

<p>Institution: University of Sheffield</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 29 - English Language and Literature</p>
<p>Title of case study: 'Storying Sheffield': Transforming Welfare and Attitudes through the Co-Production of Narrative</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research undertaken in the School of English into the interrelations between memory, trauma, and narrative led to the 'Storying Sheffield' project, which gives a voice to a diverse range of people, including long-term users of mental health services, people with physical disabilities, older people with degenerative conditions, migrants, and people in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. This has had significant socio-cultural impact for its participants, who have benefitted from an increased sense of well-being and belonging. There are also benefits for the wider community, through increasing understanding of these often marginalised sectors of society. In addition, the project has impacted on policy-making, through collaborations with Sheffield City Council, and emergency service providers, and on therapeutic training and practice, through collaborations with Rampton Hospital (a secure unit) and Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Trust.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The School of English at the University of Sheffield specialises in the study of the interrelations between memory, trauma, and narrative. A research cluster was formed by a collaboration, at the level of both teaching and research, between Professor Sue Vice and Professor Rachel Falconer between 1998 and 2010. They worked together teaching memory, trauma, and narrative modules at postgraduate level, and encouraged research students to establish lines of enquiry within the field of narrative and traumatic memory. At the core of this shared work was a common interest in Holocaust fiction and the ethical, psychological, and cultural difficulties implicit in those texts. This took the form of exploring common literary tropes (such as the notion of descent into hell, the figure of an uncomprehending child, or the invocation of earlier literature of suffering and punishment) and the unconscious fantasy elements that the texts display, as their authors wrestle challenging experience into narrative form and negotiate how to express the incomprehensible in ways which can be absorbed by their readers. The work of Vice and Falconer consequently makes innovative use of the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, drawing on two of his notions in particular: that of the chronotope, in which textual details of time and space are combined into a single literary symbol; and what Bakhtin calls 'dialogised heteroglossia', by means of which everyday and more specialised discourses combine in a literary text to create new meanings.</p> <p>The engagement with Sheffield postgraduates bore fruit, through the PhD theses of Brendan Stone (<i>Starting to Speak: Madness and the Narration of Identity</i>, 2004) and Jenni Adams (<i>Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature</i>, 2009), both of whom were subsequently appointed as (respectively) teaching fellow (now Professor) and lecturer in contemporary literature, strengthening further the research cluster. Stone's research since his appointment has established links between trauma research and actual mental health issues, exploring the role that art and self-expression can play within treatment contexts [R3]. This work has also led to important research grants for locally-led delivery projects, working with young people with multiple and complex needs, which employ narrative and creative methodologies ('Community Heritage at the University of Sheffield' , AHRC, 2013-2014, £89,112, Co-I, Stone; 'Fulfilling Lives: Evaluation and Learning Package', Big Lottery Fund, 2013, £2,179,624, Co-I, Stone). The research of the cluster is also complemented by the work of David Forrest – initially as a PhD student and, from 2012, as a lecturer in the School – on place, memory and narrative in British social realist cinema.</p> <p>The research into memory and narrative has had several key outputs, including monographs by Adams, Falconer, Vice [R1, R2, R5], Stone's essay on mental illness and arts therapy [R4], and Forrest's on visual narrative and class identity [R3]. Collectively, the research cluster examines the relationship between narrative and memory, highlighting 'narrative' as a social, cultural form, which is intrinsic to the formation and maintenance of human identity. Flowing from this recognition, human agency is seen to have a narrative element, so that the self-determination of narrative representations becomes an act with the potential to empower the author, even when placed under extreme internal and external pressures, and a means of processing traumatic events and recovering a sense, and dignity, of selfhood. However, the work of the cluster also recognises that the concept of narrative can be an alienating one, and that many people may find it difficult or</p>

impossible to conceptualise their identity as a singular and coherent narrative. These two insights underpin the 'Storying Sheffield' project, providing its primary inspiration and guiding framework.

3. References to the research

R1. Adams, J. (2011), *Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature: Troping the Traumatic Real*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Returned REF2014.

R2. Falconer, R. (2005), *Hell in Contemporary Literature: Western Descent Narratives since 1945*. Edinburgh University Press. Returned RAE2008.

R3. Forrest, D. (2013), '21st Century Social Realism', in *Shane Meadows*, ed. M. Fradley et al. Edinburgh University Press.

R4. Stone, B. (2006), 'Diaries, self-talk, and psychosis: writing as a place to live', *Auto/Biography*, 14.1: 41-59. Peer-reviewed journal.

R5. Vice, S. (2000), *Holocaust Fiction*. London: Routledge. Returned RAE2001.

4. Details of the impact

Drawing on the methodology and findings of the research cluster founded by Vice and Falconer, 'Storying Sheffield' uses accessible and universal ideas such as narrative, storytelling, history, and interaction with the local environment as ways of engaging with a diverse range of people including long-term users of mental health services, people with physical disabilities, immigrants, older people (some of whom live with dementia or other degenerative conditions), primary school students from economically disadvantaged areas of the city, and patients in secure hospitals. The project (i) has had socio-economic and cultural impact, improving the health, well-being, and employability of participants, as well as increasing understanding of, and changing attitudes to, socially marginalised groups; (ii) has impacted on policy-making, by informing City Council practices for developing sustainable community policies; (iii) has influenced therapeutic practice; and (iv) has improved communication and co-operation between previously separate entities within the city and region, through the establishment of the Sheffield Arts and Well-Being Network.

