

Institution: Queen Mary University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 33A Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: The Verbatim Formula: Making Care-Experienced Young People Heard in Care and Education Contexts in the United Kingdom		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015-2020		
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:
Maggie Inchley	Senior Lecturer	2013-Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Verbatim Formula (TVF) has had wide-ranging impact on the care-system in the United Kingdom. Using verbatim theatre techniques, which promote skills in voicing and listening, TVF has developed young people's confidence in self-expression and collaboration. This has occurred through high profile workshops and trainings with the Department of Education, the Office for Students, and with the UK and Scottish Parliament. Additionally, through training with care-providers in Wandsworth, it has reshaped professional practice in a major London Borough and provided a model for wider reform of the care system.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The Verbatim Formula (TVF) is a collaborative research project undertaken by researchers at Queen Mary, University of London (Dr Maggie Inchley and Dr Sadhvi Dar (submitted to UoA 17)) and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (Dr Sylvan Baker). Since 2015, the team has worked with a cohort of care-experienced young people, engaging them as co-investigators within a practice-led research project. Through this collaboration, TVF developed a methodology to help adults listen better to young people's voices in non-punitive contexts.</p> <p>TVF builds on Inchley's research on the politics of voice and identity as a neglected, but vital, feature of performance practice. Her 2015 monograph, <i>Voice and New Writing</i> [3.1], drew attention to the ideological stakes that underpin vocal articulation and audibility in theatre through writing, voice training and performance. Her research identifies how the use of voice in verbatim performance helps people articulate their experiences creatively, and in a way that increases the confidence of the speaker as well as the ability of the listener to hear these stories. Inchley argues this can serve as a tool of institutional change, particularly for groups whose lived experience is often unheard or stigmatized [3.2 and 3.4].</p> <p>TVF countered previous approaches to working within the care system, which often focus on listening to children voices as a tick-box formality, rather than a way to integrate their experiences into institutional or structural change. Inchley's research on the projection of adult anxieties onto young people, and the deficit in the agency and audibility of their voices onstage shaped TVF's emphasis on the audibility of young people in public [3.1]. TVF's methodology, which was developed <i>with</i> young people in care, is centered on the political and practical efficacy of foregrounding the voices of young people for whom care services are designed. Through verbatim theatre techniques, such as the use of the recorded words of participants to create performance and dialogue, the TVF methodology facilitates the development of new skills in voicing, listening and dialogue [3.3, 3.5, 3.6]. Additionally, Inchley's investigation of the voice's relationship to institutions of power, such as women's voices in Parliament and in the law courts [3.4], drove TVF's promotion of the skills of <i>listening</i> within higher education, social work, local and national government [3.6].</p>		

In 2015, the researchers led a series of university residential workshops for care-experienced young people at four universities in London (Queen Mary, Greenwich, East London and Goldsmiths). The workshops combined Inchley's expertise on the voice, Baker's research into socially engaged practice, and Dar's expertise in marginalised and muted voices in institutions, to co-create audio testimonies with young people on their experiences of care [3.3]. Young people recorded and edited interviews conducted with their peers as well as adult stakeholders. A performer (sometimes the young participants, but also adult facilitators) listened to the testimonies on headphones and performed the original recording to an audience by repeating the words accurately and respectfully. The identity of the recorded speaker remained anonymous, meaning that their voice could be heard with special attention, promoting careful listening in the audience and creating spaces for young people to speak freely without defensiveness, shame or blame [3.5 and 3.6].

3. References to the research

[3.1] Inchley, M. (2015). *Voice and New Writing 1997-2007: Articulating the Demos*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[3.2] Inchley, M. (2016). Touring testimonies: Rebalancing the public realm through human rights activism in *Asylum Monologues* and *Seven. Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association*, 5.2 (2016).

[3.3] TVF Residential Model and Methodological Toolkit: A range of creative activities developed in TVF's Residential Model and other workshops, including 'No Dream is Too Big', 'Breakfast Plates', 'Digital Statues', and 'Words'.

