic and fear with them.

Neurological studies have identified two discrete neural networks that activate in the brain when a viewer is experiencing Embodied Simulation and Theory of mind empathetic responses (Raz *et al.*, 2013; Raz and Hendler, 2014). Furthermore, these responses can be strongly associated with distinct cinematic techniques that can be used to prompt specific empathetic responses in the viewer. Long takes, wide shots and exchanges of eye level over-the-shoulder shots, accompanied by less 'real time' action and stories of past or future events are associated with encouraging a Theory of Mind empathetic response, where the viewer has time to process the story cognitively and relate it to their own life, imagining how they would feel in the character's situation. This form of cognitive empathy is frequently encouraged in melodrama and when combined with emotive music can provoke a tear-filled 'enjoyable sadness' response from the audience. On the other hand, the use of handheld cameras, natural motion and closer shots, and a focus on human expressions, movements and sounds such as breathing or screaming can provoke an immediate Embodied Simulation empathetic response in the viewer.

The physiological effects of both forms of empathetic response in the viewer are also different to each other, with Embodied Simulation provoking a response similar to our natural 'fight or flight' response, in which our heart rate increases and our muscles tense. Viewers experiencing a sequence provoking an embodied simulation response, such as a chase or a fight scene, can feel corporally connected to the action on screen, 'feeling with' a character and responding in

a physical way that mirrors the character's physical reaction to the immediate threat they may be facing at that point in the story. Scenes created to encourage a Theory of Mind empathetic response in the viewer often use a combination of the cinematic techniques mentioned above to relax of the muscles and reduce the heart rate of the viewer, allowing time to cognitively process the story as it unfolds. Both empathetic responses are equally valid and important and are present at some point in almost every Hollywood film.

Arguably the most powerful empathetic responses are those generated by scenes that engage both forms of empathy within the same sequence; scenes in which we are encouraged into a reflexive contemplative state engaging Theory of Mind empathy, only to be suddenly brought into the 'here and now' of Embodied Simulation empathy (Raz and Hendler, 2014). In their article *Forking Paths to the Self*, Gal Raz and Talma Hendler discuss the example of the multi-award winning *Amour* (Haneke, 2012), and a particular climactic scene in which a husband, Georges (Jean-Louis Trintignant), talks to his terminally ill wife, Anne (Emmanuelle Riva) at her bedside, calmly telling her a story from his childhood before suddenly suffocating her with a pillow. Our empathetic engagement with the scene is primarily driven by Theory of Mind, as we listen to his story and 'feel for' him as a child, until we are suddenly and unexpectedly faced with the immediacy and panic of an affective Embodied Simulation response, as we are forced to watch helplessly as Georges suffocates Anne and she struggles in vain against him to breathe and finally dies.

When watching the suffocation scene in *Amour*, we feel physically tense, shocked and uncomfortable, as if trapped and unable to breathe ourselves, and it is only once the sequence has ended that we can relax and breathe normally again. This example of affective empathy is all the more pronounced because of the false sense of security created by listening to and cognitively processing Georges' reminiscences immediately beforehand. The unexpected jolt of Embodied Simulation panic as Georges suddenly suffocates his wife is extremely uncomfortable to watch but leaves a powerful and lasting impression on the viewer and *Amour* drew widespread critical acclaim for the powerful and emotive effect it has on the audience (Raz and Hendler, 2014).

Through the careful employment of formal cinematic techniques, *JACK* (Deery, 2019) aims to strike a balance between the two and provide a nuanced progression between scenes that evoke both a sympathetic Theory of Mind reaction to the character's plight, that is then pierced with

more intense scenes that elicit an Embodied Simulation empathetic response from an audience. By striking a careful balance through a process of reflexive and iterative Screen Production Research practice, this project aims to have a powerful impact and create a lasting impression by modelling help-seeking and recovery from suicidal ideation.

4.2 Narrative Structure

The structure of a film's narrative can make all the difference to the comprehension of the audience and the reception of your film. If a narrative is too simplistic, flat or straightforward, an audience quickly becomes bored of the story and become disinterested in the film. Equally if the storyline is too complex, twisted or incomprehensible, an audience are likely to become confused trying to follow it. Story has always been central to human existence, survival, development and understanding. The way in which we tell stories has been refined over millennia, from our ancient ancestors regaling family and friends around a fire with tales of hunting successes and fables and fairy tales to warn or teach the young. In contemporary terms, most stories have a beginning, a middle and an end; the equivalent of a three-act structure in theatre. This has been tweaked, refined and developed into variations including the five-act structure, but our understanding of a story generally adheres to these principles.

Film has been able to manipulate and play with the accepted narrative structure and examples like *Memento*'s fractured timeline serve as proof that a film's narrative can be chopped and changed to suit a theme or intention within a piece. From Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a thousand faces* (Campbell, 2008), to Robert McKee's *Story: Substance, Structure, Style* (McKee, 1997) Christopher Booker's *Seven Basic Plot Types* (Booker, 2004) and John Yorke's *Into the Woods* (Yorke, 2013), the ways in which we tell stories has been extensively written about and is something that all of us, whether consciously or unconsciously understand. Most Hollywood films fall within broad storytelling structures, established long before the advent of film and refined over decades of filmmaking successes and failures.

Jung's archetypal characters can be found in stories throughout the history of film (Jung and Dell, 1963; Jung and Hull, 1973; Hauke, 2001; Singh, 2009; Hauke and Hockley, 2011), that tell of their journey, the obstacles they overcome and their fate. Creating an engaging and relatable character that embarks on a journey of some kind to reach an ending in which they are somehow enriched or changed is a reasonably universal template for storytelling in film. Although there exists a wealth of films that break from this tried and tested formula to explore abstract and antithetical narrative, these can often leave an audience feeling unfulfilled, disappointed, confused or deflated after viewing. There are numerous examples of films where the antagonist wins, the heroes lose and hope for a happy ending is abandoned, for example *Savages* (Stone, 2012) or *The Counselor* (Scott, 2013). Whilst acknowledging that this is an

option available to me as a filmmaker-researcher, for example my protagonist losing all hope and taking his own life, it is not an option I am considering for this piece, as I am primarily attempting to create a hopeful, positive, help-seeking model for those in need. Also, in keeping with the ethos of the Papageno Effect, the character must not die or make any serious attempt on their life, showing recovery and hope of a better future as an alternative outcome for suicidal thoughts and ideation.

The most succinct and helpful template for storytelling I have found is Nigel Watts' Eight-point story arc (Watts, 1996), which provides a universal, flexible and engaging template for storytelling, leaving room for variation and twists and turns in the narrative, but ultimately ending up with a satisfying and strong ending. Watts' model was originally aimed at writers writing a novel, but the structure and flow of his eight-point story arc template is ideal for writing a script for a short film.

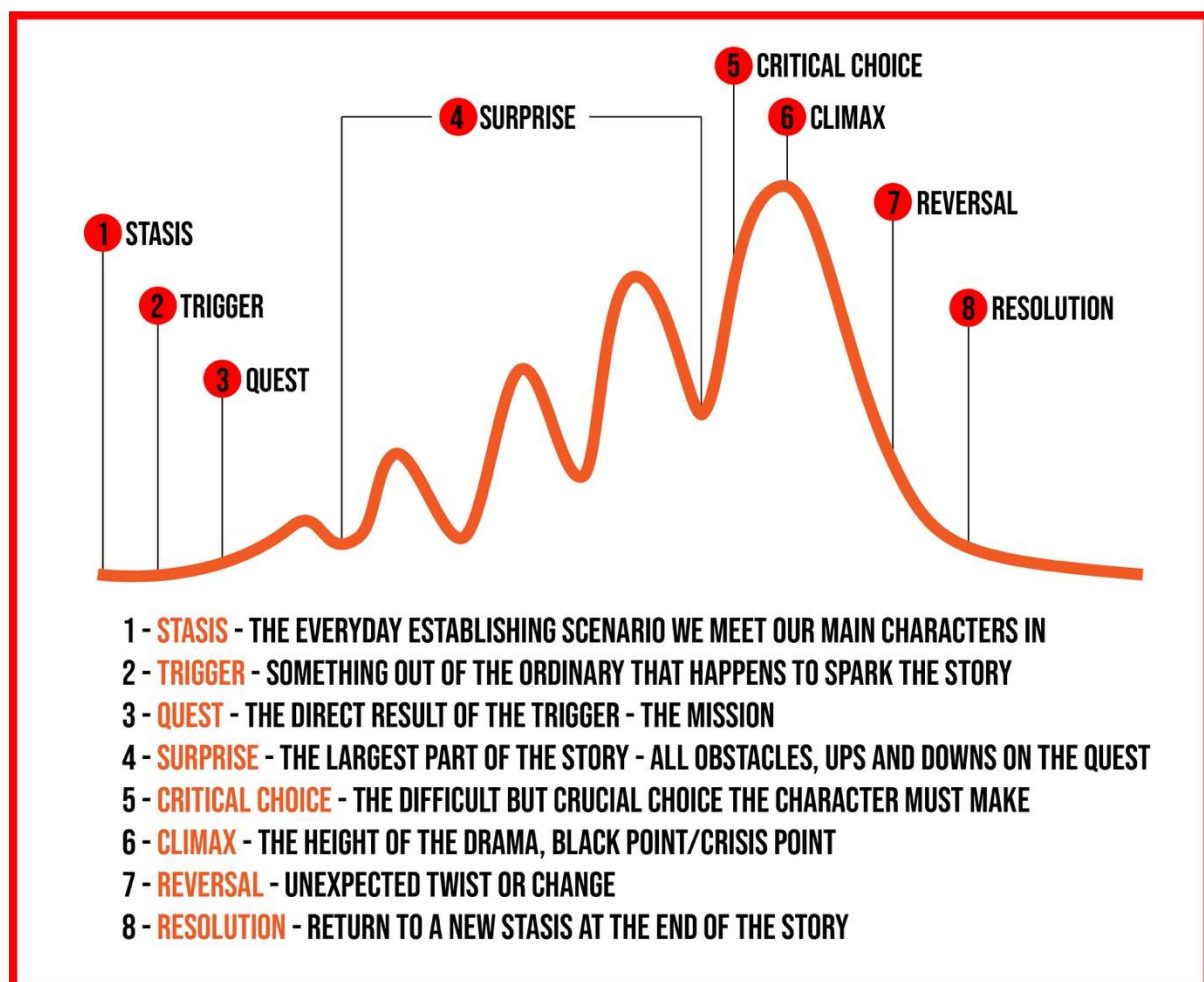


Figure 4 – Visual representation of Nigel Watts (1996) 8-Point Story Arc

Nigel Watts' 8-Point Story Arc (Watts, 1996) gives the filmmaker-storyteller a flexible framework within which to create an engaging story on any subject. The first three points ensure that there is a point to the story and a clear direction for the characters to follow. The Surprise section allows for flexible storytelling, building in unexpected twists and turns as the story progresses and the drama becomes elevated. Giving the character a critical choice to make at a point of heightened drama adds suspense and thrill to the narrative, resulting in the climax of the story. The use of a reversal or sudden twist when all hope seems lost is a satisfying plot point and one which can really work with an audience if it is well enough concealed. A sudden reveal leading to a satisfying conclusion and resolution has been used successfully in a number of notable films, for example *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999) and *The Sixth Sense* (Shyamalan, 1999). The reveal is a plot device that I used to reveal Jack as the Narrator in *DROP* (Deery, 2014) and one that I chose to revise, improve upon and employ in the creation of *JACK* (Deery, 2019). The 8-point story arc's flexible structure allowed me to develop a satisfying screenplay narrative for the final film, adding increasingly dramatic twists and turns as the plot progresses towards the tense climax followed by a satisfying and unexpected twist, with a strong preventative and protective message for suicidal ideation at the end of the film.

4.3 The Suicide Spiral: An Autoethnographic Model of Suicidality

When reflecting on my own experiences with suicidal ideation and attempting to devise a visual model or concept that might help to convey these experiences in the final film, the idea of a rapidly descending spiral of increasingly negative thoughts and behaviours towards a suicidal crisis point appeared to provide an appropriate and useable visual metaphor that illustrates the self-reinforcing and destructive thought patterns that can lead to suicidal ideation. This Suicide Spiral model based on autoethnographic reflections on lived experience with suicidal ideation is outlined in figure 5 below.



Figure 5 – Suicide Spiral, an Autoethnographic conceptual model of a rapidly deteriorating internal mental state and related behaviours in the mind of someone suicidal

This internal spiral happens internally and unseen while attempting to keep things going normally in everyday life, keeping a brave face on things and not seeking help or opening up about the serious and dangerous internal thoughts and dialogue. Suicide is often seen as sudden and unexpected to family and loved ones, having not seen any signs of their loved one's internal battles, even though they have been gradually building over months and years. The spiral does not happen over the course of a week, but over a much longer time period, building and

building, like adding straws one by one to the camel's back before finally snapping one day. The final descent of the spiral is where the person is nearing the brink of suicide and has resolved to take their own life to end the pain of the internal struggles in their head. The anger, frustration, fear and feelings of isolation and hopelessness are utterly overwhelming and can cloud your judgement and perspective like a fog in the brain or the blinkers on a horse that give rise to the title of Sole Purpose's suicide prevention play 'Blinkered' (Byrne, 2017). Someone at this end of the spiral is not seeing straight and can't make rational decisions and judgements. Often this destructive internal spiral can become externalised in reckless behaviour, putting yourself or others in danger. Drug and alcohol abuse, verbally and physically fighting others and lashing out can all stem from this place of internal desperation and hopelessness.



Figure 6 – Charity Coin Collection Box and the Spiral shot used in JACK (Deery, 2019)

Developing the spiral concept immediately conjured up an image of the charity coin spiral collection boxes from my childhood that I used to love putting coins into and watching them steadily spiral downwards, picking up speed as they reached the bottom before flying off into the black hole at high speed. This concept has continued through my work and experiments and is a strong visual metaphor in the final film. The key to the spiral concept is encouraging people to recognise the early warning signs at an earlier stage of the spiral, before it's too late. Becoming more self-aware and seeking help when you're struggling by speaking to a friend, family member, doctor or one of the many helplines is a crucial and potentially life-saving piece of information that I wish to convey in my work and one that the spiral concept allows for in a visual metaphor.

Developing my own autoethnographic model from lived experience and reflection sparked a curiosity in the context of the research to what other models of suicidal ideation and behaviour

existed. Further research uncovered several models within the field of suicide research that contained similar elements to my suicide spiral model, including the IMV Model (O'Connor, 2011), the CAMS Model (Jobes and Drozd, 2004) and the CBT Model (Rudd, 2000). Many of these have common themes, such as feelings of hopelessness, shame, guilt and entrapment that exacerbate suicidal thoughts, as well as sociological factors such as feeling like a burden on your family. Suicidal ideation worsens and becomes planning and thinking about means of suicide. Gaining access to means of suicide is also common at latter stages of suicidal ideation.

Of all the models that I encountered, Baumeister's Escape Theory of Suicide (Baumeister, 1990) is the closest approximation of my own experience and the model that most closely fits the suicide spiral concept. Baumeister's model proposes that suicide is a six-step sequential process consisting of; Falling short of standards, whereby an individual fails to meet unrealistically high life expectations, set by themselves or others or experiences negative life circumstances or setbacks; Internalisation of self-blame, where the individual blames themselves for the failures and setbacks, which in turn causes low self-esteem; Inadequate sense of self resulting in negative attitudes towards one's self; Negative Consequences of an Inadequate sense of self, including depression, anxiety or anger; Narrowed thinking or tunnel vision in an ever-increasing desire to eliminate negative thoughts; Reckless behaviour, absence of emotion and irrational thought, often manifesting in self-harm, risky behaviour, social withdrawal, suicidal thoughts and suicidality as a result of the need to escape.

