

Impact Case Study Template

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| Section A | | |
| Institution: The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London | | |
| Unit of Assessment: 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film, and Screen Studies | | |
| Title of case study: Participation, engagement, and cultural understanding: Developing new models for performance touring, audience development, creative partnerships, and social change | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011–2020 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): | Role(s) (e.g. job title): | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: |
| David Harradine | Professor of Interdisciplinary Practice | 1 December 2012–present |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| Section B | | |
| 1. Summary of the impact | | |
| <p>Harradine's practice research is conducted through the cross-disciplinary arts company <i>Fevered Sleep</i>, of which he is co-artistic director, and integrates creative practices, participation, and innovative approaches to partnerships, public engagement, and touring in order to bring about social change. Focusing on 'difficult' issues through sustained collaboration with cultural organisations, local authorities, communities, and individuals, Harradine's research has generated the following impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging diverse and marginalised audiences; 2. Enhancing cultural understanding through the exploration of difficult subjects in social contexts that facilitate conversation and exchange; 3. Changing practices and policies within partner organisations; 4. Contributing to the shaping of policy debates. | | |
| 2. Underpinning research | | |
| <p>Harradine's practice research since he joined Central in 2012 has focused substantially upon questions of widening and deepening participation in the arts, in collaboration with partners and with impact built into the research design. From 2011–2015, he led a four-year practice research project called <i>Future Play</i> (RO3), focused on developing models for touring performance for young audiences. This project, supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England, challenged the conventional 'parachute model' for touring, in which performance programming is governed principally by commercial sales targets, and connections with local partners, audiences, and participants are brief and truncated. Although this reduces costly time spent at each venue, it also minimises engagement between artists, venues, and audiences, and privileges existing audiences over those not already engaged in the arts. Instead, <i>Future Play</i> began to develop alternative and sustainable touring strategies, such as bespoke networked partnerships, local engagement at each venue, and the integration of processes of artistic and audience development.</p> <p>To extend this enquiry, Harradine developed a further practice research project, <i>Men & Girls Dance</i> (<i>M&GD</i>, RO2), in 2015. Between 2015 and 2019, 10 iterations of the project were created, with partners including Quarterhouse, Folkestone; Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield; The Lowry, Salford; Dance4, Nottingham; Southeast Dance and Attenborough Centre, Brighton & Hove; The Place and Tate Britain, London; and Skånes Dansteater, Malmö, Sweden. The project addressed and challenged the overwhelmingly negative media and social representations of relationships between men and girls, with the interconnected aims to 'propose positive, embodied narratives of care, playfulness and trust between men and children', and to develop 'new approaches to performance touring in the UK' (RO2: 8). The methodology involved the creation of a dance performance and 'contextual materials', and 'close work with a network of partner organisations to conceive and deliver new approaches to</p> | | |

collaboration, participation, touring and audience development' (RO2: 13). This innovation enabled the process of proposing alternative narratives for relationships between men and children to be developed iteratively through a socially engaged approach both to rehearsal processes and touring. This was achieved through re-creation at each venue with a cast comprised partly of local girls, thus engaging local communities in the research. Alongside this, extended and collaborative audience development activities were organised around the project's 'contextual materials' (a newspaper revised and published at each venue — with contributions from local people — and discussions curated in a 'Talking Place' around performances). Bespoke networks of local partners supported the development of these activities, facilitating knowledge exchange both among partners and with wider communities. The project found that dance, as an embodied form, is highly effective as a medium for exploring this subject, but also that 'It is insufficient to presume, with a subject as charged as men's relationships with children, that performance alone can articulate the complexity of alternative narratives to those who encounter it', and that the newspaper and 'Talking Place' proved 'highly effective tool[s] for extending the inquiry of the performance into forms that are widely and more readily accessible to diverse audiences and members of the public' (RO2: 36).

