

Institution: Edinburgh Napier University		
Unit of Assessment: Unit of Assessment 34 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Enhancing participatory film practices to empower marginalised groups		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: June 2014 - April 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): James Blake	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Head of Screen and Media (Co-Pi)	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: December 2009 - ongoing
Paul Gray	Lecturer in Film (Co-PI)	February 2001 - ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: April 2017 - June 2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Research at Edinburgh Napier University (ENU) has led to innovative participatory film processes being utilised for three films. Collaboration with external public sector organisations has sought to engage and empower specific communities. Those affected by adoption and female prisoners have both taken part in participatory processes to have their often-marginalised voices heard, as have Scottish citizens who have participated in discussion on the future of Scotland.</p> <p><i>And Violet (2017)</i> has been recommended to over 8,000 people (members of UK Adoption), and screened for almost 900 people (individuals from adoption, fostering and education communities). It has also been commended by the Scottish Government, and was a double award winner at Arizona International Film Festival 2017.</p> <p><i>Our Future Scotland (2018)</i> was a central part of the Scottish Parliament's Scotland's Futures Forum 2030 initiative. It has screened and has informed national debate on the future of Scotland at; The Edinburgh International Science Festival, Scottish Parliament regional public events, Historic Scotland, and the Royal Society of Edinburgh,</p> <p><i>On the Outside (2019)</i> has directly benefited collaborating female prisoners in their learning and development, and has been screened and used by leading prisoner rights organisations. The film has also been used to educate 120 Scottish school children and won Best International Feature at Alexandria Film Festival 2019.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) When producers and directors portray specific communities in film, it is often preceded by research to increase the accuracy of the depiction. However, the relationship rarely considers the potential benefit of the filmmaking process to the communities themselves. Participatory video and film techniques directly engage with organisations who work with, and advocate for, specific groups in society. This allows communities to feel as though films and videos truly depict their experiences, but also explores benefits of the process to the community.</p> <p>Within the Centre for Media and Culture at ENU, this 'practice-as-research' explores collaborative and creative practice by means of direct engagement with the represented communities and policy makers. Gray and Blake undertook long-term collaborations which enabled innovative production processes for three films, and created video and digital content to enhance the institutions outreach activities. For each film, the production process was designed</p>		

to best suit the disparate voices and marginalised people involved in the project, with the goal to empower, authenticate and amplify their voices and lived experiences. Blake is submitted under UoA 32, but the research and impact activity outlined fits under the remit of UoA 34.

Gray and Blake's research has more broadly studied the development of interactive and participatory media forms in television, cinema and online digital content. Blake wrote and published his book, *Television and the Second Screen*, in 2016 [O1]. This research monograph utilised mixed methodologies to explore the evolution of interactive television. Qualitative interviews with TV industry professionals, together with content analysis, explored the evolving notion of user agency and the concept of communities of participation within the digital-public sphere. In 2017 a study by Blake explored similar themes of audience interaction, this time within cinematic and immersive narratives [O2].

And Violet (2017) [O3] is a feature film written and directed by Gray, created in collaboration with adoption charity Scottish Adoption. The film explores the delineation between fiction and non-fiction narratives within film making, and the significance of anonymity in story-telling when collaborating with vulnerable individuals and communities. Work between the team and the charity recognised that similarities exist between the research processes undertaken by social workers and screenwriters. The researchers subsequently worked with social workers to co-create a fictional completed legal adoption document (Form E). This was used as a realistic example in the film, but also as an un-redacted training tool for social workers. ***And Violet*** deals with complex issues around open adoption and contact with birth families. To inform the project Scottish Adoption's service users including; adopted teenagers, adoptive parents and birth parents, fed into portrayals of adoption in the film. The screenplay includes fictionalised first-person narratives built on this involvement.

Research on audience interaction in cinematic narratives [O2] inspired the 'Our Future Scotland' project, the aim of which was to combine traditional video storytelling with online and social media platforms to enhance participation. ***Our Future Scotland (2018)***, is a film produced and directed by Blake, and commissioned by the Scottish Futures Forum at the Scottish Parliament [O5]. The project utilised film as an effective means of including disparate people in the political debate over Scotland's future. The factual narrative explores key social and developmental themes such as technology, environment, and education, and is comprised of diverse voices which intentionally cut across class, gender, social background and geographic location. As a result, Scotland's political leaders, including the First Minister, share a platform (and equal status) with refugees, school teachers, artists, actors and early-career scientists, in creating a vision and an accessible and inclusive political blueprint for the future. Beyond the film, the project explored political engagement and audience activity online and through social media and online platforms.

On the Outside (2019) [O4] is the outcome of a participatory film project involving women serving sentences in HM Prison Polmont. It was made in collaboration with Fife College and the Scottish Prison Service. Seminars and discussions were held inside the prison that explored story telling through film, with the aim of empowering the participants as authors of their own representation. Scripts were developed that recounted the women's stories using their exact spoken words, and four individual narratives were recounted by four actors. This gave introspective accounts of the women's lives, while challenging preconceived notions of the label 'prisoner'. This informed a project which explored the underlying methodology used to action participatory video techniques [O6].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

O1 is a reference point for future research beyond ENU and has been cited multiple times internationally. **O2** and **O6** are competitively peer reviewed publications. **O3** and **O4** have won multiple international film awards.