Baumeister's model outlines the progression of suicidal thought and behaviour, from negative feelings about your life, to guilt and self-blame, resulting in low self-esteem and a negative self-image. These internalised negative thoughts about life and your sense of self result in destructive behaviour, anger, depression, anxiety and so on. Tunnel vision and shutting yourself off from others and the world soon follows as suicidal ideation begins to become overwhelming. The last stage of this model includes reckless behaviour, self-harm, substance abuse and increasing social isolation as symptoms of worsening internal states, where the notion of oblivion, the need to escape, the need to end it all becomes much more attractive than living on. Suicidal behaviour often follows as a direct result of this descent, which I visualise in the final film as an increasingly rapid spiral towards darkness.

A later 'Self-Regulatory Model of Suicide' by Vohs and Baumeister, builds upon Baumeister's Escape Theory model of suicide and argues that self-regulatory resource depletion underlies the escape theory model and talks specifically in terms of a 'suicide spiral' (Vohs and

Baumeister, 2006). The discovery of Vohs and Baumeister's models provided validation of the autoethnographic approach taken to developing my own suicide spiral model and both models share a number of similarities in describing the rapidly deteriorating factors that lead to suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour.

There are a number of other models of suicidality and many organisations and individuals doing excellent work in the field of Suicidology and suicide prevention, such as the Zero Suicide Alliance, who have the explicit aim of reducing suicide to zero worldwide and offer free online training courses for suicide prevention. Suicide is ultimately a preventable cause of death (WHO, 2014) but creating the right sort of environment and society where people do not feel the need for suicide is a significant challenge. The Zero Suicide Alliance training gives individuals the tools to know what to do and say if they or anyone they know is at risk of suicide and their model is being adopted by a number of organisations worldwide in a joint effort to eradicate the problem of suicide. 'One death by suicide is one too many' has become a mantra for the movement and I can't help but agree with this sentiment. Several other suicidal behaviour models exist and most of them share similar factors. The progression towards suicide is often silent and unseen but becoming aware of the little signs to watch out for and knowing how to have a conversation about suicide is important. This is something I want to make clear in my film and show that there is always a better option than suicide, there is always someone there willing to listen and to help you recover.

4.4 The Concept of ‘Jack’

The concept of ‘*Jack*’ is something that I have been working on as a metaphor for several years, including during the production of [*DROP*](#) (Deery, 2014). Jack is the destructive, mentally unwell side of the character, who can take over and play a part in their life at any point, resulting in negative, abusive, self-harming, self-destructive behaviour. *DROP* is a film dealing with issues of mental health and suicide that I wrote and directed in 2014 as a final project for the MDes Design for Creative Practice. The film tells the story of two young men, our narrator and Jack, who meet at university and become friends. As the story progresses, we see Jack becoming increasingly anxious and unhinged, struggling with his own mental health and covering it up in front of his friends. These internal struggles eventually lead to Jack attempting suicide by jumping off the Foyle Bridge in the film’s dramatic climax. As the camera tilts down from the bridge to reveal ‘Jack’, we find out that it was our narrator all along and ‘Jack’ was the name he gave to his mentally unwell ‘friend’. The film has been shown at Mental Health festivals around the world including the Mind Rights Festival in Portugal at the Gulbenkian foundation for mental health and several prominent screenings across Northern Ireland at the Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts and Film Festival (NIMHAFF). *DROP* (Deery, 2014) is also shown regularly at the Beacon Centre’s ‘Recovery Café’, allowing groups of people recovering from mental health problems to watch the film and discuss issues around suicide and mental health. The film also received considerable interest from Samaritans, who wanted to include *DROP* in their DEAL (Developing Emotional Awareness and Learning) program in schools and has received praise for being a film that promotes a constructive representation of issues of suicidal ideation and encourages help seeking for mental health issues.

Naming ‘Jack’ is an example of a coping strategy often used to separate the symptoms of mental ill health from your real self, in order to regain control of your thoughts and actions. This is a common and effective way of trying to separate the self-destructive behaviour that often takes place when mentally unwell from the person you really are underneath (Thomas, 2017). I tried to illustrate it as a coping mechanism that we can adopt following a considerable trauma like suicidal ideation. ‘Jack’ then becomes an identifiable, nameable and therefore more controllable entity, much less intertwined with who we really are. Naming ‘Jack’ allows James, our narrator to identify whenever he appears again in his life. During a presentation at the 13th Annual Mental Health conference at Ulster University, Magee in 2016, Niall ‘Bressie’ Breslin spoke about his book on anxiety and depression and how he named his mentally unwell

self ‘Jeffrey’, identifying all the things that Jeffrey likes and hates, as well as what he needs to do to make himself well (Breslin, 2015). This was a great example of someone who now speaks on Mental Health issues worldwide, has used the same coping mechanisms as the Narrator with ‘Jack’.

The concept of ‘Jack’ as a character was originally developed from and remains rooted in Eckhart Tolle’s *Power of Now* and *A New Earth*, in which Tolle identifies the way in which we live our lives unconsciously and controlled by the ‘Egoic Mind’. The Egoic mind is a term Tolle uses for all of our unexamined and unconscious behaviour that can cause and perpetuate negativity, pain and suffering in the world, be it in our own lives, our interactions with others or on a larger scale of corporations and nations. These unexamined and unconscious patterns of thoughts and behaviours can consume us and affect our everyday lives, almost always resulting in harm or hurt to one person or another. Becoming conscious of these actions and learning to recognise when our egoic mind is controlling our actions is a crucial part of stopping the cycle of negativity and pain that is so often a part of everyday life. I have taken this concept and developed both *JACK* and the *Suicide Spiral* as examples of when our increased consciousness and awareness of our thoughts, mood and behaviour can have a beneficial effect on our own mental health internally and our relationships with the outside world, including familial relationships, friendships and relationships with colleagues and associates. The underlying learning intention of *JACK* is the distillation of Tolle’s thought into an accessible and engaging character that an audience can relate to, empathise with and hopefully learn to seek help for mental health struggles for themselves and others through.

4.5 The Mirror Moment

Mirrors have frequently played an important role in filmmaking and storytelling, providing a useful metaphor and practical tool for representing concepts of duality, revealing inner states or questioning a character's reality. Mirrors and reflections are historically ubiquitous throughout our cultural storytelling, from Narcissus falling in love with his own reflection or Perseus using the reflective surface of his shield to defeat Medusa, to Alice going through the looking glass or Maleficent asking 'mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?'. The same ubiquity can be seen throughout film history, from the Marx brothers mirroring each other's movements for comedic effect in *Duck Soup* (McCarey, 1933), to *Black Swan's* (Aronofsky, 2010) use of confusing, disorientating reflections and the eventual use of a shard of broken mirror as a weapon. Many horror films have used reflections in mirrors to provide jump scares or used the mirror to summon evil spirits like saying 'Candyman' (Rose, 1992) three times in the mirror to make him appear. The duality that can be suggested by using the mirror as visual metaphor is a useful one and a frame that has been used before throughout the history of filmmaking and storytelling, including films like *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese, 1976) and *Raging Bull* (Scorsese, 1980). The mirror is a device that I employ in my own filmmaking to suggest conflict and internal struggle within a character's psyche, when they face themselves in the mirror to gain control of their mental state and try to survive their internal turmoil and suicidal ideation. Screen theory of the 1970's and 80's frequently referred to mirrors, including what Christian Metz called the 'Screen Mirror' (Metz, 1975), inspired by Lacan's mirror stage, writing about how we identify with characters on screen and recognise ourselves in them, with the screen acting as a mirror.

The Mirror Moment is a well-established filmic trope and has been used in many films to provide a moment of self-reflection and soul-searching for characters. Mirrors feature throughout our culture, from the evil queen in *Snow White* (Disney, 1937) famously asking the magic mirror, 'Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?', or the saying 'take a good long look at yourself in the mirror' to Michael Jackson's 'Man in the Mirror' (Jackson, 1988), the cultural use of the mirror moment is both deeply personal and universal. I would argue that the use of mirrors in film alone is enough for another full PhD project, so here I simply outline my own intentions for using them in my filmmaking work.

Mirrors play an important part in this film and the concept of Jack's Mirror Moments are derived not only from the well-established traditions of both culture and Hollywood, but from real autoethnographic lived experience in which I have experienced powerful mirror moments of my own. Often the only time we are safely alone with ourselves is in the bathroom, where the door is locked, and you can block out the distractions and irritations of the external world. Being alone with ourselves gives us time to pause and reflect on our life and looking at our reflection in the mirror allows us to scrutinise ourselves in a very direct way, questioning the choices we have made and the life situations we find ourselves in, as well as seeking solutions through deep introspection afforded by the mirror encounter.

Many of us have experienced these 'Mirror Moments' and I believe that it is an instantly relatable situation for Jack to experience. The use of Jack's solitary moments with himself in the mirror give us a space within which to explore Jack's true feelings with, to and about himself. These moments are private, free from external distractions and give the character a brief moment to compose and steady himself before entering back into the world early on in the film. Later in the film, Jack's mirror moment provides a battleground for his deepest inner turmoil, struggling with thoughts of suicide and trying desperately to talk himself out of it in the mirror.

In Jack, I use the mirror to facilitate an encounter between Jack and 'himself', based on Eckhart Tolle's concept of the egoic or ego-controlled mind and our true selves, which I expand on in the following chapter. This mirror encounter affords Jack the opportunity to truly face himself, to confront his deepest, darkest thoughts and demons and call them to account. The mirror allows Jack to experience a direct encounter with his inner mental state as his 'true self' attempts to control and subdue these tumultuous thoughts that are driving him to the brink of insanity and suicide. As Jack faces himself in the mirror, it becomes a battle of the inner and outer states of his being, of his true being and the spiralling storm of negative and suicidal thoughts he is experiencing with increasing ferocity and velocity. The final mirror moment in which Jack loses his internal battle and decides to take his own life goes through several stages as his internal state worsens. The privacy of the final mirror moment is even briefly interrupted by a call from Lacie, but at that stage it is too late, Jack has fallen too far down the spiral and has already decided his fate. Jack cuts off Lacie's call and has a final knowing look at himself, resigned to his fate and seeing no other option but suicide.

4.6 Chapter 4 Conclusions and Interim Findings

This chapter has outlined the theoretical concepts, models, narrative structures and cinematic storytelling techniques that have been influential in the development of the screenplay for the final research film, as well as some of the key ideas and concepts that would become part of the visual and narrative landscape of the final research piece. There are five key interim findings in this chapter, as outlined below.

The first interim finding was the use of narrative structure templates to provide a satisfying and engaging narrative flow when writing a story or screenplay. Nigel Watts 8-point story arc provides a succinct and adaptable model for narrative storytelling that was crucial to the writing and structuring of the final research film, helping to guide the narrative and create drama and intrigue throughout the film. The development of the screenplay or the final film will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5.

The second interim finding was that certain cinematic techniques could be used purposely to elicit a range of different emotional responses from an audience, including two distinct forms of empathetic reaction: Cognitive or Theory of Mind empathy and Affective or Embodied Simulation empathy. This chapter discovered that both forms of empathic response can be triggered by the careful use of lighting, framing, movement, sound and music and that often the most powerful reaction comes from a combination of both the Theory of Mind and the Embodied Simulation responses within a scene or a film. The use of these techniques in the final research film will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The third key finding was the development of a theoretical Suicide Spiral model that suitably conveys the negative emotional state and rapidly deteriorating self-destructive spiral that I had experienced in the past and was able to draw upon through the autoethnographic reflection on lived experience. The Suicide Spiral model of an increasingly rapid descent towards a point of no return became a strong visual metaphor by using footage of a coin spiralling towards a black hole that would become an important visual element in the final film. I believe that the concept of the suicide spiral also offers potential scope for further research and development, not only as a strong visual metaphor but as a narrative structure that could be developed in a similar fashion to the 8-point story arc. This is an area for further research that is outside the scope of the current enquiry, but one that warrants further development future projects.

The fourth key finding was the concept of ‘Jack’ and the idea of naming the mentally unwell aspects of your personality in order to identify when they are playing a role in your life. This chapter found that this concept, born out of autoethnographic experience and the influence of Eckhart Tolle’s *Power of Now*, was also used by others including Niall ‘Bressie’ Breslin as a coping mechanism and a way to separate their true identity from the mentally unwell aspects of themselves. This concept became so central to the development of the final research film, that the film’s title ultimately became ‘JACK’.

The fifth interim finding of this chapter was the concept of the Mirror Moment and the use of the mirror as a storytelling device in filmmaking to show a character struggling with their internal mental state and facing themselves in the mirror to deal with their problems. The Mirror Moment would go on to become an important part of the protagonist’s internal battle in the final research film, as will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Having examined some of the theoretical concepts and models that influenced the conceptual development of the final research film in this chapter, chapter 5 will discuss the practical process of creating the final research film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019), from concept to completion. Chapter 5 discusses the iterative development of the screenplay, the extensive preproduction process that led to the shooting and finally the editing of a 34-minute film that satisfies the research project’s aims and objectives by translating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

5 Final Research Filmmaking Practice and the creation of JACK

The previous chapter discussed some of the theoretical models and concepts that influenced the development of the final research film including cinematic techniques to foster empathy, narrative structure templates and the concepts of ‘Jack’ as a character, the mirror moment and the suicide spiral, helping to identify potential cinematic solutions to the problems caused by traditional representations of mental health issues and suicide in film, as discussed in chapter 3. This chapter will now discuss the specific approaches taken during the production process of the final research film to elucidate and expand upon some of the creative decisions and processes involved in planning, shooting and editing the final film piece. Working within the ethos of Erik Knudsen’s Total Filmmaker (Knudsen, 2016) (see 2.1), I have been fully involved in every stage of the production of the final research film and the account of the decisions taken in this chapter reflects that, providing a personal and subjective explanation for every decision taken as a filmmaker-researcher and finding what Knudsen refers to as the personal voice in filmmaking (Knudsen, 2018) within the context of a Screen Production Research project.

As discussed throughout the thesis, the research process that led to this point was multifarious and consisted of three main stages. The initial Thematic Research stage of this project consisted of multidisciplinary thematic reading, concerned with representations of mental health and suicide in film, as well as further reading in the fields of psychology, sociology and others concerning suicide and mental health. The second Contextual Research stage focused on contextual reading relating to film theory and situating this project in relation to contemporary Screen Production Research and best practice. This chapter is specifically concerned with the third and final stage of the research process, the Technical research stage, consisting of filmmaking practice and the practical and technical tests that led to the development of the final research film, [*JACK*](#) (Deery, 2019); a film that successfully addresses the research projects aims and objectives by translating the Papageno Effect into Filmmaking practice. The filmmaking process consists of a series of distinct production stages that bring a film from concept to completion. This chapter will discuss each of the stages leading to the completion of the final research film, *JACK*, including Development (see 5.1 and 5.2), Preproduction (see 5.3), Production (see 5.4) and Postproduction (see 5.5), helping to elucidate the thoughts and processes that contributed to the final research film.