External evaluation of *M&GD* (Morris Hargreaves Macintyre Ltd) raised further questions about how to broaden and deepen the aims to 'develop audiences and to provoke thinking and discussion' (S1: 53). This informed the development of the practice research project *This Grief Thing* (*TGT*, 2016–2021, RO1). From September 2018–October 2019, 5 iterations of the project were delivered with local partners in Preston, Middlesborough, Manchester (at the Whitworth Art Gallery and SICK! Festival), and Nottingham. *TGT* aimed to develop strategies for enabling conversations about the complex issue of grieving and the social and cultural prohibitions that surround it; making it visible in public spaces; and building resilience among individuals, families, and communities in the face of grief (RO1: 10). Historically, grief has often been publicly marked, woven into social relations, structures, and events, and *TGT* explored ways of reviving and reinventing lost practices of grieving to make it visible and acceptable in contemporary society. This took the form of a collection of clothing and accessories, sold in temporary shops opened at each of its touring locations. The collection and these shop installations were developed through a review of medical, psychological, therapeutic, and cultural research on processes of grieving, alongside collaborations with academic experts in these fields, as well as public focus groups on grief and the many ways in which it can be experienced and articulated. This inquiry exposed an absence of provision of non-therapeutic and non-medical spaces for discussing grief and led to the development of the focus groups into 'Grief Gatherings', bringing together up to 12 people for a 90-minute conversation about grief as a key methodology for both participatory research and dissemination of the project's findings (RO1: 18). The research found that cultural practices such as performance and literature are not best placed to reintegrate grief into ordinary social relations (since such practices, in their stylised explorations of themes of grief and death, further separate these from the everyday). Instead, the research has demonstrated that participatory 'practices of everyday life' (clothing, shopping, conversation) provide an effective approach for enabling people to come together to talk, think, and learn about grief (RO1: 30). Furthermore, the 'cluster models' for partnerships developed by the project were shown to be particularly effective in engaging diverse groups of people in conversations about grief, because participants recognised and trusted the local organisations within the cluster (RO1: 31).

3. References to the research

RO1. Harradine, David. 2016–2021. *This Grief Thing*. Practice Research Project, ISBN: 978-1-8383968-0-0. Submitted in REF2021.

RO2. Harradine, David. 2015–2019. *Men & Girls Dance*. Practice Research Project, ISBN: 978-1-8383967-8-7. Submitted in REF2021. Runner-up in the Guardian University Award 2017 for Social and Community Impact and shortlisted finalist in the Times Higher Research Project of the Year (Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences) in 2017.

RO3. Harradine, David. 2014. *Future Play*. ISBN: 978-0-9559082-2-4.

4. Details of the impact

As a result of **Harradine's** close collaboration with partners and his focus on developing innovative artistic practices that engage audiences and participants in explorations of difficult social issues, his work has led directly to the following impacts:

1. Engaging diverse and marginalised audiences;
2. Enhancing cultural understanding through the exploration of difficult subjects in social contexts that facilitate conversation and exchange;
3. Changing practices and policies within partner organisations;
4. Contributing to the shaping of policy debates.

Engaging diverse and marginalised audiences

Fevered Sleep's practice in relation to diversity is recognised as 'strong' by Arts Council England: 'The organisation understands and is responsive to challenges and barriers facing members of the protected characteristic groups in engaging in the sector. The creative case [for diversity] is embedded across all aspects of the programme and a key driver for informing and shaping the artistic programme' (S9: 7). Harradine's practice research in *M&GD* and *TGT* has led this process by generating forms of artistic expression with multiple, interconnected mechanisms for engagement and participation: in the first instance, by developing 'contextual materials' which wrapped around the dance performance at each venue (the newspaper and 'Talking Place'), and, in the second, through the development of innovative practice to deliver the aims of the project. As a result, Harradine and Fevered Sleep have successfully engaged diverse and marginalised audiences across the UK and in Europe. By August 2019, the 10 versions of *M&GD* had generated 81 performances, engaging 11,600 people as participants and audiences (RO2: 29–31), including a residency at Skånes Dansteater in Malmö, Sweden as well as further planned commissions that had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic (RO2: 5). To date, *TGT* has completed 5 residencies (2018–2019), with 3,440 people visiting the shops and 341 people participating in 'Grief Gatherings', including a programme of online gatherings in 2020, subsequent to the project residencies (RO1: 29–30). Project evaluations show that *M&GD*'s 2016 tour played to 89% of its full audience capacity, of which 'an impressive 14% were brand new to contemporary dance' (S1: 6), 'over a third (37%) of those surveyed had never been to the respective venue before' (S1: 7), and '10% of audience [were] from areas of low engagement' with the arts (S1: 50). This engagement with diverse and marginalised audiences was delivered through collaborative, local engagements: each two-week rehearsal process with local performers created opportunities to engage their families and for volunteer 'community catalysts' to link the project into existing, local networks to promote interest in and engagement with it (S1: 20). The success of these mechanisms for engaging audiences in a creative form they had not previously engaged with fed into the development of *TGT*, which focused specifically on marginalised participants through iterations exclusively in places in the top 100 locations on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (S9: 7). Participants came from 38 different Local Authorities, with almost 50% of visitors coming from those ranking in the top 20% of most deprived areas in the country (S2: 16). In all, 13% of respondents giving feedback identified as BAME (the average for the populations of the areas visited was 12%) and 22% identified as LGBTQIA+, substantially higher than the national average of 6.8% in 2017 (S2: 21 and ONS data).

