

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Liverpool Hope University		
Unit of Assessment: 33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: Staging addiction recovery: transforming lives through applied theatre		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr. Zoe Zontou	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer in Drama	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2011-2021
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – 30 June 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Zontou's research has established applied theatre with people in recovery from addiction as an emergent field of practice. It has an impact on the following beneficiaries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, a UK charity that supports those in recovery from addiction to transform their lives through performance. Zontou's research has enabled the charity to develop a structured and sustainable method of monitoring and evaluating their projects. 60 people in recovery from addiction by creating opportunities for participation in dance theatre projects, which enhanced their sense of community, and cultural citizenship. Fellow practitioners through initiating an artists' network as a means of promoting the role of arts in addiction recovery. 		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) See paragraphs 318 to 326.		
<p>Through collaborative projects with end users and academic publications Zontou's ongoing scholarly research into applied theatre with people in recovery from addiction has interrogated the establishment of a cultural identity for the recovery community. The key findings arising from this interrogation demonstrate that when people in recovery from addiction are presented with opportunities to create performances based on their lived experiences, this has the potential to enhance their sense of community belonging and cultural citizenship (3: R1, R2). The research has developed an advanced understanding of the role of ethics and politics in representing addiction recovery in the arts, and the role that performance might play in eradicating the stigma associated with addiction (3: R3, R4).</p> <p>In the UK context, to date, applied theatre engagement with substance addiction and misuse remains small scale. Zontou's research findings advocate the establishment of applied theatre with people in recovery from addiction to further it as a prominent field of practice. Her research has been referenced in publications about the role of performance in the representation of addiction recovery (Dehl 2016, Sloan 2017, Shu 2018), and the mental health benefits of theatre-based opportunities (Heinemeyer and Rowe 2019). Adams and Stickley's (2019) study of the effectiveness of group art activities for people using substances included Zontou's research for its contribution in providing evidence in regard to the effects of drama and theatre activities in enabling recovery from addiction (5: S5). Finally, her work has been included in Baxter and Low's book <i>Performing Health and Wellbeing</i> (2017) as a case study.</p> <p>Since 2012, Zontou has researched in partnership with Fallen Angels Dance Theatre (henceforth FADT), a charity that works with people to support them in recovery from addiction in all its harmful forms, to deliver a series of collaborative projects as an applied theatre researcher who engages with practice. FADT is been delivering projects for adults in recovery from addiction in Cheshire, Merseyside, Leigh and Greater Manchester. Since their establishment FADT have engaged with</p>		

271 individuals and 73,080 audience members. Alongside designing and delivering the projects, Zontou gathered data for the evaluation reports, and monitored the impact of their projects (5: S1, S2). Her involvement with the charity as both a member of the creative team and project evaluator allowed an insider/outsider status to the process of documenting their practice, whilst providing a framework for a contextual analysis of FADT's artistic approach. These findings formulated the arguments presented in her publications (3: R1, R2).

In 2012, with Dr. James Reynolds (Kingston University), Zontou organised an international conference on the theme of *Addiction and Performance: The New Normal?* which led to the publication of an edited collection (3: R4). The conference and book were timely as they coincided with the emergence of the UK recovery movement (White 2011). Arts organisations such as Portraits of Recovery and Outside the Edge were contributors in the conference and book and are playing an active role in advocacy. Hence, the book has become a frequent reference and has led to a formation of a network of academics and art practitioners.

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

Peer reviewed publications:

R1: Zontou, Z. (2018) "Under the Influence of ... Affective Performance", *Performance Research*, 22(7), pp. 93-102

R2: Zontou, Z. (2019) "Performance, Dislocation and Spirituality: Adrift together", In S. Musca and M. Galea (eds), *Redefining Theatre Communities: International Perspectives in Community-Conscious Theatre-Making* (Bristol: Intellect), pp. 48-64

R3: Zontou, Z. (2017) "Upon Awakening: Addiction, Performance and Aesthetics of Authenticity", In A. O'Grady (ed.), *Risky Aesthetics: Performance, Participation and Critical Vulnerabilities* (London: Palgrave MacMillan), pp. 205-231

R4: Reynolds, J., and Z. Zontou, eds (2014) *Addiction and Performance* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars). Zontou co-authored the Introduction of the volume and contributed a solo-authored chapter entitled "Staging Recovery from Addiction".

Grants:

Paul Hamlyn Foundation: Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, £35000 (of which £5000 to Zontou to undertake research) for the project Creative Conversations, 2017-18.

Cheshire Community Foundation: Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, £2,000 (of which £300 to Zontou to complete the evaluation), Pinpricks of Light: 10-week pilot project, 2017.

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

Zontou's ongoing scholarly research into applied theatre with people in recovery from addiction has made a cultural and social impact by establishing applied theatre for and by people in recovery from addictions as an emergent field of applied theatre practice. As one of the beneficiaries maintains: "Zontou's work makes a significant contribution to this field of knowledge. I would furthermore assert that her work stands out amongst the global literature" (5: S5).