5.1 Final Film Development: Initial Tests and Experiments

The initial phase of the final filmmaking process consisted of a series of both structured and relatively unstructured [tests and experiments](#) that included technical tests with cameras and lighting through to thematic and postproduction experimentation with techniques that would help to inform the filmmaking techniques used for the final research film. This period of experimentation allowed for the free flowing and development of techniques and ideas without the pressures and restrictions of a full final film production. This period of free, creative, artistic filmmaking practice allowed space for ideas to grow and was crucial to the practice-based component of the Screen Production Research process, developing ideas, processes and techniques that helped to shape the final research film. This chapter discusses the results of that period of filmmaking experimentation and highlights several examples of techniques and processes that are evident in the final research film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019).





Figure 7 - Stills from *Down* (Deery, 2018b)

When first exploring the themes of the research project through filmmaking practice, I was interested in the type of shots that might help tell the story of a character who is struggling with their mental health. *Down* (Deery, 2018b) is a film made up of a short series of mood tests that might help to illustrate depression and convey the suspension of time that accompanies a period of depression, where days, weeks and months begin to blur together and lose their sense of meaning or purpose. The days spent lying in bed, staring at the walls and ceiling, numb and unmoving, the complete lack of purpose and motivation and the seeming impossibility of even the most mundane everyday tasks that appear insurmountable when suffering from a period of depression were all drawn from personal experience and I wanted to explore how these ‘impossible tasks’ could be conveyed in film. In fact, ‘the impossible task’ was the original working title for the short film, which was later changed to the shorter title ‘*Down*’.

Long, lingering takes, close ups on an unblinking eye staring into the middle-distance, slow breathing, absence of dialogue, low, slow, moody music, cold blue colour grading, unkempt character appearance and slow, laboured execution of simple daily tasks were used to create a mood of depression in the piece. *Down* shows a man who struggles to motivate himself to get out of bed, searchingly stares at himself in the mirror and slouches with abject and hopeless disdain for himself and the situation he finds himself in; lacking the motivation or energy needed to start his day, let alone make any meaningful changes to his life. The fog of depression

in the mind of someone in this situation can cloud judgement and hamper the ability to make and positive change in your life. Often described as a Black Dog (Black Dog Institute, 2019) that grows silently until it completely takes over your life, depression has a debilitating effect on sufferers, and this is what I wanted to convey in *Down*. Some of the themes and shots used in *Down*, such as the slouching shot from behind and the character's confrontation with himself in the mirror in figure 7 above, went on to be included in the final research film *JACK*.



Figure 8 - Railway Details and Layered Video Fading in Tracks (Deery, 2018c)

[Tracks](#) (Deery, 2018c) was created as the result of a series of technical tests with the new Panasonic GH5's high quality 4K setting and experimenting with close focus, composition and depth of field. I also experimented with layers to explore the possibilities brought about by layering video to convey notions of presence and absence, memory and time in film. I wanted to explore how by combining two or more layers of video and changing the transparency and opacity of the footage, I could create 'ghosts' of the person on screen, fading away, appearing from nowhere, becoming visible and invisible in the same shot, as illustrated in figure 8 above. The choice of the abandoned Foyle railway that once ran from Derry into Donegal as a location gave me ideal backdrop upon which to base these experiments, fading ghost-like images of myself over the abandoned and overgrown railway tracks played with notions of time and memory, of presence and absence in a place that was once bustling with rail commuters and now lies abandoned and unloved.



Figure 9 - Flickering experiments with presence and absence in *Bridge* (Deery, 2018a)

The location of the old Foyle Valley Railway also includes Noah Rose's *The Third Bridge* (Rose, 2005), a public art sculptural piece made from an old Victorian Railway bridge, that explores notions of community and identity in Derry and Northern Ireland, with the two identical parts of the bridge situated at the east and west banks of the River Foyle, representing the traditional divide between the catholic and protestant citizens of the city. Both sections of the bridge are symbolically 'joined' by a beam of light that stretches across the Foyle, representing notions of hope and progress in a city that has been bitterly divided by conflict in the past. Using a similar layering technique to *Tracks*, the short film experiment [Bridge](#) (Deery, 2018a) experiments with a flickering effect on and off between presence and absence in a series of shots on The Third Bridge as illustrated in Figure 9, I was exploring ways in which the effect could be used to convey meaning. The staccato flickering effect created by quickly turning on and off the visibility of the top 'layer', made these shots appear more glitchy and disjointed, creating a blinking effect reminiscent of Morse code messages from a torch, which was inspired by the filming location and the symbolic messages of light sent between both banks of the River Foyle. I very much enjoyed experimenting with film and editing techniques in this way and both *Tracks* and *Bridge* revealed several avenues for further film explorations, including the flickering strobing effects and masking effects that would eventually feature in *JACK*.



Figure 10 - Layering, Time-lapse and Slow-Motion Experiments

Further experimenting with video layering and effects led to the creation of [several short film tests](#), combining green screen slow motion footage with a range of other film footage including other slow motion, time lapse and driving hyper lapse footage to create a range of experimental effects as [seen](#) in Figure 10. These initial experiments developed into the layering techniques used in *JACK*, particularly the drunken scene in which Jack is starting to unravel and we see slow motion footage of him, layered with semi-transparent footage on top, to represent the blurring and confusion of Jack's spiralling descent into drunken self-destruction.



Figure 11 - Experiments using eyes blended with other footage

In another series of formative experiments, I was experimenting with [eyes](#) and blending layered footage together to create meaning, such as an eye blended into an eye-shaped knot in a piece of wood, which could be used to suggest age or impermanence, to the spiralling coin used in the final film's opening sequence, spiralling into the eye. Erik Knudsen believes that the eyes

are not merely just part of an actor's performance, but also 'a window through which we can see a world whose presence is untouchable' (Knudsen, 2014). This is something I was keen to explore in the initial film tests, to find ways in which the eyes might be incorporated into filmmaking practice to suggest the unseen inner turmoil that the character is experiencing.

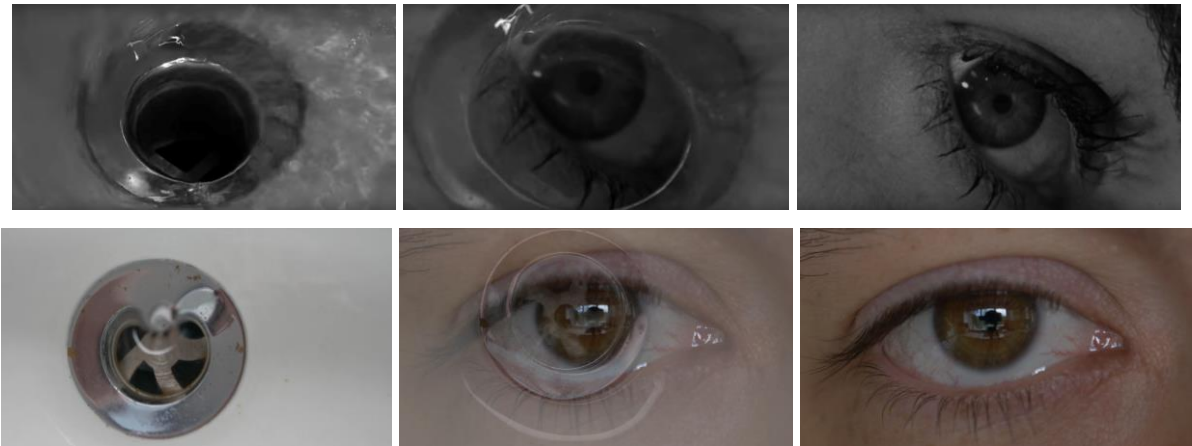


Figure 12 - Hitchcock's iconic shower scene blending from plug hole to eye in Psycho (Hitchcock, 1960) and blending a similar sink plug hole with an eye in a series of experiments

Whilst working with eyes and blending footage in this way, I was reminded of Alfred Hitchcock's iconic shower scene in *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) and how the shot of the blood running down the plug hole blends into Janet Leigh's staring dead eye. This cinematic image is so iconic that I decided to steer away from the idea in the final film, as to imitate the shot in any way would be derivative, opting instead to use a combination of close ups, layering and lighting techniques to illustrate the internal turmoil and mental distress of the character.



Figure 13 - Split screen close ups of two eyes

Another short experimental idea involving eyes was to use a [split screen](#) to illustrate a character's internal and external worlds, showing on one hand how they appear to the world and on the other side a representation of how they feel internally. This could involve two different actors, or the same actor with alternative makeup and lighting for each shot, illustrating the mood, atmosphere and meaning of each shot. This is a technique that wasn't adopted in the final film, but one that could be an interesting concept to explore further at a later date.



Figure 14 - Lighting and Location testing

Working with Matt Deery, who would eventually go on to play Jack in the final film, *JACK*, I conducted a series of camera tests to gauge the capabilities of the Panasonic GH5 in various conditions, ranging from bright sunlight outside to low light in an indoor environment. I was pleased with the results overall and the 4K resolution is very impressive compared to previous cameras I have used, for example the Canon 550D used for filming *DROP* (Deery, 2014), which was only capable of Full HD recording at 1920x1080px resolution. The low light shots struggled a little without a fast lens, but overall, I was more than happy with the quality of footage that the camera produced, particularly without a substantial budget to hire more expensive lenses and equipment in keeping within the ethos of Erik Knudsen's Cinema of Poverty (Knudsen, 2010a).



Figure 15 - Composition and Camera Equipment Testing

In another series of tests and experiments, I was exploring the various possibilities for [composition and movement](#) in the filmmaking practice. These included the use of a range of equipment including a tripod, dolly and slider to test the effects of various combinations of composition and movement that could be used in the final film. These were useful for a number of reasons including improving familiarity and proficiency of the new GH5 camera, as well as testing options for the types of shots and equipment that would be used in the production of a final film.





Figure 16 - Colour gel testing with lights

This series of studio-based experiments also included testing [lighting equipment](#) including various LED and Tungsten lamps and combining them with [coloured gels](#) and modifiers to create particular moods and effects in the shots that could be used to convey a particular mood or meaning in the final film. These tests proved to be an important technique for the creation of the final dramatic sequence in [JACK](#), which makes heavy use of gels and lighting experiments to show the internal distressed state of the character in the moments leading up to his suicide attempt.

All of the technical filmmaking tests and experiments during the development stage helped to inform the filmmaking approaches and techniques employed in the final research film, *JACK*. Developing concurrently and reciprocally with the technical filmmaking experiments was the final screenplay for the research film, *JACK*, as will be discussed in detail in the following section (see 5.2).

5.2 Final Film Development: Screenplay Development

The [screenplay](#) for the final research film was developed alongside the technical and practical experiments (see 5.1), working reciprocally to test ideas and concepts from the developing screenplay using filmmaking techniques and taking inspiration from the visual results of the experiments to further inform the development of the screenplay in order to create a final film that satisfies the research aims and objectives by translating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

The development stage of any film project can be as exciting as it is daunting, due to the virtually infinite range of narrative and creative possibilities open to filmmakers at the start of a project and one of the primary concerns during the development stage is to narrow these options down to one clear and concise idea for a final film. Based on the aims and objectives of the research project, the primary goal of the development stage was to write a screenplay that would help to successfully translate the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. This meant creating a story of a character experiencing suicidal ideation as a result of internal psychological distress and external sociological factors impacting on their emotional wellbeing and leading to the point of suicide, followed by modelling character agency, help-seeking and recovery as an alternative outcome for suicidal ideation rather than an attempted or completed suicide. Developing a screenplay within the principles of the Papageno Effect presented considerable challenges in terms of the narrative development and the filmmaking techniques that might be used to convey and imply suicidal ideation while avoiding any descriptive detail of a suicide attempt or any means or method of suicide.

Working within the constraints presented by the Papageno Effect and using Nigel Watts' 8-Point Story Arc (see 4.2), I began to develop a screenplay that would incorporate the protective principles of the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. Initial free writing on ideas for the film included a range of stories that might be told, including an elderly, isolated man, living alone after the death of his wife, detailing the impact that loneliness and isolation has on his mental wellbeing, to a single teenage mother who struggles to cope with the demands of raising an infant without the support of her family or a partner. This initial stage of free writing generated over thirty ideas for stories that could be told within the 8-point story arc structure, reflecting the themes of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation. The story that appealed most to me, however, was the story of a struggling actor whose mental wellbeing begins to suffer after a series of failed auditions and setbacks in their personal life. This story allowed me to further explore and develop the concept of 'Jack', first explored in *DROP* (Deery, 2014) and the 8-point story arc provided a familiar narrative structure within which to create an engaging final film on issues of mental health and suicidal ideation. This also afforded the opportunity to refine and improve on some of the imperfections in *DROP*, by incorporating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking research practice. Exploring 'Jack' as a character and telling his story throughout the film, only to be revealed as the mentally unwell side of the other main character at the 'reversal' stage after the 'climax' (Watts, 1996) creates an entertaining and engaging piece of drama with an unexpected twist. Following up on this twist/reveal with the

story of how the character went on to live a fulfilling life despite his experiences with suicidal ideation can offer hope to an audience and finishes the film on a positive note promoting help-seeking and recovery for those in need, in line with the Papageno Effect.

As the process of writing the screenplay progressed it became apparent that the final research film was developing into a realistic narrative drama, based on the characters, themes, issues and storylines that were emerging through the writing. The choice of film genre is important to shaping the final film outcome and creating a realistic drama affords the filmmaker-researcher a space in which to create characters that feel like real people, living with mental health struggles and suicidal ideation in their everyday lives, adding a layer of authenticity that supports the aims of the project to model help-seeking and recovery from suicidal ideation in line with the Papageno Effect and that also fits with the ethos of Humanist filmmaking (see 1.6). There is of course, much to be said for creating documentary films, comedies, thrillers or even horror films exploring ways to integrate the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice, and I would welcome further research into more constructive representations of people with mental health issues and suicidal ideation in other genres, however based on the aims and objectives of the current Screen Production Research enquiry, I felt that a realistic drama was the genre best suited to addressing the aims of this research project.

Autoethnography based on my own lived experiences with suicidal ideation played a critical role in the development of the screenplay (see 1.7) in order to write a script that was authentic, believable and grounded in real lived experience. Through a series of personal, autoethnographic reflective writings on my own experiences with mental health struggles and suicidal ideation, I was able to draw out some common themes that helped to inform the writing of the screenplay. These themes were consciously broader and more universal than detailing the biographical specificities of my own experiences on screen. There were several factors informing this decision, not least the ethical and personal implications and potential ramifications of detailing biographical and private experiences for public viewing, but also the desire to tease out the universality and commonality of mental health struggles to us all, creating a story and writing characters that have the potential to be more relatable to a broad general audience.

The themes that emerged from the autoethnographic reflective writing included a feeling of being trapped within your own mind and body, imprisoned and bullied by persistent, negative

and self-destructive thoughts; An inability to accurately articulate what you're going through, or to find the words to seek help, exacerbated by an ignorance of who to talk to or the support services available; The frustration of this inability to communicate your feelings or navigate a way out of your internal mental situation, the rejection of help from concerned loved ones, putting on a brave face, pushing others away and insisting everything is fine; The suffocating and claustrophobic effect of these feelings and the panic it triggers, resulting in fight or flight response and lashing out; Feelings of shame and guilt about a perceived inability to stop the destructive thoughts and the prospect of becoming a burden on loved ones; The spiralling and self-reinforcing nature of these internal destructive thought patterns and the rapidly narrowing perspective of the sufferer, becoming blinkered by an inability to see a way out of the situation; The resulting external behavioural manifestations of the suffocating internal spiral, becoming increasingly erratic and severe as the internal struggle worsens until finally the intensity of the internal struggle has totally consumed the sufferer to the point of seeing suicide as the only possible outcome. The themes emerging from the autoethnographic writing helped to steer the narrative development of the final screenplay and particularly the rapidly worsening character arc of Jack towards the point of suicide.