Many of these are documented in *Making Places: A Guide to a University Residential with Creative Practice for Care-experienced Young People* (QMUL-PPP 2018). <http://www.theverbatimformula.org.uk/>

[3.4] Inchley, M., & Vice, J. (Eds.). *Amending Speech: Women's Voices in Parliament, 1918-2018* (pp. 282–87). House of Lords Hansard.

[3.5] Inchley, M., & Baker, S. (2020). Verbatim practice as research with care-experienced young people: An 'aesthetics of care' through aural attention. In Thompson, J., & Stuart-Fisher, A. (Eds.) *Performing Care*. Manchester University Press. [3.6] I Inchley, M., Dar, S., Pujara, S., & Baker, S. (2019). The Verbatim Formula: caring for care leavers in the neoliberal university. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 24(3), 413-419.

Evidence of the quality of the research

[EQR.3.3; 3.5; 3.6] Inchley, M. [PI]. (2017). THE VERBATIM FORMULA: Creative Practice for Young People in Twenty-first Century UK Care' (TVF) [AH/P010342/1]. AHRC. GBP249,993.

4. Details of the impact

The Verbatim Formula (TVF) enabled care-experienced young people to make their voices heard in public, which resulted in changed perceptions and processes within the care system. Through public engagement workshops, training and consultations with a wide range of third sector, charity and cross-sectoral partners, TVF has led to concrete changes and improvements in systems of care and education. It has encouraged care and education professionals and policy-makers to reconsider existing practices, structures, and mechanisms to better align with the needs of young service users. Additionally, it has improved social and educational inclusion of young, care-experienced people, and raised their ambitions and aspirations.

Developing professional practices

TVF enhanced the skills of adult professionals working in the care system. Through workshops and training programmes, it provided a strategic tool to support service users 'to challenge providers more effectively and appropriately' [5.4]. This led to improved knowledge

and understanding amongst adult professionals who were able to better understand the specific challenges faced by young people in care and care leavers.

The project ran two training programmes for Wandsworth Children's Services. 50 staff members participated in each programme, which led to significant changes within the management of the Care System in the London Borough of Wandsworth [5.4]. As a result of the training, a team of 36 multi-agency professionals who are responsible for nearly 500 looked-after young people embedded TVF's participatory methodology into their practices [5.4]. For example, the system established care-experienced people as 'Verbatim Champions', who use verbatim techniques to communicate the experiences of their hard-to-access peers within the Care System to children's service managers. A Participatory Manager in Wandsworth noted that TVF 'helped us widen our approach to sharing the experiences of young people in care' and stated that 'elements of it will feature in training to the workforce that will be co-delivered by young people' [5.4]. The inclusion of young people as collaborators in training programmes was a direct result of the TVF methodology, which identified the need to engage young people meaningfully in 'decision-making and meetings' [5.4]. The Future First Team Manager stated that TVF methodologies provided access to the concerns of young people in care and helped 'improve Children's Services and corporate parenting' by making them more responsive to 'the issues the young people raised'.

Additionally, the workshops changed how individual social workers have approached working with young people in care. For example, one social worker realized that she needed to pay more attention to keeping young people informed of changes of social workers and making 'that handover the best it can be' [5.8]. Another indicated that TVF testimonies led her towards 'making a conscious effort to highlight strengths and what has gone well in records and notes' about the young people for whom she is responsible [5.4]. This has ensured that young people in care's voices are presented in their standard paperwork, in addition to the more specific interventions with policymakers and service managers that the training facilitates.

In 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) invited TVF to share testimonies from care-experienced young people (including digital versions accessed through a QR code) at an event with the Minister for Children, the Deputy Directors for Child Protection, Safeguarding and Family Law, and for Children in Care and their teams. After TVF's visit, the head of Children's Services pledged to 'use his agency' to respond to young people [5.8]. Additionally, the researchers trained the Director for Fair Access and Participation and 40 staff at the Office for Students (OfS) as part of its development of a regulatory framework for universities in England.