- [O1] Blake, J. (2016) *Television and the Second Screen*. Book. Routledge: London. **Submitted to REF2.**

- [O2] Blake, J (2017) '*Experimenting with transmedia narratives and commercialising user participation*'. Participations Journal. 14/2.
<https://www.participations.org/Volume%2014/Issue%202/27.pdf>
- [O3] Gray, P. *And Violet* (2017). Film.
<https://portfolios.napier.ac.uk/view/view.php?t=eDhEBwcsQxyNa6pj2rMY> Submitted to REF2.
- [O4] Gray, P. *On the Outside* (2019). Film.
<https://portfolios.napier.ac.uk/view/view.php?t=rvsjkhR8FAScqpMVbZJm> Submitted to REF2.
- [O5] Our Future Scotland. (2018) Online archive site.
<https://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/scotland-2030-programme/our-future-scotland/>
- [O6] Gray, P. (2020). *On the Outside: film-making as story-telling through introspective re-enactment, and the significance of anonymity in the spoken word*. Media Practice and Education, 21:3, 185-199, DOI: 10.1080/25741136.2020.1800299.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research into novel participatory video techniques has led to direct impact on participating groups and wider society. Each film project reached out to diverse groups with the aim of co-creating films and supporting partner practices. This has led to direct benefits to adoption and female prisoner communities, as well as Scottish Futures planners. However, the aim has also been to inspire, inform and engage wider society in important underlying issues. As such, extensive public screenings have occurred, both in Scotland and internationally, with a variety of stakeholders, and the films and their factual narratives have had a direct impact on policy makers.

And Violet (2017)

The story told in ***And Violet* (2017)** was developed closely with Scottish Adoption and their service users. As has been noted, this collaboration resulted in the creation of a fictional legal adoption document, which is now used in an unredacted form for training purposes in the sector [C1]. The film itself also allows Scottish Adoption and the wider sector to engage with the public. It has created greater awareness of contemporary adoption practices, in particular; the concerns surrounding open adoption and contact between adoptive families and birth relatives. Adoption Today magazine (Adoption UK, August 2017, circulation approximately 8,000), described ***And Violet*** as '*an honest and thought-provoking film, dealing with immensely difficult and complicated subjects with great sensitivity*', and '*required viewing for anyone whose life, professional or personal, is touched by adoption*'.

In June 2017 the film screened at Cameo Cinema, Edinburgh, to an audience of 242 people (individuals from adoption & fostering, film and education communities). It was then invited and screened in November 2017 as an opening event for a conference during Adoption Week Scotland 2017 (the Scottish Government campaign seeking to raise awareness of adoption nationwide). This was followed the same week by further screenings across 8 local authorities, to a total audience of 650 people (individuals from adoption & fostering, film and education communities) as a part of the same event. The impact on audiences was significant, particularly those whose lives have been affected by adoption. As one audience member highlighted, '*I think it will stay with me for a long time*' and '*I loved the fact the characters are not perfect. There were elements in all of the characters I could relate to even though our "adoption experience" has been different.*' [C2].

MSP Rona MacKay invited the film to screen at Scottish Parliament in December 2018, stating that '*it lays bare the issues and struggles surrounding adoption*'. The film was introduced by Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People [C3]. ***And Violet*** also premiered at Arizona International Film Festival 2017, where it won the Best Dramatic Feature Award & Special Jury Award for Best Performance. It also screened at two other international festivals (Orlando Film Festival 2017, Glendale International Film Festival 2017) [C4].

Our Future Scotland (2018)

The film and online project [O5] were a central part of the Scotland's Futures Forum 2030 initiative. They were designed to engage with key stakeholders and citizens, and aimed to

increase participation in political and social debates around the future of Scottish society. All the major political party leaders in Scotland contributed to the film, which also engaged with high profile figures in industry, science and culture. The finished film played an important role in the debate in Scotland, as these events demonstrate:

- April 2017: Blake delivered a talk at the Edinburgh International Science Festival on research around interactive and connected TV viewing [O1, O2]. This happened during pre-production of *Our Future Scotland* and featured many of the themes that went into the film. [C12].
- May 16th 2018: A full public screening was organised at the Scottish Parliament, chaired by Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP, Presiding Officer [C8]. This was a full-house event followed by a panel discussion including the author Chris Brookmyre, Brian Cox, Clare Adamson MSP and Sethu Vijayakumar. The event also enabled audience members to record their own video vision for the future, which were uploaded to the online site.
- May 25th 2018: A screening took place at Scotland's Futures Forum May Festival event in Aberdeen [C11]. The discussion panel included Edel Harris, Chief Executive of Social Care organisation Cornerstone, and chair of Culture Aberdeen Dr Duncan Cockburn.
- May 30th 2018: Screening at Historic Scotland Centre in Stirling.
- September 2018: *Our Future Scotland* film screened at the Royal Society of Edinburgh as part of its public 'Doors Open' event.
- September 2018: The film was shown at the Parliament stand at the Scottish Learning Festival. The event was designed to get teachers and the education sector engaged in the project.
- February 2019, Sections of the *Our Future Scotland* film were screen at the "Art of Conversation" public event at the RSE in Edinburgh.
- April 2019: The film was shown to a policy working group of the International Panel on Climate Change during a visit to the Scottish Parliament.
- June 2019: The film was screened to guests at the Scottish Parliament's 20th birthday celebrations [C9].