Throughout the process of writing the screenplay, I aimed to create a story that would bring the protagonist as close to the point of suicidal crisis as possible, creating the impression that suicide is inevitable and then to reveal a twist that provides hope of recovery through an intervention and the development of character agency. This approach embodies the Papageno Effect by bringing the character close to the point of suicide and then modelling recovery and help-seeking for suicidal ideation, demonstrating mastery of suicidal crises and the hope of recovery from suicidal ideation. The apparent inevitability of the characters' fate at the end of *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010) provides a good example of how this approach can be effective. Having resigned to their fate and awaiting imminent death in an incinerator, the audience is gripped and terrified by the prospect of seeing these characters, who they are emotionally invested in, perish. Just as the outcome seems inevitable and their escape impossible, the aliens come to their rescue with a claw that saves the toys from death. This scene has a strong emotional impact and creates a great feeling of relief once the characters are saved from imminent death. I believe that if this level of emotional engagement and impact can be generated in an animated film, the potential impact of dramatic narrative film for emotional resonance and a feeling of catharsis by portraying 'real' people suffering with relatable mental health struggles is substantial. A film of this kind could have a beneficial impact by bringing a

character to the verge of suicide, making their fate seem unavoidable and then to suddenly have them saved, modelling the hope of recovery from suicidal ideation and encouraging help-seeking for anyone experiencing suicidal ideation or struggling with their mental wellbeing.

The screenplay for the final film was written over several months, developing and changing based on critical reflection and [iterative editing](#). This writing process was greatly helped by discussions with my supervisors, fellow Screen Production PhD researchers and consultations with prominent mental health and suicide prevention professionals including Professor Siobhan O'Neill and Tom Bradley of Samaritans to ensure the screenplay was both dramatically engaging and well-informed on the subjects of mental health and suicidal ideation. The characters, scenes and settings of the screenplay came and went, grew and developed as the iterative process of writing and rewriting progressed and allowed the screenplay to grow organically into a story that satisfied the aims of the research project and functioned effectively as a final production script for an engaging dramatic film.

The final screenplay is a 25-page script comprising of 20 scenes telling the story of Jack, a struggling actor whose mental wellbeing begins to rapidly deteriorate after a series of setbacks in his career and personal life, eventually spiralling out of control towards the point of suicide. The screenplay starts as we meet Jack and his supportive friend and fellow actor, James, as they fail an acting audition. As the narrative progresses we learn that Jack is struggling with a number of aspects of his personal life, including relationship strain and problems at work and that these issues are starting to have a negative impact on his mental wellbeing, resulting in increasingly worsening self-destructive behaviours including aggressive behaviour and alcohol abuse. As Jack's internal psychological state and external sociological circumstances continue to worsen, he descends towards the point of suicide. In the penultimate scene, Jack's character decides to end his own life and just as suicide seems inevitable for the character, he is saved at the last minute by his girlfriend and in a dramatic twist we discover that 'Jack' has actually been the mentally unwell aspects of James's character all along. The screenplay concludes with James seeking help for his suicidal thoughts and making a full recovery, going on to live a full and happy life and promoting help-seeking and mental wellbeing and integrating the protective principles of the Papageno Effect into a screenplay for the final research film.

rehearsals, location scouting, scheduling and the arrangement of all of the props, equipment, costumes and people that would help to create the final film, as will be discussed in detail in the next section (see 5.3).

5.3 Final Film Preproduction

The preproduction phase of a filmmaking project involves everything that needs to happen between the screenplay being finalised and the shooting of the film itself, including auditioning actors, organising crew, cameras, lighting and sound requirements, set design and mise-en-scene, costumes and props, hair and makeup and every other technical element that goes into the film's production, including budget, location scouting and recce, risk assessments and more.

Once the [screenplay](#) for *JACK* was completed, I began to consider casting and crew for the film in consultation with my brother, Matt Deery; a talented actor with many years of experience, who assisted with the screen tests and experiments and would eventually go on to play the lead role of Jack. After initially considering a list of local actors to play the character of Jack, we decided to approach Colm Herron, a local filmmaker, actor and musician who had previously played a number of intense characters on stage and screen, including most recently the award winning short film *Clean Freak* (Chambers, 2018). I felt that Colm's intensity might be the right fit for 'Jack', but I also wanted him on board with the project for his skills as a supporting cinematographer. Colm was keen to be involved in the project in any capacity and initially read for the part of 'Jack' while Matt read James' lines. Although the [initial script reads](#) went reasonably well, I felt that there was something missing in the character dynamic between the two and that the fit wasn't quite right. After reviewing the footage, I also realised that the two actors look reasonably similar on screen and therefore the impact of the dramatic twist and reversal at the end would be lessened. Upon further reflection and consideration of these issues, I decided to prioritise Colm's technical skills as a trained filmmaker instead of splitting the demands of acting and supporting cinematography.



Figure 19 - Initial script readthroughs for *JACK* with Matt Deery and Colm Herron

The next actor considered for the role of Jack was [Joseph O'Hagan](#), who had played a similar role convincingly in [DROP](#). After reading the script, Joseph was happy to be involved with the project and further discussions about the film led to the realisation that Joe would rather play the supporting role of James this time, having 'recovered' at the end of *DROP*, providing a positive progression into the role of being there to support others, having gone through his own struggles before. Although *JACK* is not a sequel to *DROP*, there are similar thematic concerns and having Joseph on board with this project created a meaningful tie with our previous work together and ensured that he fully understood the style, themes and aims of the project, as well as what would be required from the role of James.



Figure 20 - Joseph O'Hagan in *DROP* (Deery, 2014)

This decision emerged simultaneously alongside the decision to cast [Matt Deery](#) in the part of Jack. Matt has a wealth of acting experience and had been an invaluable help throughout the development of the project and so understood the character and story better than anyone. During the script readthroughs, Matt had been advising other actors on the role of Jack and in the end seemed like a clear choice for the role, having already worked with Joseph in the past and established an on-screen chemistry.

Casting for the part of James' partner *Alice* (and her off-screen anagram equivalent, 'Lacie') considered several actors for the role, before discovering [Rosie Patton](#), who had recently joined Derry acting group *The Actor's Bunker*, run by Jean Dunn. I had approached Jean to recruit extras for the film and she recommended Rosie for the role. After meeting with Rosie, Matt and Joe, it became instantly apparent that this was a group of actors that could work well together and had a great instant chemistry between them.

The additional supporting actors for the film were recruited through *The Actors Bunker* and online via the #DERRYCreatives page on Facebook, both of which drew significant interest

and helped recruit over twenty extras for the drama rehearsal group and the bar scenes. The drama group also included Tom Bradley from Samaritans, who was involved in the project from the start as a consultant on the content and approach to *JACK*. As previously discussed (see 5.2), I had consulted Tom on early drafts of the screenplay to make sure that the content fell within all relevant media guidelines from Samaritans and he was very enthusiastic about the project and wanted to be involved, so I offered him a role as part of the actor's group.

In keeping with the ethos of the Total Filmmaker (Knudsen, 2016) in a Screen Production Research (Batty and Kerrigan, 2017) project, I wanted to ensure that I captured as much of the footage and sound as possible and did in most of the scenes. Two of the scene setups, the bar and the drama group rehearsals, required additional cameras and sound and for this I turned to the Bennigans Film Club; a local group of independent filmmakers who write, shoot and produce their own films and host regular film screenings in Bennigans in Derry. Colm Herron is a founding member of the group and a fine filmmaker in his own right and so I wanted to ensure that he was able to support in the shooting of the more complex scenes alongside me. Several other members of the film club joined us on the crew, as well as some of my past students, who made the shoots run very smoothly and were a pleasure to work with in these more complex filming locations.

Finding suitable locations for the film presented another preproduction challenge. The finished screenplay was analysed scene by scene to establish a list of required locations and I then approached several local businesses and organisations in Derry for permission to use their venue or location as a filming location. The response I got was very positive and when I told owners about the project, they were keen to help and kindly agreed to let us film on their premises. The venues included The Warehouse Café and Gallery, The Craft Village, The Playhouse, Nerve Centre, Badger's Bar, Sandinos Café Bar, Bennigans Bar, a friend's flat and my own home.

Props and costumes were another important consideration during preproduction and were initially determined by a scene-by-scene analysis of the screenplay. There were several items that needed to be sourced for the story, including Jack's hip flask, a bandage for his hand and fake blood for Jack's mouth, a whistling camping kettle, Samaritans literature, a bedside table, a doctor's computer and other items. I also needed to create 'work clothes' for Jack and decided to design and create my own apron and cap for the fictional '*Mel's Diner*' that Jack works in,

but we never see on camera, hinting to a job that Jack hates in a run-down café, washing dishes in a job that he thinks is a waste of his potential and acting talent.



Figure 21 - Design file of 'Mel's Diner' logo, based on the 'World's Best Cup of Coffee' diner scene in *Elf* (Favreau, 2003) and the final embroidered cap and apron, worn in *JACK* (Deery, 2019)

I designed the 'Mel's Diner' logo using Adobe Illustrator to resemble the sign in the 'World's Best Cup of Coffee' scene in *Elf* (Favreau, 2003). Upon seeing the sign in the window of a cheap, run-down diner, Buddy the Elf, played by Will Ferrell bursts into the diner and heartily congratulates the staff on achieving the best coffee in the world. This is one of my family's favourite festive films and a funny scene that I wanted to pay tribute to when designing the logo for 'Mel's Diner', that I imagine to be a similarly low-quality establishment. Although early drafts of the screenplay included scenes shot in the Mel's Diner, I decided it would be

more telling to leave them out, because Jack is ashamed to work there and doesn't want anyone, especially James and Alice, to see him there. Once the logo design was finished, I sent it to local company Ferguson's Fashions to get professionally embroidered on the cap and apron, adding an extra layer of authenticity and believability to Jack's work clothing.



Figure 22 - The darkening colour palette of Jack's clothing as the film progresses

Careful consideration was given to Jack's clothing throughout the film and I wanted to ensure that the colour palette of the character's clothing got progressively darker as the film went on. We can see Jack in five distinct outfits throughout the film, starting with a vibrant bright red jumper and gradually getting darker, red with black checks, dark red-brown checks, black sweater and in the final mirror scene Jack has a black polo neck, suggesting the blackness crawling right up his neck and consuming him. This toning down of the colour palette meant that I had to keep a close eye on clothing continuity during the shooting schedule, keeping a careful note of Jack's outfit in every scene to ensure that they fitted together in the edit.



Figure 23 - Storyboards for JACK (Deery, 2019)

Upon completion of the screenplay, storyboarding acts as a bridge between the written word and the final film, visualising each shot and sequence and testing how each scene might be represented in terms of camera angles, movement, lighting and so on. As with the infinitely unmanifest options that lie in front of the filmmaker at the development stage of a project, storyboarding presents a similar opportunity to explore the myriad ways in which a scene could be visualised, taking the screenplay ‘from concept to screen’ (Katz, 2006; Proferes, 2017). By way of example, imagine that a production script describes a man sitting at a desk; this could be framed and shot in many ways, from a wide establishing shot to a close up of him writing at the desk, or an over the shoulder shot from behind, an overhead aerial shot, a low angle shot from down in front of the desk and so on. Each decision on the type of shot selected affects the visual impact and implied meaning of the scene, for example, shooting the man from a low angle below the front of the desk, centrally framed with shadowy lighting could make the character seem imposing or intimidating, whereas the same character shot with a wide-angle lens from above in an empty office could make him appear lonely and isolated. The visual meanings conveyed through the choice of shot type has an important impact on the mood and atmosphere of the overall film and storyboarding provides a way of visualising how each scene might look and feel before shooting. Storyboarding also helps to elucidate the technical requirements of the shoot in advance, in order to achieve the required visual results. This is an invaluable preparative step in the creative process as it helps to imagine how a scene might be shot, allowing the filmmaker to prepare the cameras, equipment, locations, props and costumes required to capture the scene.

When all of the elements of planning and preproduction had been completed, I was able to commence the production of the final film, as will be discussed in detail in the following section (see 5.4).

5.4 Final Film Production

Once the development and preproduction stages of the final film had been completed and everything was in place to start shooting, production of the final film could begin. Filming took place across several locations in Derry in early 2019. The production stage of the process presented a new set of challenges and obstacles to be negotiated and a number of variables that needed to be coordinated and managed.

Table 4 - A shooting schedule ensured that film production ran smoothly

SCENE	LOCATION	DATE	OUTFIT #	
03. Jack Bathroom getting ready after work - first minor 'mirror moment'	At Home	16/01/2019	1/2	✓
06. Jack next morning home alone, hears Lacie come in then leave, slamming door	At Home	16/01/2019	(t-shirt and boxers)	✓
09. Instead, Jack staggers drunkenly and dizzily through the streets	In Town, Night	16/01/2019	3	✓
10. Morning, Phone Buzzing, missed calls from work, calls back, Jack fired	At Home	16/01/2019	(t-shirt and boxers)	✓
13. Jack in A&E room with busted mouth, sees support literature but chooses to ignore	Magee TBC	16/01/2019	4	✓
17. Jack's main mirror moment, decides to take his own life	At Home	16/01/2019	5	✓
07. James and Alice go for dinner, meet Jack on his lunch break, drinking hip flask all day	In Town, Evening	21/01/2019	3	✓
15. Middle of night awakening, Jack at James' door, Jack sleeps on sofa	At Home	21/01/2019	5	✓
16. Next morning walking to sober Jack up, talking, Jack zones out (CAR SHOT)	At Home / Walking out the line Day	21/01/2019	5	✓
18. Walking along the quay, height of drama, head spinning and tension building	Quay, Night	21/01/2019	5	✓
19. Alice shouts to him, snaps him out, saves him, twist reveal, emotional embrace	Quay, Night	21/01/2019	5	✓
20. Recovery and wellness, growing old with Alice, seeking help and getting better.	Various locations	21/01/2019	6	✓
01. Jack comes out of Failed Audition, James consoles him	Playhouse Afternoon back room	22/01/2019	1	✓
02. Coffee and Chat, James encouraging, Jack disillusioned - Jack leaves for work	Warehouse (9am)	22/01/2019	1 + work overalls	✓
04. Group Rehearsal Scene – Alice Introducing Macbeth	Playhouse Evening theatre	22/01/2019	2	✓
08. Drama group first read, Jack slurring and told to go home and sleep it off	Playhouse Evening theatre	22/01/2019	3	✓
11. Jack in rehearsals that night, knuckles bloody and bruised from punching a wall	Playhouse Evening theatre	22/01/2019	4	✓
14. Awkward silence, bad vibes in Rehearsals, James tells Jack to apologise, Jack leaves	Playhouse Evening theatre	22/01/2019	5	✓
05. McGinty's after rehearsal, Jack gets tipsy, staggers home	Nerve Centre Bar	23/01/2019	2	✓
12. McGinty's after rehearsal, Jack gets very drunk, aggressive, starts fight, kicked out	Nerve Centre Bar	23/01/2019	4	✓

Scheduling presented one of the biggest challenges during the production stage and striking a balance between the availability of cast, crew and venues was something that required significant coordination. A running shooting schedule, as outlined in Table 4, ensured that filming was well-managed and coordinated, maximising the limited amount of available time that actors could commit to the project amongst their other personal and professional commitments. Many of the shooting times were dictated by the availability of the venues, such as shooting in the café early in the morning before customers started to arrive or shooting late at night in the Playhouse after the day's classes and rehearsals had ended. Keeping a well-organised shooting schedule ensured that everything ran on schedule and mostly according to plan.