Socio-Economic and Cultural Impact

Storying Sheffield began in 2009 with an innovative course, which remains at the core of its activities. This is a unique venture in British Higher Education in which undergraduate students and people from the city from disadvantaged backgrounds (chiefly people who have long-term mental health problems and/or physical disabilities) collaborate under Stone's guidance to produce, record, and collect stories and other diverse representations of the lives of Sheffield people and the 'life' of this major UK city more broadly. Working with a wide variety of media, the project supports participants to construct their own narrative artefacts, in which they critically examine contemporary life and identity, with the work produced showcased at a variety of public events, including a one-day exhibition every year. The primary aims of this course are to use narrative (i) to open up opportunities and resources in Higher Education for more people, particularly those who are often excluded (or feel excluded); and (ii) to give these people a voice, so that the wider community can learn from their experience and knowledge. Its achievement of these aims is evidenced by the fact that it was shortlisted for the 2011 Times Higher Education awards in the widening participation category.

The Storying Sheffield course is further underpinned by the belief that, in addition to disseminating ideas, 'education' can benefit participants through offering them new frames of reference and critical skills. It also connects them to various resources and people who are able to assist and advise them if they are interested in continuing further in education, taking up volunteering or employment opportunities, or developing new interests. Evaluation of the course reveals that some 70% of participants with mental health issues make a measurable and significant change in their life as a direct result of their participation, from being able to leave their house alone to enrolling in further study, getting a job, or starting voluntary work. This impact is also evidenced through feedback on the annual exhibition [S4], and the following comments (from 2010) are illustrative of the way in which the course enables participants to enter into further education or employment, or to order their lives more purposefully: '*[Storying Sheffield] gave me the confidence to get back into education, and to enrol on the foundation degree*'; '*This course has given me confidence to express myself in ways I never thought possible... [it] has given me the confidence to apply for jobs, in which I have been successful and I start my new job three days after the exhibition*'; '*Previous to this course, I had led a chaotic lifestyle for a number of years and*

my life had lacked purpose and direction, but coming to this course has made me think of what I want to do in the future. The project also impacts on its participants' sense of emotional well-being. Feedback from the 2010 exhibition is testimony to this transformative effect, and the following comment is indicative: *'Clearly some of the themes of the project touched on some very personal issues for me, and I haven't experienced that kind of emotional catharsis in a long while, so I also wanted to thank you for that. [...] It was amazing to see something that clearly had such a positive effect on so many people – I add myself to that number*'. In addition, Storying has had a profound social impact by helping members of the public gain insight into the plight and consciousness of these marginalised members of the Sheffield community. As one of the participants wrote in a published article about his experience on the project: *'the Storying Sheffield project will enable more of us to feel comfortable in telling our stories and also help people without mental health conditions to understand us better and therefore see us in a more positive light'* [S6].

The impact of the original course and public exhibitions is further demonstrated by the way in which the project has diversified and grown, with organisations approaching Stone to set up projects utilising the narrative methodology developed. These projects include partnerships with (i) Sheffield City Council and emergency service providers (e.g. South Yorkshire Police) aimed at understanding community cohesion through narrative, the results of which are feeding into local government policy and informing interventions (see below, 'Impact on Policy-Making'); (ii) Rampton Hospital and Sheffield Health and Social Care (see below, 'Impact on Therapeutic Practice'); (iii) Rotherham's Youth Ready Hub, working with young people as a part of a NESTA-funded project (£10,000) to improve educational attainment and enterprise using a storytelling approach [S5]; (iv) Learning for the Fourth Age, working with 'memory books' and other narrative artefacts to help residents of care homes with degenerative conditions capture and recover memories, a process with positive impact on their self-esteem; (v) St Mary's Community Centre, Sheffield, working with migrant women, newly arrived in the UK and learning 'survival skills' and conversational English, to produce narratives about points of cultural connection and difference.

From the initial research focus of trauma, then, the project has developed into a much more wide-ranging exploration of the ways in which narrative can give voice to marginalised, deprived, or overlooked communities. An example of the way in which the success of the original project and its reputation for recovering marginalised voices led to this diversification is supplied by the 'Women of Steel' project. In 2011, Stone was approached by a group of women who worked in the Sheffield steel works during World War II. Using methods and approaches developed on the Storying Sheffield course, students collaborated with the former steelworkers under Stone's supervision to produce a film about the lives of these women and a lasting record of a previously overlooked – but crucial – part of twentieth-century history and the role of working women in the war effort. This film has been shown at several public screenings: at the Sheffield Showroom (Feb 2011, sold out both times), at Sheffield Town Hall, to mark International Women's Day (March 2011), and at the Sensoria Festival of Film/ Digital/ Music (2012). Copies of the DVD were sold, raising almost £400 for the cancer charity Clic Sargent, and the film has also been used as an educational resource in local schools and in Age UK training seminars for social work students.