Scotland Futures Forum Head of Business notes that the film was '*an excellent way to engage people from lots of different backgrounds in discussions about Scotland's long-term future....*' And notes that '*We've shown the film as a way of opening discussions at a variety of events... At each event, the film has set the framework for challenging and deep discussions. It can often be hard for people discussing the future to leave their current preoccupations behind; this film has been brilliant in bringing everyone in the room to the same stage of thoughtful interaction on the future.*' [C7].

On the Outside (2019)

The initial audience for *On the Outside* (2019) [O4] were the participants and their families. One participant explained the importance of the project to them, saying "*I wouldn't have done it [writing] otherwise. I am pretty proud of it. I want to see this finished piece so badly. And say, I wrote that. That's something.*" The participants had been released from prison by the time the film was completed, and a private screening at Filmhouse Cinema, Edinburgh was held for them in September 2018. 75 people attended (participants, their families and other stakeholders). The Head of Learning and skills of the Scottish Prison Service talks more broadly about the benefit of the project, and notes '*This innovative and creative film project dovetails perfectly with our overall creative approach to engagement in learning [...] The film project has proved a real attraction to stimulate participation among an often disaffected group, while the course content and skills development has enabled an opportunity to nurture and showcase the often latent talent of those in our care.*' [C5].

On the Outside was also screened by advocacy groups. Howard League Scotland, the country's leading penal reform organisation, screened the film and followed with a panel Q&A in January 2019. Koestler Trust, the UK's best-known prison arts charity, presented the film as part of a wider expression of prisoner creativity during *Voices from Prison, London Literature Festival*

2018, and at the Scottish Parliament in December 2018, as part of an exhibition titled '100 Years On – An Art Trail by Women in Prison'. [C6].

The film has also been used in secondary education. In 2019, Gray led a series of workshops and screenings for 120 participants across five local schools. Pupils involved found the workshops influenced their opinion of criminal justice through the film's focus on the 'backgrounds of these women instead of the crimes they committed because it allows the audience to look at the woman as a human being who got lost and did some mistakes instead of looking at the crime they committed.' [C6].

On the Outside won best International Film at *Alexandria Film Festival*, Virginia, 2019, was shortlisted in the *Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community* category of the *Times Higher Education Awards 2019*, and the *Partnership Award*, *The Herald Higher Education Awards 2019*. [C5].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [C1] *And Violet* - Form E, Screenplay and the film.

<https://portfolios.napier.ac.uk/view/view.php?t=lnhZd8AVcS51RetxXY2J>

- [C2] *And Violet* - Summary of feedback from screenings.

<https://portfolios.napier.ac.uk/view/view.php?t=lnhZd8AVcS51RetxXY2J>

- [C3] *And Violet* - Film screening hosted by Rona Mackey MSP

<https://www.ronamackay.scot/post/rona-mackay-to-host-film-to-mark-adoption-week>). Tweets confirming screening submitted separately.

- [C4] *And Violet* - Awards and Screening evidence

<http://filmfestivalarizona.com/film-detail.php?id=540>

https://issuu.com/orlandofilmfestival/docs/off_2017_program_2

Glendale International Film Festival Programme submitted separately.

- [C5] *On the Outside* - Shortlisting for Times Higher Education Award and Herald Awards.

<https://the-awards.co.uk/2020/en/page/shortlist>

<https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/17627005.finalists-announced-heralds-higher-education-awards/>

- [C6] *On the Outside* - Schools, participant and stakeholder comments and feedback.

<https://portfolios.napier.ac.uk/view/view.php?t=lnhZd8AVcS51RetxXY2J>

- [C7] *Our Future Scotland* - Testimonial from Scotland Futures Forum at the Scottish Parliament

- [C8] *Our Future Scotland* - Social Media post from Ken Macintosh MSP, the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, with images from the OFS launch event and screenings within Parliament.

- [C9] *Our Future Scotland* - Social Media post advertising the Our Future Scotland screening as part of the Scottish Parliament's 20th birthday celebrations.

- [C10] *Our Future Scotland* - Social Media post from Clare Adamson MSP, Convenor of the Skills and Education committee at the Scottish Parliament.

- [C11] *Our Future Scotland* - Screenshot of Scotland Futures Forum website promoting the Our Future Scotland screening event in Aberdeen.

- [C12] *Our Future Scotland* - Magazine listing for the Edinburgh International Science Festival 2017.