Enhancing cultural understanding through the exploration of difficult subjects in social contexts that facilitate conversation and exchange

Through forms as varied as dance, clothing, printed materials, and conversation, these projects enhanced cultural understanding of difficult social issues. In *M&GD*, a newspaper was published about the project and its context at each venue, with contributions sourced locally, described by one partner as 'an excellent mechanism for starting a conversation on the theme and a brilliant resource that is very useful for teachers/safeguarding officers [...] dance practitioners working with young people' (S1: 28). Community members were also engaged via 'The Talking Place', a series of drop-in safe spaces 'for the public to discuss the project's themes' through facilitated conversations both in community locations and before and after performances (S1: 4). Evidencing the capacity of the performance and its contextual materials to enhance understanding of the project's difficult subject, a local councillor stated that 'The way the piece gradually dispelled any misgivings about men dancing with young girls was phenomenal. I was totally drawn in and at the end completely related to all on stage' (S1: 15); likewise, theatre critic Lyn Gardner wrote: 'At the end, children and adults stand side by side at the front of the stage and look out at us with a steady gaze. They have banished the monsters, and made us see something different: the joy. It's touching, in every way' (S11).

The shop installations for *TGT* were also developed to generate opportunities for participation and conversation, engaging people with the difficult subject of grief in a setting that is ordinary, unthreatening, and familiar (unlike arts spaces such as galleries and theatres which many people do not and will not attend). Members of the public were also invited to join 'Grief Gatherings' in the shop after closing time, described by one partner as 'very much needed. People don't have a public space where they can talk about grief and death' (S3: 6), and by another as 'a beautiful space for sharing hard experiences with one another' (S3: 56). Participants attested to their own enhanced understanding of grief: 'I found it a really positive experience where everyone got to contribute and many insights were provided [...] it made me feel that grieving is allowed and normal!', 'Breaking the taboo is really helpful — made me feel comforted' (S3: 51, 52); 'it helped to unlock something that I didn't even realise was trapped inside of me', 'it's very rare indeed for me to find an opportunity just to have someone hear me', '*This Grief Thing* has changed my life because it's changed me' (S8: 02:34, 03:55, 05:50). The project also widened its impact on cultural understandings of grief and grieving through extensive press engagement at national, regional, and local levels, including features on BBC Radio 5 Live (almost 5m listeners each week) and the *i* newspaper (online and print circulation 248,230 monthly), as well as local television and press (S2: 17).

Changing practices and policies within partner organisations

Partner organisations report that their practices have changed as a result of collaborating with Harradine and Fevered Sleep, with some sustaining specific aspects of Harradine's approach within their own organisations. Louisa Davies, an independent producer formerly of the Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), acknowledges that

By building a convincing body of evidence around a series of high-quality performance pieces, Fevered Sleep's work through *Future Play* undoubtedly impacted on and changed my (and MAC's) approach to programming and producing performance for children. We changed our approach to tour bookings from one-off performances to longer residencies; integrated creative activities at MAC (such as workshops) with strategic audience development initiatives; and developed new ways to work in partnership with primary schools. (S10)

Partners also confirmed more indirect influences on their organisational practice. Following collaboration with Harradine on *TGT*, one host organisation remarked that 'our space is now being used in a different way — we have pop ups happening in it all the time — the project sparked a different way for us to use the space' (S3: 64), and David Tuffnell, Middlesbrough Town Council's Arts Development Officer, testifies to changes to practices within his own organisation evident in 'a whole new approach to the use of retail spaces in the town (which has also enabled the development of new ways of working in partnership with one of the town shopping centres), and the reimagining of retail spaces as civic spaces' (S5). The project evaluation notes that further new partnerships have been generated through collaboration with Harradine: 'two of the partner organisations are now collaborating with artists in delivering social and palliative care' (S3: 79), and Tuffnell states that the project initiated a sustained conversation about how Middlesbrough's Culture and Arts, and Health teams can work together (S3: 66), resulting in 'an Arts and Health group for Middlesbrough' (S5). Attesting to changes in his own individual approach, he writes 'As a contributor to the development of a strategy for this group, I have drawn directly on learning taken from *This Grief Thing* and the council's work with Fevered Sleep' (S5). He goes on to explain still wider organisational changes to the practices of Middlesbrough Town Council relating to partnership working that have developed directly from their collaboration with Harradine:

Working with Fevered Sleep provided a context that facilitated partnership building in the town (for example with local organisations Ageing Better and Public Health). This process led directly to an ongoing working relationship with these organisations, but also, importantly, to a new way of thinking about partnership working, and the necessity to create ties with other, specialist organisations when working in community settings. This process, modelled by Fevered Sleep's approach to touring and presenting *This Grief Thing*, relies on collaborating organisations mutually embedding their work, strategy and practice, an approach we continue to pursue. (S5)

Harradine's influence on the practices and policies of the wider arts sector is evidenced by the Co-Creative Director of SICK! Festival, who states that his engagement with *This Grief Thing* 'has helped me formulate this idea of "subject as practice" [...] where the artist starts with the subject and everything comes from that. It has an integrity when the form is driven entirely by the subject. *Fevered Sleep* and this project have been influential in how I've ended up framing this idea when I talk about it [...] It's been formative in my thinking' (S3: 65). Likewise, Moira Sinclair, Chief Executive of Paul Hamlyn Foundation testifies that Harradine's practice research 'has undoubtedly had an impact on the sector, leading to change in practices of both touring companies and receiving venues: touring companies have used the evidence from *Future Play* to bolster confidence to take artistic risks and create innovative work; programming/presenting venues have been able to take more risks in programming and make bolder programming choices, as *Future Play* has strongly evidenced the success of this approach' (S4). Harradine's success in audience engagement and practices involving local communities led to his 2018 appointment to the Board of Directors and Artist Advisory Group of Yorkshire Dance, one of the UK regional dance development agencies. The organisation's CEO and Artistic Director reports that insights from Harradine's practice research have fundamentally impacted on Yorkshire Dance's strategic thinking, organisational development, practice and policy when it comes to equality, diversity and inclusion. As a direct result of David's work in this area, we have made changes to our recruitment processes and policies; we have introduced new systems to support marginalised trustees when they join the board; we have revised the recruitment policy and membership of the artist advisory group, and we have changed how we reach, engage and work with independent artists [...] Drawing on the knowledge he has developed through his research with *Fevered Sleep*, he has consistently reminded Yorkshire Dance that this commitment is not an absolute set of actions, but a dynamic process undertaken by a group of people. (S6)

Contributing to the shaping of policy debates

Harradine's practice research in *This Grief Thing* has led to his contribution to policy debates on grief and bereavement. In recognition of his research and impact, he was invited in early 2019 to join the All-Party Parliamentary Group on bereavement support, representing *Fevered Sleep*, who are the only arts organisation in the group. The group's secretariat, The Good Grief Trust (the UK's umbrella organisation for bereavement charities and related organisations), contributes to government policy on bereavement and developed National Grief Awareness Week 2020. The Trust has testified to Harradine's impact on policy debate: '*Fevered Sleep* was the key arts partner for this project, galvanising major cultural institutions across the UK (including the National Theatre and Imperial War Museums) to engage in awareness-raising activities to highlight the need for high level government action on bereavement support' (S7).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1.** Morris Hargreaves McIntyre Ltd. April 2017. *Complexity with Care: Evaluation of *Fevered Sleep's* Men and Girls Dance, Final Report*
- S2.** McEvoy, Beth. April 2019. *This Grief Thing: Interim Evaluation Report* (*Fevered Sleep*)
- S3.** *This Grief Thing*, *Fevered Sleep*: Evaluation Report. January 2020
- S4.** Testimonial from Moira Sinclair, Chief Executive, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, undated
- S5.** Testimonial from David Tuffnell, Arts Development Officer, Middlesbrough Town Council, undated
- S6.** Testimonial from Wieke Eringa, CEO and Artistic Director, Yorkshire Dance, 10 March 2021
- S7.** Testimonial from Linda Magistris, Director, The Good Grief Trust, undated
- S8.** Video documentation of *This Grief Thing*
- S9.** Arts Council England, NPO - Annual review and feedback 2018/19
- S10.** Testimonial from Louisa Davies, Independent Producer, 16 March 2021
- S11.** Gardner, Lyn. 2016 '[Children storm the stage with awkward questions for grownups](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2016/nov/01/children-storm-the-stage-with-awkward-questions-for-grownups)', *Guardian Theatre Blog*, 1 November
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2016/nov/01/children-storm-the-stage-with-awkward-questions-for-grownups> [accessed 9 March 2021]