Thorough planning during the preproduction stage (see 5.4), and effective coordination of the shooting schedule during and throughout the production stage is critical to the success of the filmmaking process and goes a long way to ensuring that the production stays on track.

However, no matter how well-planned a filmmaking project is before shooting, there are always certain eventualities that can't be planned for or predicted, which is where being flexible and adaptable within the flow of the filmmaking production process is also important. This is where the real benefits of tacit intuition and embodied knowledge can come to the fore, drawing on previous experience in order to innovate and improvise when engaged in the process of filmmaking, responding to unseen challenges during the film shoot. This is what Schon calls *reflection in action* (Schon, 1982), making intuitive decisions in response to the fluid and unpredictable complexities of the creative process. From a director or filmmaker-researcher's point of view this can include working with actors who want to take a different approach to acting a particular scene based on their own intuitions and responding to their own creative process, or working with your crew to change camera setups, adjust lighting or try alternative techniques to filming, depending on the various untold circumstances that can impact a shoot and make adjustments from within the flow of filmmaking practice.

After the filming of one or more scenes has been completed, a process of what Schon calls *Reflection on practice* (Schon, 1982) can begin, reviewing the raw footage, often referred to as rushes or dailies, and assessing the successes and failures of the day's shoot before deciding on next steps for practice. This process of reflection on practice helps to identify any potential issues that may have been missed during the day's shoot which can then be addressed either by reshooting or taking an alternative approach to the scene. This reciprocal and reflexive process of *reflection in practice* followed by *reflection on practice* allows the filmmaker-researcher to develop the film iteratively during the production stage according to their vision and make creative decisions that ultimately determine the outcome of the creative filmmaking practice. Gibson (see 2.2) refers to this process within filmmaking practice as a cognitive two-step (Gibson, 2017), in which the filmmaker moves between the 'emic' stance of being a form of participant observer while filming scenes, able to make changes within the flow of the filmmaking practice in response to the dynamic nature of the film set, to the 'etic' stance of a detached scrutineer when reviewing the footage, able to reflect on practice, review and assess the captured footage of the day and make decisions for next steps in the filmmaking process. Once all of the required footage has been captured for a final film piece, the filmmaker-researcher engages in a further process of summative reflection on practice; deciding on what shots, takes, scenes, angles and so on make it into the final cut and what ends up on the proverbial cutting room floor. The two examples of scenes that were cut from the final edit of

JACK, as shown in figure 24, illustrate the use of both ‘emic’ *reflection in practice* and ‘etic’ *reflection on practice* within the flow of the filmmaking production stage.



Figure 24 – Examples of Reflection in Practice and Reflection on Practice during the making of *JACK*

Neither of the shots shown in figure 24 were included in the final cut of the film but serve as practical examples of the difference between Schon’s reflection *in* action or Gibson’s emic stance and reflection *on* action or Gibson’s etic stance within the context of filmmaking Screen Production Research practice. The shot on the left is from a scene that involved James and Jack walking along the quay with James trying to get through to Jack and encourage him to talk to him or anyone about what’s going on. The scheduled day of the shoot was very windy and began to turn bitterly cold with sleet showers shortly after we arrived on location and so I decided that the shoot had to be abandoned. We went inside to warm up and regroup and I reflected on what was an important scene to shoot, but one that would prove impossible in the original location. After quickly assessing the various alternative options, I decided to film the conversation in my car instead and restructure the scene to feature James and Jack supposedly driving out to get coffee, but James stopping to talk to Jack in the car before they leave. I believe the resulting car sequence turned out to be much more effective than the scene I had originally intended and this fluid reflection *in* action meant that the scene was quickly rescued by some intuitive quick thinking and problem-solving in the flow of creative practice.

The still shown on the right in Figure 24 is an example of a scene that didn’t make the final edit of the film as a result of reflection *on* practice during postproduction and editing. The scene features James and Jack discussing rehearsals during a break after Alice announces that the drama group will be performing *Macbeth*. The scene felt extraneous to the narrative and I didn’t feel it added anything to the character development of either James or Jack and so it was cut from the final film. The cutting of scenes during the editing process is another example of reflection on practice that takes place after all of the footage has been captured and is one that

often leads to reshoots if the director isn't satisfied and the scene is important. In this case, I was happy to drop the scene altogether from the final film as it wasn't adding anything of value to the narrative. Switching between reflection in practice and reflection on practice seamlessly and fluidly between an 'emic' state of creation to an 'etic' state of reflection and back again is an essential skill as a filmmaker, moving from inside to outside of the creative practice in a reciprocal and evolving process towards a creative goal. Further examples and discussion of the reflexive and iterative nature of the development of every scene in the final film can be found in the [scene-by-scene breakdown](#) and commentary in the submission folder.

As demonstrated above, the ability to adapt and respond to the fluid and dynamic nature of the filmmaking environment is an important quality to learn as a filmmaker-researcher. This ability also includes working with actors and affording them the flexibility to find their voice within a character. When working with the actors in *JACK*, I wanted the performances to be as natural, grounded and realistic as possible and so it was important that the actors felt comfortable with their lines and characters. Judith Weston suggests that directors should give actors 'playable direction and freedom to explore' their characters (Weston, 1999), in order to bring their own unique performance to the role. I agree with this approach and it is one that I felt was important in this project to ensure a relatable and believable performance from the actors. After some initial direction and context for each scene, I allowed the actors inhabit their characters and respond naturally to each other's lines, even if these weren't strictly word for word from the script. Several scenes featured improvised lines that felt more natural in the moment than what was written in the script and this added to the dynamic of the scene and the authenticity of the performances. By trusting your actors and working in a collaborative environment where they feel safe to explore the characters with you and develop their performance organically in response to the flow of the creative process is another aspect of a Humanist approach to filmmaking that results in natural and believable performances from actors who care for their own characters and have invested some of themselves in the creation of that character.

Crew dynamics are an equally important aspect of any film production and managing the large number of people who contribute to a typical film production can be a significant challenge. Fortunately, on this production I was able to work with other local independent filmmakers who all understood the aims of the project and had collaborated on projects together previously. This was an advantage when discussing approaches to the more complex shoots, as I was able to discuss the scene requirements with Colm Herron and rest of the crew and quickly delegate

roles and responsibilities based on their individual strengths and skills, ensuring everyone made a valuable contribution to the production. An open and inclusive approach to filmmaking can help foster an atmosphere in which every individual feels valued and appreciated, but this must also be balanced with a clear headedness when it comes to directorial decision making in order to ensure the film shoot progresses in the right direction. Striking a balance between effectively delegating tasks and ensuring the film stays true to the director's vision is what Nicholas Proferes refers to as 'delegating authority while accepting responsibility' (Proferes, 2017) and is one of the key skills to learn as a filmmaker. I was very pleased with the assembled crew for *JACK* and felt that we all worked together effectively, with clear shared goals and an understanding of what was required in each of the more complex shoots in the Playhouse and Nerve Centre.



Figure 25 - 'Cinelike D' flat colour profile 4K footage colour graded and adjusted in JACK

In line with the ethos of Erik Knudsen's Cinema of Poverty (Knudsen, 2010a) (see 2.1), the film was created using the best filmmaking resources I had available to me, rather than seeking to hire more expensive professional cinema cameras and equipment and a full list of the equipment used to shoot the final film can be found in Appendix 1. This approach meant that the film was primarily shot on the very capable Panasonic Lumix GH5 camera, which has the capability to record 10-bit 4K 4:2:2 footage internally onto a high-speed SD card, shooting at a cinematic 24fps frame rate and using a flat 'Cinelike D' colour profile that ensured footage that could be colour graded in post-processing. The camera's ability to capture high-quality 4K footage is good by current standards, but the resulting files are significantly larger than average and so a proxy 4K workflow was required to edit the piece, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section (see 5.5).

Upon completion of the production stage of the filmmaking process and once all of the necessary footage for the final research film had been captured, the project could move on to the final postproduction stage of the process (see 5.5).

5.5 Final Film Postproduction

Following the completion of the production stage of the final research film as outlined in the previous chapter, the final step in the filmmaking process was the postproduction to create the final finished research film. The postproduction stage of the filmmaking process includes the renaming, organising and importing the captured video files, assembling and sequencing the clips for every scene, adding visual effects and transitions, colour grading the footage, adding music and sound effects, and adding titles and credits before exporting as a final finished film. This chapter will discuss the postproduction process of the final research film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019), outlining the processes, challenges and creative decisions made during the final stages of creating the final film.

JACK was edited using Adobe Premiere Pro and After Effects using a 4K proxy editing workflow, as a direct result of the demands of processing the large 4K files from the Panasonic Lumix GH5 camera. This was my first time working with a 4K workflow like this and so there was a considerable learning curve to understand and operate the new editing approach. The 4K workflow consisted of adjusting the project ingest settings to create proxies for editing, processing the 4K footage down into a more manageable size, which could take several hours, and then assembling on the timeline. Once the sequences were assembled using the proxies, the final scene could be exported via Media Encoder, which would reference back to the original 4K footage and produce a final high-quality 4K outcome. Although this workflow was time-consuming and laborious, the final footage was worth it and made sure that the final film was of a suitable high-quality for cinematic display, as well as ensuring the futureproofing of the film in the medium to long term as industry standards for display resolution and quality continue to improve.

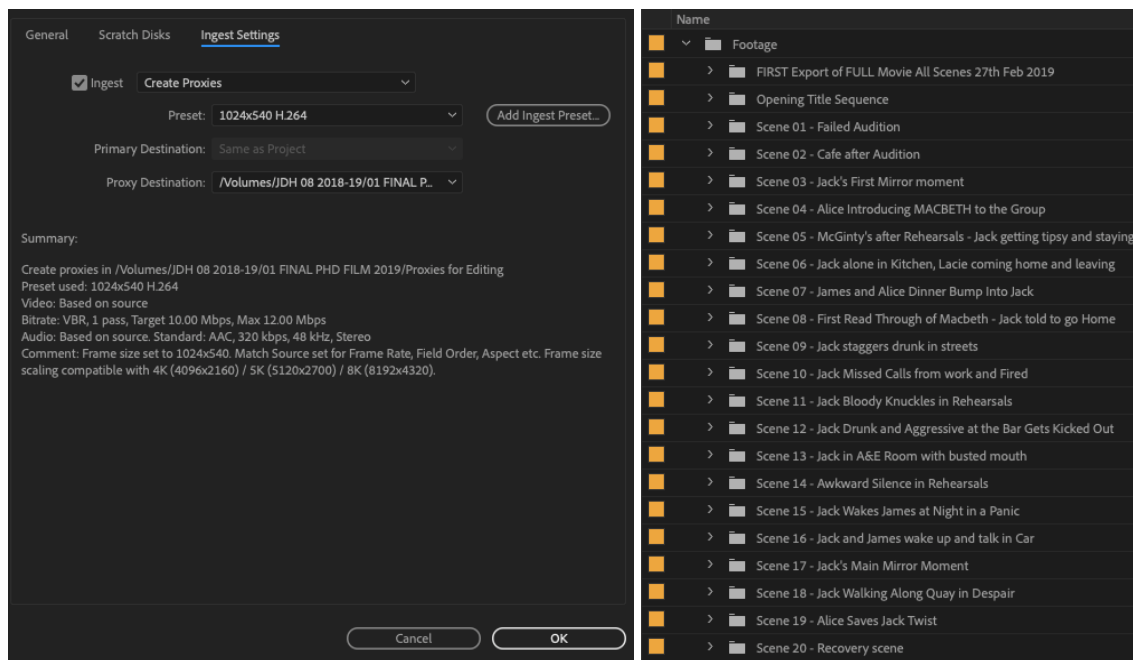


Figure 26 - Ingest settings for 4K workflow and scene by scene footage folders for editing

All of the 4K footage captured on the Panasonic GH5 was shot using the cinematic 4K 24fps frame rate setting and the 'Cinelike D' colour profile, which ensured high-quality flat footage that was suitable for colour grading. Once all of the files were renamed appropriately, organised into clearly labelled folders and the Adobe Premiere project was set up to process the 4K footage, I imported all of the footage and audio into folders organised by scene, ready for editing, an example of which can be seen in figure 27.

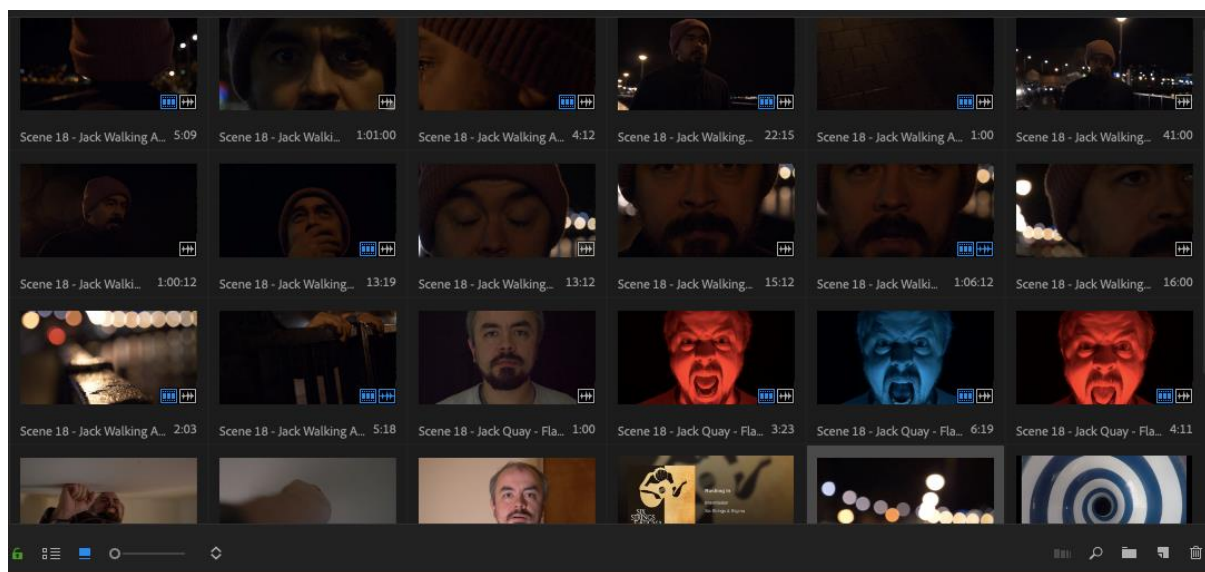


Figure 27 - Footage imported and organised into scene-by-scene folders ready for editing

Although the majority of the film was shot on the Panasonic GH5, the bar and rehearsal scenes also included footage from Colm Herron's Sony a7S II, which has superior low light performance on paper, but also presented some issues with colour matching and created some banding problems in the darker areas, as seen in figure 27, that presented a problem that needed to be corrected in postproduction using colour grading tools as illustrated in figure 28.



Figure 28 - Banding problems with some of the Sony a7S II footage

After importing the Sony a7S II footage, I needed to make several adjustments to colour and contrast in order to remove the significant banding that was affecting the footage. After adjusting the footage, the final result looked well and was able to be used along with the other GH5 footage.