Workshops at the OfS and DfE had substantial impact on those who participated:

- A Senior Policy Officer at OfS described 'putting myself in a care-leaver's shoes when making decisions and developing policy' [5.4].
- An OfS Access and Participation Manager noted that it 'greatly increased' their 'understanding' of the experiences of young people in the care system, and that it provided them with 'really specific examples of care leavers' experiences' [5.4].
- A Senior Policy Officer at the Department for Education noted how TVF approach created 'a change in [their] thought process': It is not good enough to assume we know what is the right approach [...] We need to hear what they are telling us instead of assuming we know what they are saying' [5.4].
- An evaluation officer for the OfS reflected that as part of her work in developing a regulatory framework that understands the needs of students from diverse backgrounds: 'I have also thought more about ethics more broadly in my work - how to engage marginalised groups in a way that doesn't further marginalize.' [5.4].

Importantly, testimony from respondents has shown that participation has led them to mirror TVF's child-centeredness in their own work. One OfS Senior Policy Officer used 'recorded audio for our board presentation that allowed student voices to be in the room even

though they weren't physically there' [5.4]. A Senior Policy Advisor from the DfE stated: 'I now see that it is extremely crucial to have the voices of care leavers embedded in the work we do' [5.4]. Her feedback provides further evidence that TVF has reinforced practices of inclusion with wider organisational or policy implications: 'Going forward I intend to apply some of what I have learnt with regards to my thought process when developing or supporting policy framed around support for care experienced young people' [5.4].

Changing advocacy groups' methods with a subsequent influence on policymakers

TVF has provided expertise to local and national government bodies, which has contributed to progressive changes to the knowledge base of those implementing policy in London and in Scotland. It has increased awareness amongst policymakers of the importance of including care-experienced people's input in ongoing evaluations and reformations of the care system. In November 2016, Inchley and Baker were called as expert witnesses to the Greater London Authority Peer Outreach Team's enquiry into Children's Rights at the House of Commons in Westminster. Inchley and Baker presented the voices and experience of care-experienced young people directly to policy makers and attested to the benefits of the TVF methodology in enabling and representing them [5.1]. The Peer Outreach Team has since 'been able to adapt TVF verbatim methodologies independently, using its research methods in its 'Our Time' project to spread awareness amongst policy makers of young people who have caring responsibilities for parents' [5.10].

Additionally, it has resulted in alterations to the 'design and delivery of projects' used by advocacy bodies intended to evaluate the educational experiences of young people to include 'more lived-experience data' [5.4]. Working with the Scottish advocacy organization Our Hearings Our Voices (OHOV) the researchers provided training for 25 practitioners as part of the Scottish Independent Care Review. At an OHOV event in the Scottish Parliament (2019) attended by the Minister for Children and Young People the researchers gave stakeholders access to young people's experiences in a mode that was 'palpable' and facilitated concentrated listening, in contrast to the dry format of written documents [5.9]. One young person testified that TVF's anonymous verbatim and soundscape methods gave his group 'safe and non-judgmental ways of sharing personal experiences' at the Scottish Parliament [5.4], which helped OHOV 'hold adults to account' [5.9]. For OHOV, the TVF methodology had 'a powerful, emotional and thought-provoking impact on the MSP's, civil servants and other key decision makers' in getting over young people's experiences as part of Hearings System in Scotland's Independent Care Review [5.9]. OHOV has since adopted TVF creative methods as part of their work to give young people's guidance to stakeholders in the Scottish young people's Hearings system [5.9]. Following the event, 5000 advisory zines were distributed to create continuing impact. Young people working with OHOV have used TVF methods to produce further materials, which are now being rolled out to 'all the major players' in the administration of the Care System in Scotland [5.9].