Impact on Policy-Making

Storying Sheffield champions the principle that agencies must listen to the views and experiences of the public, and supports the development of an exercise in listening, particularly to those parts of the community that are most talked about but rarely heard. This is exemplified in work undertaken for Sheffield City Council, the police and fire services on a pilot project in the Abbeydale region of the city to look at innovative ways of developing sustainable community policy in an area of cultural diversity and socio-economic disadvantage. The project involved adapting a technique – courage mapping – devised with local primary school pupils. This produced over 400 individual maps of the children's neighbourhoods, identifying where and how they felt courageous in different locales. Stone and Forrest developed the methodology, supervised the operational 'delivery' of completing the maps, and analysed this extensive resource. The City Council also wanted to hear and understand the stories told about their neighbourhoods by local residents. As the Council's Head of Safe and Sustainable Community states [S3]: *'the project [produced] a substantial amount of data about how people choose to talk about, think about and imagine their neighbourhood [...] In terms of wider impacts, the project is reporting to the City's Cohesion Strategy Group (jointly chaired by the Council's chief executive and the SYP [South Yorkshire Police] District Commander) and the City's statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. The methodology of the work has been*

Impact case study (REF3b)

praised as being an innovative approach to exploring how and why neighbourhoods work/don't work. The success of the project to date and its sustainability and success in the future, is reliant on the exemplary partnership approach adopted by the University.'

Impact on Therapeutic Practice

Storying Sheffield's methods have also been applied in a variety of health and social care settings. The Head of Education, Peaks Unit, Rampton Hospital (Notts, NHS Trust) attended the 2010 Storying Sheffield exhibition and was struck by the evident impact of the project on community-building after traumatic mental health histories, commending the '*pride and a sense of "togetherness" [which] emanated from the exhibition*' [S1]. This insight into a new way of achieving '*inclusivity and collaborative working*' led directly to 'Living Narratives', undertaken with Rampton Hospital, in 2011, in which the methods developed by Storying Sheffield around narrative artefacts were used to help patients – who do not always engage fully with therapy – to understand and articulate the routes of their offending. The project, which produced an exhibition and two privately printed volumes (of poetry and art), won the 2011 award for promoting and supporting recovery from the Care Programme Approach Association. As Rampton's Head of Education notes, '*The principles behind Storying Sheffield have been very successfully used in this forensic mental health setting, and the project is now doing even more to promote the benefits of learning*' [S1].

As a result of the success of Storying Sheffield, Stone was also commissioned by Sheffield Health and Social Care (SHSC) to produce two DVDs: *Digital Narratives of Severe Depression* (2010) is used for training clinical staff, giving them a much more informed sense of real-life experiences through testimonials in which patients situate their health within narratives about their life; *Film Narratives of Recovery* (2011) , a series of interviews with long-term service users, was used to open a conference of practitioners and service providers, giving unique insights into the perspectives of vulnerable patients. In 2011 SHSC also commissioned Stone to work with practitioners to develop a package of recommendations about how to implement innovative approaches to recovery (including education) within the health care setting and how to broaden routes to well-being beyond medication. As a result of these recommendations, the Executive of SHSC has resourced the 'Recovery Implementation Group', chaired by Stone, to oversee the implementation of recovery approaches.

Impact on Civic Partnerships

Storying Sheffield's partnerships with health providers and the creative industries led to the establishment of the Sheffield Arts and Well-being Network in 2012. Monthly meetings bring together artists, health and social care professionals, academics, and service-users, improving communication and building sustainable relationships between previously diverse groups.

In short, Storying Sheffield has had significant impact in a number of ways: it has increased social cohesion by breaking down barriers and increasing understanding between different groups; it has had economic benefit, by equipping socially-marginalised individuals with new skills and confidence; it has had a positive impact on the health and well-being of participants through creating a sense of community and inclusivity; it has influenced policy-making and therapeutic practice; it has drawn partners from across the city into productive and sustainable collaborative relationships; and it has enhanced knowledge and understanding of a neglected piece of women's history and the British war effort, validating and commemorating the efforts of those individuals.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1. The Head of Education, Peaks Unit, at Rampton Hospital, Nottinghamshire NHS Trust can corroborate the impact of Storying Sheffield exhibition and Living Narratives spin-off project.
- S2. The Director of the Psychosocial Intervention and Recovery Unit, Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Trust can corroborate impact of Digital Narratives and Film Narratives of Recovery, and Stone's role in the development of the Recovery Implementation Group.
- S3. The Head of Safer and Sustainable Communities, Sheffield City Council can corroborate impact of Abbeydale corridor project; testimonial cited in this case study (is also held on file).
- S4. The Storying Sheffield website <http://www.storyingsheffield.com/about> links to samples from the extensive media coverage of the project, as well as links to evaluative feedback.
- S5. Staff at the Rotherham Youth Ready Hub can corroborate impact on users.
- S6. P. Denton, 'Storying Sheffield', *Your Voice in Sheffield Mental Health*, Autumn 2010 (ISSN 1464-696 X) describes its impact from the perspective of a service-user and participant.