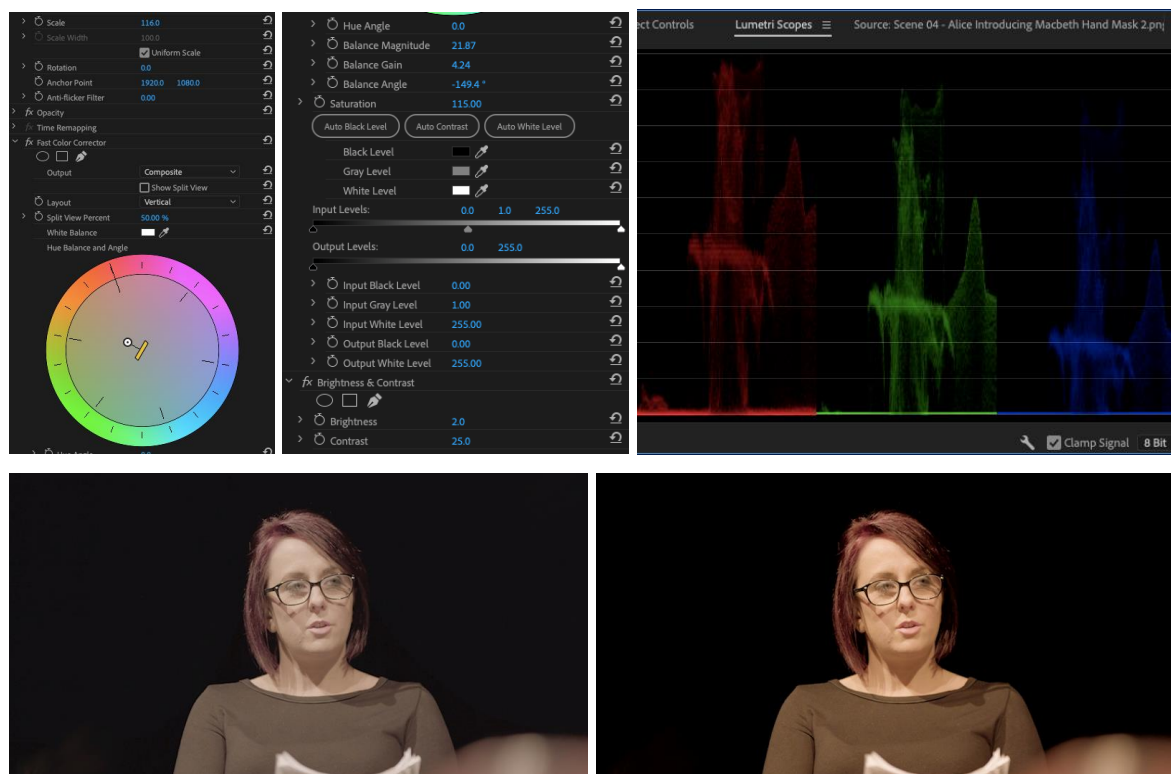


Figure 29 - Before and after colour adjustments to remove banding on footage

The editing requirements varied from scene to scene, ranging from simple sequences that only required assembling clips in a linear narrative order, as seen in figure 30, to scenes with more complex visual requirements involving multiple layers of video, audio and effects, as illustrated in figure 31.

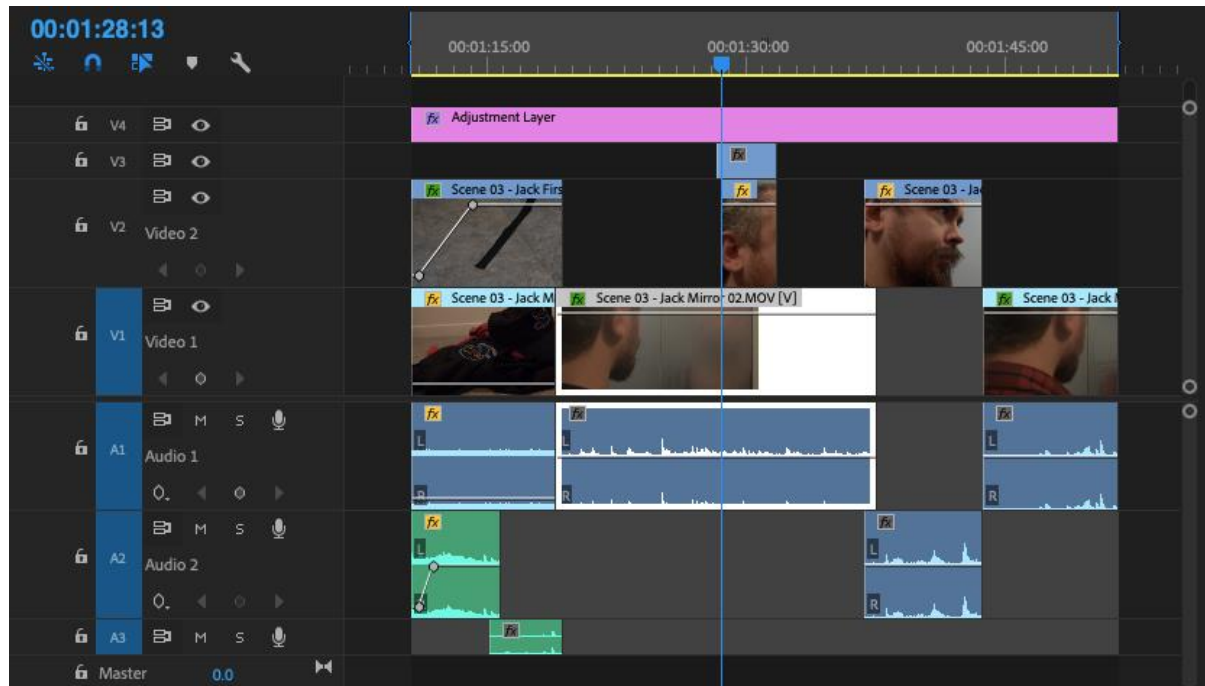


Figure 30 - A simple sequence placing clips in order during the short bathroom scene

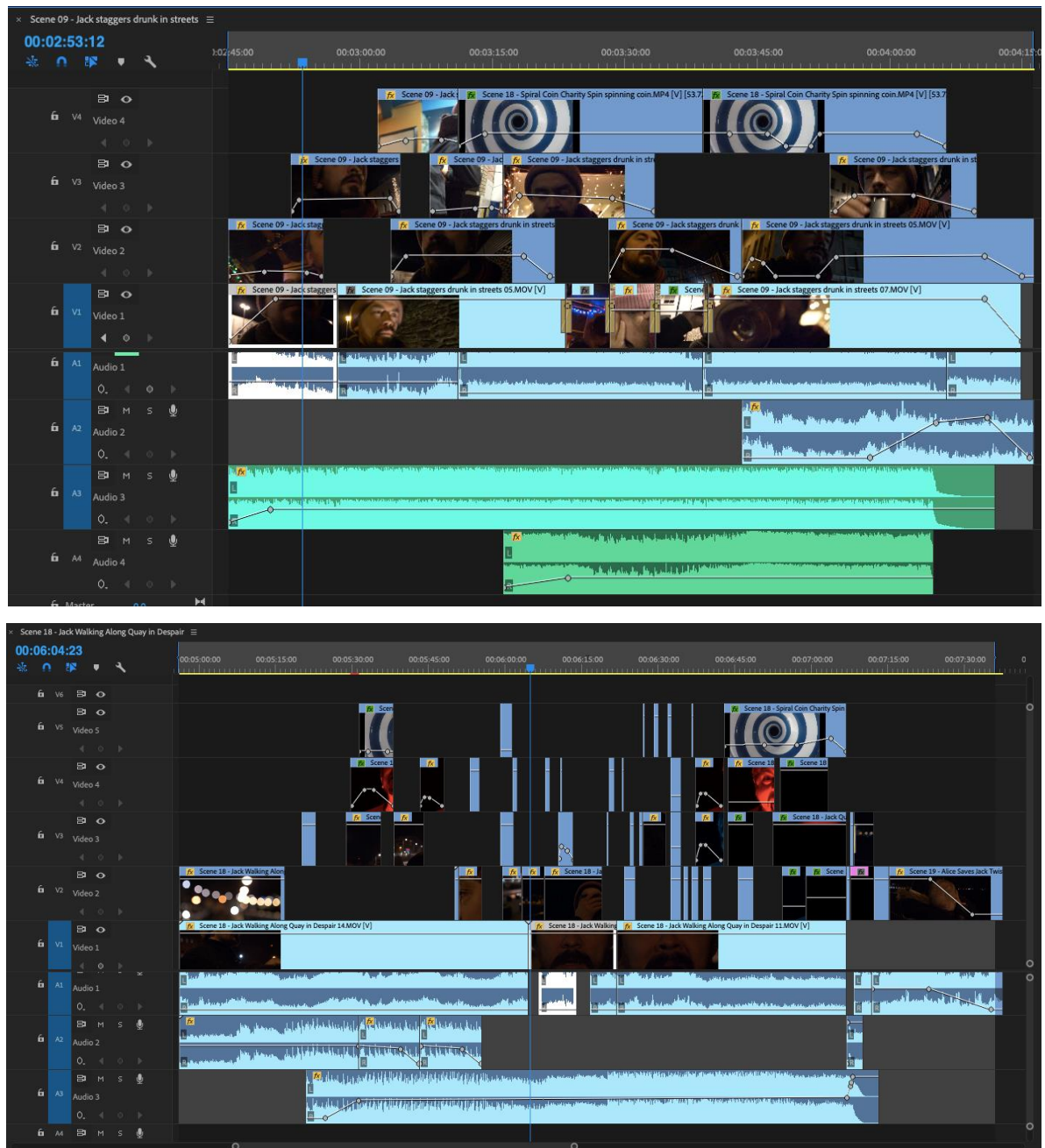


Figure 31 – Example of a more complex sequence requiring multiple layers and effects

The most complex scenes to edit in the film included the scenes in which Jack is experiencing the most mental distress, including the drunken sequence and the penultimate sequence where Jack reaches the point of suicide. These sequences required a number of complex video layers and adjustments in order to convey the sense of confusion and mental distress that Jack was experiencing. As mental health struggles are internal and unseen, I wanted to explore cinematic techniques to convey a strong sense of the internal disordered mental state of the character, as well as the outward, self-destructive physical behaviours.

The drunken scene features Jack, after being sent home from rehearsals, staggering alone from bar to bar and self-medicating heavily with alcohol. I wanted to convey a sense of the drunken haze and confusion that Jack experiences due to his excessive drinking, drifting in and out of consciousness, swaying and staggering movements and a fragmented sense of time and place. In order to film the swaying shots from a low angle on Jack, I improvised a rig consisting of a monopod and a gorilla pod, attached on to the actor's belt as he walked along, swaying the camera from side to side. Supporting the camera from the front, I was able to keep the camera trained on Matt's face throughout, moving deliberately in and out of focus and swaying to convey the experience of the drunken state of the character. This footage was then combined with some handheld follow shots and overlaid with fragmented segments of the night, fading in and out, blending together and creating a blurry account of an evening in which Jack seems determined to destroy himself. Searching for the right piece of music for this scene proved to be a challenge, as even the heaviest, noisiest songs I could find were not chaotic enough. After a period of searching, I decided to experiment by combining two or more pieces of music together, resulting in the combination of two tracks by Kevin MacLeod at Incompetech music, which resulted in exactly the right type of chaotic noise I was searching for and yet wasn't available in a single track.

When capturing the footage for the penultimate 'suicide' scene I knew that I needed to create a sequence that would provide a dramatic climax to the film and have audiences gripped before the twist/reveal. I chose to include several of the techniques explored during the initial technical testing and experimentation, specifically the use of coloured gels, semi-opaque video layers, layer blending modes and flashing strobe lights to create an intense climax to the film in line with Nigel Watts' *8 Point Story Arc* (Watts, 1996). I wanted the audience to experience a strong emotional connection to Jack's character at this point in the story through *Embodied Simulation* empathy (Raz and Hendler, 2014; Raz *et al.*, 2014; Lotman, 2017), and by making Jack's impending suicide appear inevitable and inescapable, the audience become gripped in a moment of embodied simulation that increases the heart rate, engages a bodily 'fight or flight' response and yet renders them helpless to do anything to stop Jack from taking his own life.

The emotional connection in this scene is further reinforced by the choice of music. Glenn Rosborough's *Rushing In* (Intermission, 2013) provides a strong emotive auditory signal of the urgency and desperation of Jack's situation, building towards the dramatic climax that comes right at the point of the twist and revealing Jack as part of James all along. The gathering pace

and intensity of the music is matched by the increasingly rapid edits and layered imagery, including the speeding up of the suicide spiral, images of Jack screaming into the mirror and punching the wall, as well as flashbacks of the bar fight and other scenes, bringing the film to a climactic point.

This combination of narrative, filming, scoring and editing techniques were employed for a very specific purpose and to maximise the emotional engagement with the characters at this point in the story. Just as the dramatic music reaches its climax and it seems as though Jack will almost certainly die by suicide; the drama is suddenly and unexpectedly pierced by Alice screaming “James!” and when Jack turns around and morphs into James, it is revealed that ‘Jack’ was in fact the mentally unwell part of James all along. At this point during the test screenings, there was a palpable sense of relief in the audience and an audible emotional release as a result of the character being saved from suicide. This sense of relief and catharsis is then followed up and reinforced by a constructive model of help-seeking and recovery in the closing monologue, in which James encourages anyone who is struggling with their mental health to seek help and for us all to speak more openly about our mental wellbeing, putting the core meaning of the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.



Figure 32 - Final shot of ‘Jack’, in which he disappears behind Alice’s glass

One of the final shots of the film shows Alice and James out together and Jack briefly appears in the background, only to disappear behind Alice’s glass, illustrated in figure 32 above. This shot was created in Adobe After Effects, using a frame-by-frame masking technique that used two video layers to hide and reveal Jack in the background. The short shot was created as a way of illustrating that ‘Jack’ can still play a part in all of our lives and that we need to develop the emotional awareness to recognise when he is starting to have a negative impact on our thoughts, mood and behaviour and seek help when we are struggling.

As well as the use of visual effects, the use of audio elements in *JACK*, both in terms of sound effects and music play crucial roles in establishing the character's internal states as well as setting the mood and atmosphere for the scenes. David Lynch notes that films are fifty percent visual and fifty percent sound and that sometimes the sound outweighs the visual. Throughout *JACK*, music is used quite sparingly and subtly, only becoming more pronounced and apparent in the scenes of utmost internal mental struggles for the protagonist. The subtler musical pieces used throughout the film, for instance in the background of the café scene and the bar scenes are all original compositions of my own. These musical pieces are instrumental versions of songs from the album *Nothing Permanent Lasts* (John Deery and The Heads, 2017), recorded with the band John Deery and The Heads. The full album features analogous themes to *JACK*, including hope of recovery from mental health struggles and suicidal ideation, dealing with internal conflict, anxiety and suicidal ideation, the challenges of coping with the struggles of everyday life and the search for meaning in our lives. The instrumental versions of these songs were created specifically for use in *JACK*, working well in the background of scenes and adding an additional meta-layer of meaning to the piece. The instrumentals therefore serve a dual purpose, both in terms of the necessary practical application of enhancing the atmosphere in the bar and café scenes, as well as on a symbolic and deeply personal level that seamlessly incorporates another significant artistic and expressive strand of my work dealing with suicidal ideation and mental health struggles through music.