The research has an impact on the following beneficiaries:

1. Fallen Angels Dance Theatre (FADT): 2013-2020

The research enabled FADT to develop a structured and sustainable method of monitoring and evaluating their projects. Impact has been achieved through Zontou's involvement with the charity as:

a) a Trustee (2013-2017), during which time she utilised her research expertise to assist FADT's development as the UK's only dance theatre charity that aims to support people in recovery from addiction through performance.

b) a researcher in residence (2017- 2021), for which she is responsible for measuring the impact of their work. Zontou developed a bespoke evaluation framework for collecting and analysing participant feedback, allowing the charity to move to a more conscious and sustainable monitoring of their practice. As a change of practice FADT has embedded the use of visual and creative methods of qualitative feedback in their practice, and in so doing are giving participants the ownership of tracking their progress. (5: S1, S2, S3).

2. People in recovery from substances, members of FADT (henceforth people in recovery) who participated in a series of collaborative projects. In total, 60 people aged between 18 to 60 years old, both male and female, were involved in 5 projects across Merseyside and Cheshire: Upon Awakening (2014), Adrift Together (2015-2016), Pinpricks of Light (2017), Creative Conversations (2017-2018), and Women in Recovery (2019-2020). Zontou designed the evaluation and delivered a series of workshops at the start of each project, with the purpose of setting up the group and project themes. These encounters made an impact on the participants in the following ways:

i. In the workshops, participants used their personal experiences to create artistic performances, which resulted in an increase in their self-worth. One of the participants maintains: "*It awoke in me a realisation that art is so important to me and it's something that informs every aspect of my life (..) Working with (Zontou) has given me the confidence to realise that I am not just A the addict, I am A the human and my innate experiences are rich and valuable in relation to creating performances*" (5: S8C).

ii. They developed new understandings on how their lived experiences can be translated into artistic performance: "*In the workshops I was able to find a way of telling my own personal story in a new way which I'd never thought of being capable of doing before*" (5: S8A).

iii. B., who is in recovery from addiction, has participated in Zontou's workshops and evaluation, resulting in their decision to enrol in a Drama and Dance BA degree, graduating with first-class honours. Participating in FADT projects alongside completing a degree has assisted them in sustaining their recovery, maintaining full employment, and increasing their feeling of integration into the wider society (5: S8B).

v. Participation in the projects enhanced the participants' confidence, sense of self and sense of cultural citizenship. The evaluation of the *Creative Conversations* project demonstrated that out of 15 responders, 87% felt more confident and connected in their communities. In terms of cultural citizenship, the findings of the same report showed that 80% of respondents reported that they are extremely likely to attend cultural events (5: S1). This notion of connectivity has had an impact in helping them to sustain their recovery.

3. Artists' Network and developing creative practice arts

The research has influenced the work of artists and cultural organisations by:

i. assisting two applied theatre practitioners (5: S6, S7) who work with people in recovery in developing an advanced understanding of the role of the ethics in representing addiction recovery. As the former Artistic Director of Outside the Edge Theatre Company and applied theatre practitioner-researcher points out: "*I have found Zontou's publications very useful in assisting me to challenge the ethics and process of my practice. Her chapter, 'Staging Recovery from Addiction' (2014), was particularly useful when critically reflecting on how to stage Simon Mason's autobiography Too High Too Far Too Soon. I was particularly aware of not fetishizing his experience or exposing too much vulnerability*" (5: S6).

ii. Creating a platform through the conference *Addiction and Performance: The New Normal?*

(Kingston University 2012) and edited book (3: R4) for cultural organisations to disseminate their work. The conference enabled the formation of a network of academics and practitioners, which have since have curated symposiums and conferences such as the Art and Recovery symposium by Portraits of Recovery (2015), and the Recovery and the Arts conference (2019, curated by Dr. Stephanie Kewley at John Moores University). As the director of Portraits of Recovery, a visual arts charity supporting people in recovery maintains: “*The conference was a real kind of breakthrough moment because it was the first cultural platform around addiction recovery. I presented at the conference (...) and I co-authored a chapter for the book that gave us a publication platform to promote and put forward some ideas around the need for a cultural identity for the recovery community*’ (5: S4).

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

A. Evaluation, Reports and Event Data

S1. *Creative conversations* 2017-2018 project file: comprising the project report and a film documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdr4G0fHmgQ> about the creative process, including interviews with the artistic team, participants and audience members.

S2. Fallen Angels Annual Reports 2017, 2018, 2020 and *Pinpricks of Light* Evaluation report (2017)

B. Testimonies.

S3. Letter from Director of Fallen Angels Dance Theatre charity

S4. Video testimony from Director of Portraits of Recovery, a visual arts charity

S5. Letter from Associate Professor of Mental Health, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, The University of Nottingham.

S6. Letter from former Artistic Director of Outside the Edge Theatre Company and applied theatre practitioner-researcher.

S7. Audio testimony from creative artist at the Spider Project: a creative arts and wellbeing recovery community project.

S8. Video testimonies file: comprising interviews with five Fallen Angels Dance Theatre project participants (A,B,C,D,E)