Developing new social and interpersonal skills for young people in care

Young people that participated in TVF were better able to regulate emotions, resolve conflicts, work as a team, take responsibility, engage in peer support, engage in self-reflection, take on responsibility, and develop leadership skills [5.3, 5.4]. Both participants of TVF and their carers testified that its techniques gave young people the skills to articulate experiences they had previously found it difficult to address [5.3]. Additionally,

- One participant noted TVF 'developed a lot of skills' that have enabled her to 'figure out [her] weaknesses and [her] strengths' [5.4].
- Another stated, that they saw the value of 'engaging young people with different methods and skills - including decision making etc.';
- and that 'TVF has given young people [the opportunity] to develop their social development skills, including improving their communication and group work skills, learning how to compromise and to step outside of their comfort zone. The young people

are more confident and have a stronger sense of teamwork and supporting each other as peers' [5.4].

Improved communication skills amongst young people and professionals led to an increased experience of social inclusion. Participants who had felt isolated when they entered care found support and 'comfort' in sharing experiences 'in common' with other young people [3.5].

Improving self-esteem, aspirations and ambitions for Higher Education

TVF's interventions in the 'pre-programming' of low aspirations received by children in care, created a space where participants could freely articulate their aspirations. 80% of participants noted that participation in TVF increased their confidence and helped them transcend negative associations of being in care [5.2]. A Children in Care Council co-researcher noted, '[w]ith every new experience, comes new confidence', and that they had 'never experienced something like that before' when working with young people in care [5.4]. Likewise, the Future First Team Manager in Wandsworth stated that TVF interventions had raised 'aspirations for the future' [5.5]. Testimonies from these young people corroborate this, with participants stating that the workshops affirmed and enabled their aspirations [5.2, 5.7].

These impacts extend to areas such as Higher Education, where care leavers are typically under-represented. Nationally only 6% of care-experienced young people attend university. An independent evaluation of TVF's 2016 residency at Goldsmiths University demonstrated the extent to which the project enabled young people to make choices about tertiary education. Facilitators, foster carers and social workers noted it increased participants 'enthusiasm for university' [5.2]. For one participant, 'observing current students' and being able to speak directly with staff while working within a university context, had 'changed his mind' about re-applying for higher education [5.7]. Another participant testified that her TVF residential had helped her 'realise that [she] can achieve [her] dreams even if they are big' [5.2].

Increasing public awareness of the experiences of young people in care

TVF has worked to advance awareness of young people's care experiences in the general public through a variety of outreach events. These include a Wellcome Trust Late Night Care event (attended by 500 people), and performances at the Being Human, Inside Out Festivals and Battersea Arts Centre (attended by 150 people). Additionally, the project has increased the socio-cultural visibility of care-experienced young-people through major media coverage in *The Guardian* (Jan 16, 2016), on BBC Radio Three's *Freethinking* (May 20, 2020), as well as a special podcast made to support Steve McQueen's BBC/ Amazon *Small Axe* (Dec 11, 2020) series on London's West Indian community, making the voices of participating young-people in care present, and available to, national and international audiences alike.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [5.1] [Inquiry] Hansard transcript of GLA Westminster Inquiry into Children's Rights (2016).
- [5.2] [Report] Pujara, M. 'I wish, I hope, I dream', Evaluation of Residency, 2016. [Corroborator 1]
- [5.3] [Report] Maxwell, Hannah, The Verbatim Formula Impact Report, (2015-7)
- [5.4] [Report] Dar, S., and Williamson, D., Impact Report (2020)
- [5.5] [Testimonial] TVF (2020)
- [5.6] [Feedback] TVF Scotland (2019)
- [5.7] [Thesis] Wallace, Felicity, An Exploration of Young People's Experiences of a Participatory Project (2019).
- [5.8] [Report] The Verbatim Formula Impact Report, Alan Francis (2017-19)
- [5.9] [Testimonial] OHOV (2020) [Corroborator 2]
- [5.10] [Testimonial] GLA (2020) [Corroborator 3]