The two more prominent uses of music in the film come at *JACK*'s two most dangerous and chaotic points, the layered chaos of Jack's drunken staggering and the final suicidal scene. The decision to use amplified and distorted music in Jack's drunken scene was one that I made to emphasise the chaos taking place inside Jack's head, amplified by his self-destructive drinking binge. I knew that I had nothing in my own repertoire that would suit what I was trying to achieve, as my own music is largely melodic and acoustic-based music, so I went searching for royalty-free music online. I discovered several tracks that I thought might be suitable for the scene and tried a number of them out within the edit, but in the end no individual track was quite noisy and chaotic enough for the sense of distortion and disorientation I was trying to create visually and audially. After some experimentation and practical testing, I decided to try combining two of the 'almost good enough' tracks together, which created a wonderfully distorted, confusing and chaotic sound that I was searching for in the scene. Through a process of active experimentation, I layered the two tracks 'Bet you can' and 'What you want' by artist

Kevin McLeod at incompetech.com underneath the visuals and immediately loved the result. Both songs clashed against each other in terms of rhythmic patterns and tempos, enhancing the sense of chaos in the visuals on screen, which deliberately doesn't 'work' in any traditional sense of the word, but is ideal for the scene because of this.

The music used in the final suicidal scene, *Rushing in* (Intermission, 2013) by Glenn Rosborough and Intermission, from the 2013 local mental health charity album 'Six Strings and Stigma' was used with kind permission by the artist. The Six Strings and Stigma project, in which the stories of fourteen local people suffering with long-term mental health problems were used to inspire fourteen local songwriters and artists to write and record songs based on those stories, was a huge success and the resultant album became an powerful example of how people can work together within artistic practice to highlight and address mental health stigma. Glenn's song 'Rushing In' was an appropriate song choice for this scene and, having previously used it in the corresponding scene in *DROP* (Deery, 2014), I felt strongly that it needed to be used in the climax of distress for Jack in this film. The song is inspired by the story of a relationship breakup and the subsequent catastrophic impact it had on the individual's mental health, being the final straw in triggering a psychotic episode and a battle with self-harm and suicidal ideation.

The theme of the song is well-suited to many of the themes I am addressing in *JACK*, but more importantly, the song structure is well-suited to the scene, starting with a slow and contemplative, repetitive and cyclical guitar riff and brooding lyrics and rising to a dramatic crescendo with soaring vocals and strings and a sudden drop at the end. The song structure, albeit in condensed form in *JACK*, suits the scene well and fits in with the dramatic arc I have created in the narrative, with Jack struggling with suicidal thoughts and in a desperate situation. The repeating lyric 'I feel it all rushing in' is accompanied by layered visuals, flashing imagery, and increasingly rapid cuts, as Jack becomes suddenly and tragically conscious of his own suicide spiral and impending death. Jack on the one hand is acutely aware of the distressed, hopeless and seemingly inevitable situation he has found himself in, but is helpless to do anything to stop it, seeing no other way out than suicide. At the height of the crescendo musically, Alice's shout pierces the music and saves what is revealed to be James from the brink of suicide. The sudden dropped ending to 'Rushing in' provides the ideal musical accompaniment to the sudden twist and dramatic reveal in the narrative and works well for the scene.

The final music used in the film is my own song 'One Silver Line', taken from the same mental health album 'Six Strings and Stigma'. The song was inspired by the story of a republican prisoner during the troubles, who was incarcerated in the Maze prison in Northern Ireland. While serving a sentence for paramilitary activity, this person suffered a mental breakdown which manifested in a belief that if he could just stop smoking, the clouds above the Maze prison would clear and he would be able to save Northern Ireland 'for God and Ulster', suddenly adopting a complete reversal of his own political beliefs and rhetoric as a republican prisoner. This episode opened the person's eyes to the possibility of seeing both sides of the story in our troubled past and developing an understanding of the other's perspective in the political conflict. Eventually making a full recovery and going on to live a happy life with his partner, who has been a constant source of strength and support for him as he went through his mental health struggles, I was fascinated with the revelation that someone so politically staunch on one side of the Northern Irish conflict as to be imprisoned for paramilitary activity could learn to see both sides of such a divisive, long and bitter conflict and reconcile these in his mind with a more Humanist approach; an understanding and mutual respect of the range of historical, cultural and political perspectives that exist and moreover the ultimate imperative of the underlying commonality of all of our human species. The song encapsulates those sentiments and provides a message of hope for those that are feeling lost and confused, lost in their own maze, with the chance of a brighter future and hope of recovery from mental health struggles and suicidal ideation.

Sound effects throughout the film were a combination of original recorded sounds using a Zoom H1 field recorder and where necessary downloaded royalty-free sounds from sources like freesound.org and zapsplat.com. The sound requirements varied from scene to scene and the use of sound effects to enhance and complement the visuals on screen was crucial to enhancing the impact and implied meaning in each sequence. Examples like the use of the whistling kettle sound and the dripping tap to emphasise Jack's heightened state of sensitivity to environmental sounds and irritations are coupled with the metaphorical implications of these sounds, including Jack's blood boiling and anger rising, the slow drip of the tap like water torture that has worn Jack's psychological resistance down to breaking point. Other examples include the snap of the light switch at the end of the final bathroom scene implying the final straw that broke the camel's back, or the muffled sounds in the bar scene as Jack retreats into his own head space and shuts out the outside world, the heavy breathing following the chaotic

soundscape of the drunken scene, the sudden banging sound in the darkness as Jack wakes James in the middle of the night and so on.

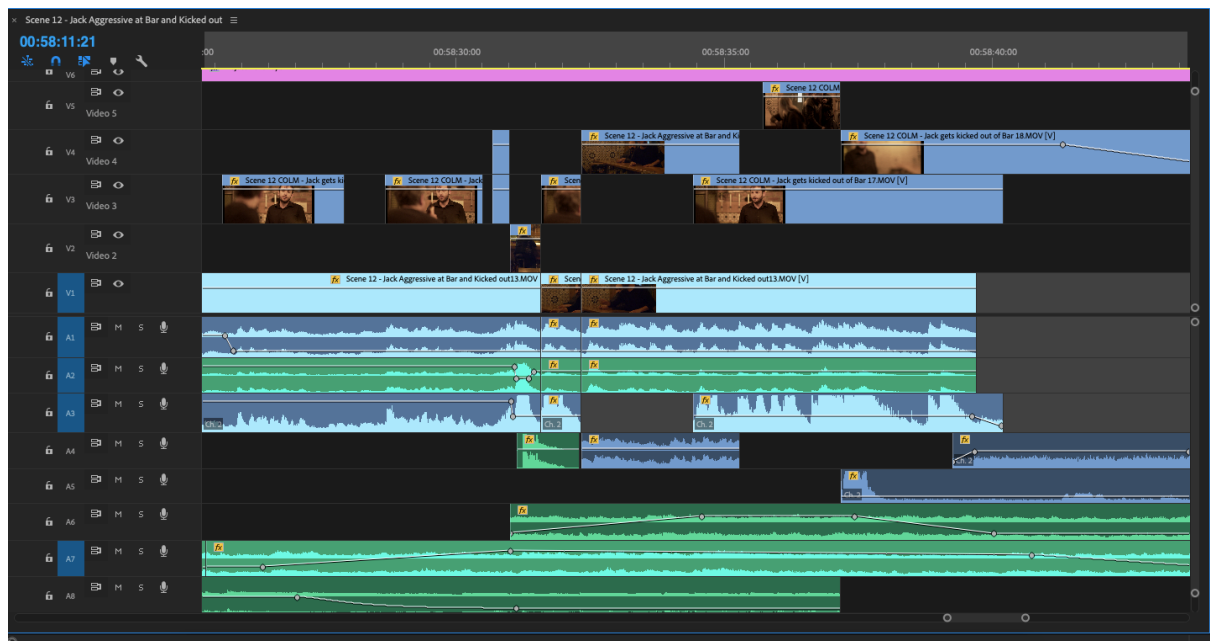


Figure 33 - Rapid cuts and a smashing glass sound effect make for a convincing bar fight sequence

One scene in particular that illustrates the impact that sound can have is the bar fight scene, in which Jack becomes aggressive after the barman refuses to serve him any more alcohol and throws a bottle behind the bar which smashes, and two guys grab him and aggressively drag him outside. There was in fact no bottle thrown at all and the smashing sound was added in postproduction and combined with a rapid series of cuts that make it appear as if Jack has thrown the bottle. This effective (and much safer) technique is a good example of when filming and sound can work hand in hand to create the desired effect in a scene. The importance of sound in film and its ability to reinforce and further the visual meaning of a piece is one of the key advantages that filmmaking has over other creative art forms as a communicative force and is something that I have carefully considered throughout each stage of production for the final Screen Production Research film, *JACK*.

Once all scenes were assembled and edited, I created a master sequence for the full film, as seen in figure 34, and arranged each scene in order, adding additional transitions where necessary before exporting the film via Media Encoder as a final 4K high-quality film file.

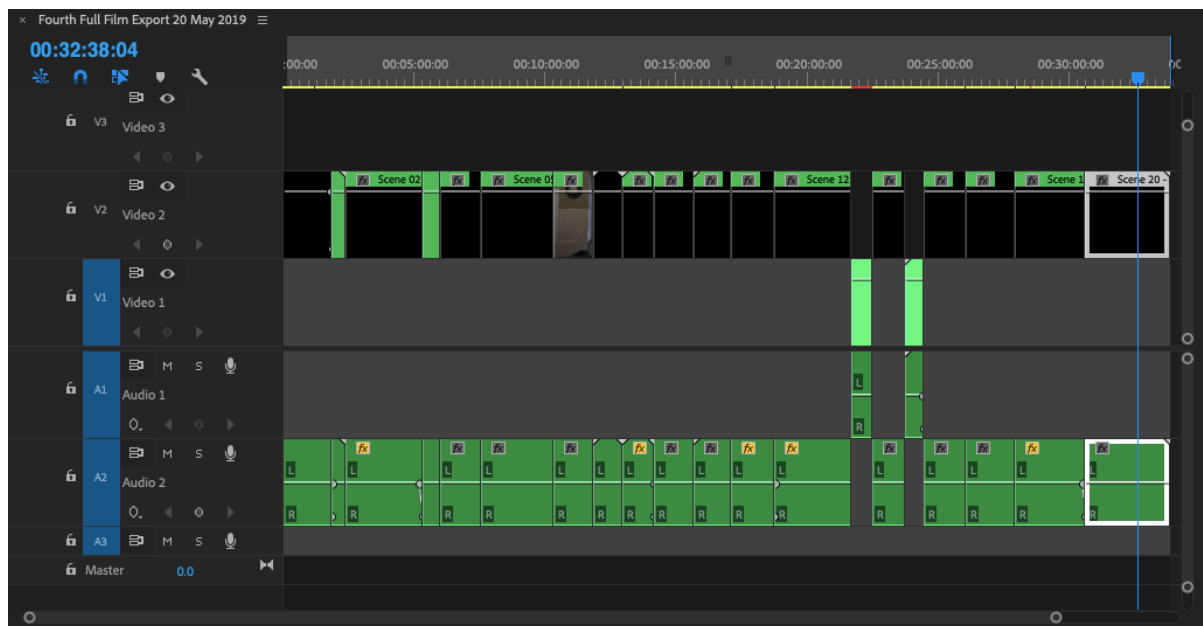


Figure 34 – Final master sequence for export of the entire final film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019)

Once the final film was exported it was viewed in its entirety to identify any final corrections or adjustments that needed made and when I was satisfied that the final film was complete it was ready to be shown to supervisors and fellow Screen Production Research PhD students. Following a number of [test screenings and feedback sessions](#) available to view in the submission folder, several further [iterative edits](#) and refinements were made to the final film before releasing *JACK* online at www.jackthemovie.co.uk on World Suicide Prevention day 2019.

This chapter has outlined the postproduction processes that finalised the Screen Production Research film, *JACK* (Deery, 2019), from the process of organising, renaming and importing the footage captured during the production stage, to the assembly and editing of sequences, adding of visual effects, transitions, music, sound effects, titles and credits before exporting as a high-quality finished film piece that satisfies the aims and objectives of the research project by successfully putting the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

5.6 Chapter 5 Conclusions and Interim Findings

Chapter 5 has discussed each stage of the practical filmmaking processes that led to the creation of *JACK* (Deery, 2019), a final Screen Production Research film that satisfies the aims and

objectives of the research project by successfully translating the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice. The process of creating the final film revealed several key interim findings at each stage of the filmmaking practice, as detailed below.

The first interim finding was the discovery of innovative and novel approaches to the representation of mental distress through the manipulation of formal cinematic techniques including lighting, framing and editing, developed during an initial phase of testing and experimenting with filmmaking techniques (see 5.1). The techniques and approaches developed during this stage of the filmmaking practice research were instrumental in the creation of the final research film, including layering and blending of video and the use of lighting and editing to convey mental distress leading to suicidal ideation.

The second interim finding was the development of a screenplay for a final film through a combination of an autoethnographic methodology and an 8-point story arc structure (see 5.2), creating a final screenplay that successfully answers the objectives of the project while retaining its inherent value as an engaging screenplay for a piece of fictional narrative drama.

The final interim finding was to discover novel video editing techniques and approaches to convey internal states of mental distress and suggest suicidal ideation, while avoiding any descriptive detail of suicide method or means in line with the Papageno Effect (see 5.6). These techniques and methods include a combination of multiple layers of video blended to create a sense of chaos and convey the internal distress of a character, while avoiding replicable suicidal behaviour. These layered visuals are combined with symbolic imagery conveying the character's downward spiral and further enhanced with the use of discordant music to create an audio-visual experience that communicates the character's internal turmoil and distress, whilst avoiding any replicable suicidal behaviour.

The processes involved in the filmmaking practice, as discussed throughout this chapter have contributed towards the creation of an original and innovative final research film that offers a practical answer to the central research question by demonstrating how we as filmmakers might create more constructive depictions of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation in our work by putting the protective principles of the Papageno Effect into our filmmaking practice.

6 Conclusions

This Screen Production Research project set out to answer the central research question ‘How might we as filmmakers represent issues of mental ill health and suicidality more constructively in our work?’. Through a multidisciplinary research process pertaining to mental health and suicide, combined with an autoethnographic methodology based on personal lived experience with these issues, this practice-based filmmaking research project successfully addressed the aims of the project by creating a final film that presents a more considered and constructive representation of the realities of living with mental distress and specifically suicidal ideation. The main framework used to create more responsible narrative storytelling on suicidal ideation was found to be the Papageno Effect. The Papageno Effect, proposed by Niederkrötenhaler, Till and colleagues at the University of Vienna, posits that stories of help-seeking and recovery from suicidal ideation, instead of demonstrating imitable suicidal behaviour may have a protective effect on vulnerable viewers by modelling positive alternative responses and outcomes to suicidal thoughts. By using the Papageno Effect as a framework and translating it into filmmaking practice, this practice-based Screen Production Research project has revealed a range of insights through, for and about filmmaking practice pertaining to mental distress and suicidal ideation.

6.1 Context, Purpose, Aims and Objectives of the Research Project

The emerging field of Screen Production Research recognises filmmaking practice as an approach to obtain new insights through filmmaking, for filmmaking and about filmmaking. Screen Production Filmmaking researchers conceive and create films with the intention that their production and dissemination will answer specific research questions, with both the research process and filmmaking practice framing new knowledge that emerges through the filmmaking and it is within this context that the current research project takes place.

The initial stages of this research project revealed a long history of cinematic depictions of suicide and stigmatising portrayals of characters with mental health issues that sit at odds with contemporary efforts to encourage open conversations about our mental wellbeing and reduce suicide deaths worldwide. This phase of the research revealed how these stories are typically represented and realised on screen, information that was then used to underpin the research project going forward. A wide-ranging and multidisciplinary systematic literature review revealed the proposed Papageno Effect from the psychology and suicidology literature that provided a clear theoretical framework within which to develop better-informed filmmaking practice concerning suicidal ideation and mental distress. Combining the latest multidisciplinary research with personal autoethnographic reflections on lived experience, this project succeeded in creating a final film outcome that was both grounded in theory and informed by the realities of living with mental distress and suicidal ideation; creating an authentic and believable story that fulfils the aims and objectives of the research project by successfully interpreting and translating the protective principles of the Papageno Effect into filmmaking practice.

This thesis has outlined the theoretical frameworks and research design that shaped the Screen Production Research project, as well as stating some of the core philosophical principles that underpin the research and dictate the terms on which the filmmaking practice took place. These philosophical principles include a constructivist ontological position and an interpretivist epistemology, believing that human beings construct meaning through the things we see and experience in the world and that every individual's own experience is subjective and unique to them, helping to shape their own world view and informing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. The stated ontology and epistemology established a qualitative research paradigm for the project, where the importance of self-reflection and autoethnography are recognised as salient

factors in shaping the final research outcome. To that end this thesis has discussed the personal motivations behind undertaking a Screen Production Research PhD on issues of mental health and suicide, as well as contextualising the project against a personal continuum of creative practice.

The fundamental principles of Humanism have underpinned the project throughout and the philosophical worldview that all human beings can work together to solve the problems we face has guided many of the creative decisions made throughout the film production process. This thesis has also outlined the three unique stages of the research design process, with distinct research methods appropriate to each stage; stage one involved a systematic multidisciplinary literature review in order to gather information on the thematic concerns of mental health and suicide; stage two situated the project in relation to the Screen Production Research context within which the filmmaking would take place and stage three concerned the filmmaking practice and the synthesis of the written research into a manifest piece of film.

Practice methodologies are used to design filmmaking research within the field of Screen Production Research. This thesis has outlined some of the key contributors to this field, their practiced-based methodologies and research contributions, as well as the bearing they have had on the creation of this research project, the work of knowledge production, rather than the work of film production. One filmmaking researcher who creates project that allow him to gain insights about culturally and socially topical issues, as well as developing new knowledge about specialist filmmaking practices, is Erik Knudsen. Knudsen is one of the core contributors to this research project in terms of the philosophical and practical approaches underpinning much of the project's methodology. Knudsen's work and research have contributed to establishing Screen Production Research as a valid form of inquiry with its own set of approaches and techniques to knowledge creation and its own language with which to articulate the research.

One key factor in how to articulate the new knowledge gained through filmmaking practice is reflexive practice within the context of a Screen Production Research project and the crucial role that filmmaking practice and reflexivity play in the iterative development of practice and the discovery and articulation of new knowledge. The practice-based methodology employed in this research project gathered new knowledge through and for filmmaking pertaining to suicidal ideation and the Papageno Effect, which has advanced our understanding and

knowledge about how narratives, production, and filmmaking processes concerned with suicidal ideation can be approached more constructively, as well as revealing how narratives have typically handled these issues in the past. The knowledge gathered is culturally and socially beneficial and provides an opportunity for other filmmakers to reflect on ways in which to deal with these topics.

This research project has identified the problems caused by historically unfavourable representations of mental illness and suicide throughout film history and the negative impact these have had on public understanding, stigma and fear surrounding issues of mental health. This thesis revealed the numerous mental health stereotypes that have been used throughout the history of cinema, becoming categorizable tropes that each have a stigmatizing impact on certain vulnerable groups within society. The thesis also revealed how suicide has been represented throughout cinematic history, drawing upon Stack and Bowman's extensive study into over 1,500 films that contain a suicide and concluding that most film suicides can be considered negative and unnecessary, serving no discernible benefit to anyone. Stack and Bowman also found that films tended to focus on the external sociological factors that contribute to a suicide, such as relationship strain or financial hardship, rather than the internal psychological factors that are the focus of much of the literature. Stack and Bowman's research also revealed that films often present the internal and external contributing factors to suicide as comorbid (Stack and Bowman, 2011).

The potential harm that irresponsible, graphic, or descriptive depictions of suicide can have by triggering real imitative copycat suicides, known as the Werther Effect, is now well established and the Papageno Effect has helped to reframe this issue to focus on the positive contribution that filmmakers and creators of visual content might have instead by creating more constructive depictions of stories concerned with suicide by modelling help-seeking and recovery from suicidal ideation. Knowing the harm that irresponsible depictions of suicide can cause, media guidelines have been established to offer advice and guidance on how filmmakers and media professionals can tackle these issues more responsibly. It is within this context that contemporary discourse in the field of suicide prevention has shifted away from the Werther Effect towards the positive 'Papageno Effect' role that film and the media might play in preventing suicide. It is the primary objective of this Screen Production Research Project to find ways in which we as filmmakers might interpret and translate the principles of the Papageno Effect successfully into our filmmaking practice.

6.2 Restrictions and Challenges presented by the Papageno Effect

Whilst the Papageno Effect presents a positive reframing of the debate on the impact that stories and depictions of suicide may have on vulnerable viewers, interpreting the parameters within which filmmaking practice can take place safely in line with the Papageno Effect presents several challenges to filmmakers. Media guidelines suggest using as little detail as possible about a suicide method to avoid imitative copycat suicides (Samaritans, 2012, 2013) and therefore one of the primary challenges for filmmakers is how we might convey suicidal ideation and intent without using any descriptive detail of suicide means or method that could be imitated by vulnerable viewers. Although avoiding descriptive or sensationalised depictions of suicide method is a key aspect of the Papageno Effect, it is something that filmmakers have relied heavily upon in the past to tell their stories, normally detailing a suicide method as a dramatic climax to a scene as the character takes their own life by gunshot, hanging, overdose, jumping from a height or any number of other suicide methods that have been used throughout the history of cinema. This presents a significant challenge for filmmakers in finding new ways to suggest and convey suicidal intent and ideation to an audience whilst avoiding any specific reference to suicide means or method.

Another challenge presented by the principles of the Papageno Effect is the avoidance of any suicidal behaviour, including a suicide attempt from which the character subsequently recovers. This is a specific plot device that I have used previously in *DROP*, but the Papageno Effect suggests that a focus on suicidal ideation not accompanied by a suicide attempt or completed suicide may have a protective impact (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010). This presents a further challenge to filmmakers, as it suggests that stories featuring recovery from a non-fatal suicide attempt might also be avoided in favour of stories that focus on individuals experiencing suicidal ideation, but refrain from adopting suicidal plans and instead adopt ‘positive coping mechanisms in adverse circumstances’ (Niederkrötenhaler *et al.*, 2010). A further restriction for filmmakers to tackle in line with media guidelines and the Papageno Effect is avoiding the use of any identifiable location for a suicide attempt, such as a well-known suicide ‘hotspot’ or easily identifiable landmark.

The principles of the Papageno Effect therefore present a range of unique challenges to us as filmmakers and encourage us to reflect on the way we tackle stories concerning suicide and suicidal ideation using the tools and techniques of our trade in new and innovative ways that

minimise risk of imitative suicidal behaviours and encourage help-seeking and recovery from suicidal thoughts. Throughout this research project I have been able to explore alternative approaches to representing stories of suicide and mental distress in a safer and more constructive way, encouraging open conversations and promoting help seeking for vulnerable viewers and the wider audience.

6.3 Applying the Papageno Effect to Filmmaking Practice

Working within the parameters suggested by the Papageno Effect, as outlined above (see 6.2), presented several restrictions and practical challenges as a filmmaker that this research project sought to address. The proposed avoidance of any detail of suicide means, method or location prompted a substantial re-evaluation of the myriad ways in which we as filmmakers might typically represent suicide in our work, which may include detail of the planning, preparation, and execution of a particular suicide method with varying degrees of detail. These considerations played a critical and fundamental role in the development of the screenplay from the earliest stages of the research project. For the purposes of the research project, the screenplay needed to be able to tell a story of a character whose life circumstances had led them to the point of suicidal ideation. Taking inspiration from Stack and Bowman's book on suicide in film (Stack and Bowman, 2011), I wanted the film to include a combination of both the external sociological factors and internal psychological factors that might lead a character to the point of suicidal ideation.

After considering a range of narrative options, the story of a struggling actor whose life circumstances and internal mental distress lead him towards the point of a suicidal crisis was developed through several iterations before becoming the final screenplay for JACK (Deery, 2019). JACK tells the story of a struggling actor who, after several failed auditions, struggles to stay positive about his life and career choices. As the story progresses, we see Jack lose his relationship with his partner, get fired from his part time job and becoming increasingly distant from his social circle as his internal mental distress in response to his personal life circumstances worsens, manifesting itself in increasingly reckless behaviour including alcohol abuse and violence. In the penultimate scene of the screenplay, Jack's deteriorating psychological wellbeing and his worsening external life circumstances have led him to the point of suicidal ideation, at which point his partner finds him and stops him right before attempting suicide, thereby saving his life. By the end of the screenplay, we see Jack gradually recovering from his experiences with suicidal ideation and he begins to make a full recovery with the help and support of his partner, his doctor, support services and his friends. The screenplay for JACK was developed in line with the principles of the Papageno Effect by telling a story of a character whose life circumstances had led him to the point of suicidal ideation but did not engage in any suicidal behaviour and instead adopted positive coping mechanisms in adverse circumstances. By avoiding any detailed imitable descriptions of suicide means,

method or location the screenplay also minimised any possibility of imitative Werther Effect suicidal behaviour, in line with the principles of the Papageno Effect.

Working safely within the parameters suggested by the Papageno Effect, this research project found that employing innovative video layering and blending techniques offered a solution that could successfully convey internal states of distress to an audience. The layering techniques used allowed for several pieces of film to blend into and out of one another, creating a sense of fragmented time and suggesting inner turmoil within the character. This was found to be an effective way of creating a sense of confusion and blurring the lines between the internal distress and the external manifestation of the character as seen by those around him.

The visual metaphor of a coin spinning down towards a black point in the centre was introduced from the start of the film and subsequently used throughout the piece as the character's internal state worsened, gathering pace as the character nears the point of suicide in the penultimate scene. This use of an effective visual metaphor for a character's descent towards a point of no return was found to provide a convincing means of conveying what was happening to the character's mental state whilst avoiding any descriptive suicidal method, means or preparation for a suicide attempt, as might typically be employed by filmmakers in these instances. The video layering and blending techniques used in the penultimate sequence of the film included the use of novel lighting techniques and strong colour that suggested a screaming internal voice within the character's own mind that led him to the point of suicidal crisis, while flashbacks, flickering imagery and fast cutting within the editing software amplified the visual intensity of the sequence and helped convey to the viewer that the character was intent of ending his own life.

Music also played a critical role in intensifying the drama of the sequences in which the character is most out of control. Music is deliberately used sparingly throughout the film so that when it is used it has a significant impact on intensifying the scenes in which the drama is highest. Two instances of where music was used effectively include the drunken self-destructive sequence in which two unrelated pieces of music were layered together to create a crashing, chaotic soundscape that suitably fitted the fragmented layered visuals on screen and the penultimate sequence in which the song 'Rushing In' provided a soaring, screaming vocal performance that matched the layered internal screams of the character as his descent towards the point of no return quickened and intensified.

Through the use of innovative cinematic techniques and novel approaches to film craft, this filmmaking research project has successfully demonstrated that the principles of the Papageno Effect can be used to inform filmmaking practice pertaining to suicide and suicidal ideation, creating an engaging piece of film drama that brings a character to a point of suicidal crisis with no discernible suicide means, method or identifiable location on screen and then models help-seeking and recovery from suicidal crisis instead of modelling suicidal behaviour on screen.

6.4 Areas for further research

This research project has demonstrated that effective filmmaking on the subject of suicide can be created within the parameters of the Papageno Effect and that using novel techniques and approaches to filmmaking and editing can convey internal states of distress and imply suicidal ideation without descriptive depictions of suicide means, method or locations. This project also crucially embodied the principles of the Papageno Effect by modelling help seeking and recovery for a character who had suffered from suicidal ideation, demonstrating hope for anyone who is struggling with their mental wellbeing or experiencing thoughts of suicide.

As the first screen production research project to look specifically at interpreting and translating the Papageno Effect from the world of Psychology and Sociology into Filmmaking practice, this project represents a unique opportunity for other filmmakers to reflect on the ways in which we tackle issues of suicide and mental health in our work, as well as considering other alternative and constructive ways that we might approach these issues in future. Having worked strictly and rigidly within the parameters suggested by the Papageno Effect during this project, there is scope for further research on the degree to which we restrict or represent these issues in our filmmaking practice, for instance, is there a potential benefit in having a suicide attempt from which the character survives and makes a full recovery, if the suicide attempt occurs off screen and is only talked about in abstract, rather than explicit, descriptive or imitable detail? Would this type of representation fit with the principles of the Papageno Effect if the suicide attempt isn't represented visually on screen? Could the subsequent recovery with the support of family, friends and health services be an effective way to reduce stigma around mental health and recovery services? Might this approach encourage even more people to seek help, having removed or significantly reduced the stigma and fear around help seeking? These questions are indicative of the many new approaches that I hope can come out of this new area of research and I look forward to much more work emerging in this very important research area.

There are also significant areas of further multi-disciplinary research between filmmakers and researchers in other areas including Sociology and Psychology, not only for demonstrating, teaching, or testing with films within the context of the sciences, but for active cross-disciplinary collaboration and creative development of filmmaking practice. Working closely with partners from Psychology and Sociology to translate the latest contemporary research

from the sciences into filmmaking practice would allow for the often-inaccessible theory from the literature to be conveyed in a digestible and relatable format for an audience to discuss, question and engage with in new and novel ways.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equipment list for Shooting and Editing Final Film JACK

Equipment	Description
Cameras	Panasonic GH5 Camera (x2)
	Sony A7SII (for Playhouse Acting Group Scenes)
Tripods	Velbon Sherpa Tripod
	Neewer Tripod
	Manfrotto Compact action tripod
	Joby Gorillapod flexible tripod
	Smatree Monopod
Hardware	Neewer Dolly for Tripod
	Neewer Shoulder Rig Stabilizer
	Neewer Weighted Manual Stabilizer
Sound	Zoom H1n Handy Recorder
	Rode SmartLav Lavalier Mic and Audio Splitter (x2)
	Rode Videomic
Lighting	Yongnuo YN300 LED Lights (x2)
	Neewer LED Lights and Stands (x3)
	Assorted Neewer Lighting Gels for LED Lights
Power	Batteries and Chargers for Cameras, Microphones and Lights
Editing	Apple Macbook Pro (2012)
	Seagate 4TB External Harddrive

Appendix 2 – PhD Submission Folder Contents

PhD Submission Folder Contents
PhD Final Submission – John Deery
01 – JACK by John Deery – Final PhD Research film
02 - Video Thesis - The PhD Research process and Making of JACK
03 - JACK scene by scene breakdown and commentary
04 - Screenings, presentations, talks and conferences
05 - Cast Interviews
06 - Film Technical Tests and Experiments
07 - Screenplay for JACK
08 - Film Script rehearsals and development
09 - JACK Iterative Previous Edits
10 - Email Correspondence with Benedikt Till and Thomas Niederkrotenthaler
11 - PHD Development Blog Notebooks
Thesis - John Deery - Researching the use of filmmaking techniques for the representation of mental health struggles and suicidal ideation - Putting the Papageno Effect into Filmmaking Practice
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