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**Panel Title: Attuning to Impact Creatively: evaluating participatory arts in adolescent mental health research.**

Panel Co-ordinator: Prof Nicola Shaughnessy, University of Kent

In this panel, we feature papers from academics and scholar practitioners, representing three interconnected and interdisciplinary UKRI funded creative health projects: "Playing A/Part '(exploring the lived experience of autistic girls and women), ATTUNE (investigating adverse childhood experiences and adolescent mental health) and a methods based project CREATE: **'**Creating Research Ecologies to Advance Transdiciplinary lEarning on arts-based programs through the study of adolescent loneliness.' As the presenters have worked in various capacities across these projects, the papers are conjoined and the panel will be dialogic. Creative methods are part of data assembly in all three projects and we feature insights and tools to support understanding of creative processes and mechanisms for impact.

1. **Creative process as impact: The participatory play framework** (Professor Nicola Shaughnessy, University of Kent, Dr Ruth Herbert, City University, Dr Jacqueline Walduck, Royal Academy of Music)

   This paper introduces the Participatory Play framework (PPF) as a tool for working inclusively to evaluate creative engagement in participatory arts processes, working in diverse health contexts. Impact is frequently thought of as an end point and process is often discussed as a pathway to impact, so in this paper we foreground participatory arts *processes,* introducing a tool that offers a means of identifying and evaluating different modes of playing in participatory arts and creative health contexts. The PP-Framework is an evaluation tool for mapping engagement in participatory arts practices. It maps types of participation in terms of performative behaviours and qualities of experience, understood as modes of play. It is predicated on the processes of working in creative participatory contexts whilst also being sensitive to the aesthetic qualities of what is produced and capable of capturing beneficial changes in engagement. It offers a conceptual approach for researchers to undertake observation of participatory arts practices, taking account of embodied engagement and interaction processes. It is informed by understandings of

autistic performativity and masking in conjunction with an ecological understanding of sense making as being shaped by environments, social relations and sensing subjectivity. The framework has the potential to be a bi-directional tool, with application for both practitioners and participants

The paper will make reference to a range of settings and includes a project with autistic learners at St John's College Brighton.

2. **Validating Voices: The Attune project** (presented by Dr Luke Allder, University of Kent, co-authored with Prof Siobhan Hugh-Jones)
   The ATTUNE project (UKRI funded adolescent mental health programme) investigates the impact of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) on adolescent mental health and the intervention potential to mitigate further harm using interdisciplinary, creative and participatory community methods. Data assembly included a programme of creative workshops in venues across the UK, eliciting the lived experience and perspectives of ACE affected young people. Across Work Packages (WP) 1 and 3, a co-designed public health resource was produced, informed by our findings, to help professionals respond more helpfully to adolescents who have experienced ACEs / trauma. We have worked with 84 young people and 10 national organisations who are trialling the co-produced resource in their settings for 6 months. The resource created, ***Validating Voices***, emerged through young people and professionals acknowledging the need for validation within their settings and a creative approach to achieving this. The resource is made up of three elements – *Realise*, *Re-Act*, and *Remember* – these stages highlight the need to validate, ways of recognising and enacting validation, and methods of retention.

3. **Arts based mechanisms and creative methodologies:** Dr Emma Williams (University of Surrey), Anna Mankee Williams (University of Falmouth), Professor Paul Cook, Dr Cristina Harney and Professor Siobhan Hugh-Jones (University of Leeds).

There have been increasing demands for Participatory Arts-Based (PAB) programmes involved in health research to better evidence impact using robust quantitative evaluation methodologies so that they can better inform commissioning and scale-up decisions. However, in contrast to social scientists who typically measure efficacy in terms of quantifiable outcomes, PAB researchers prioritize enhancements in agency (via artistic expression), community engagement (via creative collaboration) and aesthetics (qualities of the art produced) in evaluative reports. As PAB programmes involve an iterative approach that values process as well as artistic products, alternative methods of demonstrating impact are needed that use valuable qualitative

and narrative insights from PAB participants, and which combine systematic rigour with a sensitivity to the values, contexts and strengths of this approach.

We draw on findings from three different sources utilising explanations proffered by artists, scientists and young people to investigate the common and specific active processes / mechanisms of change across different arts-based practices (ABPs) as they relate to youth mental health: a systematic review synthesising evidence relating to mechanisms of change documented in papers presenting findings from PAB programmes for youth; and PAB workshops from the CREATE and ATTUNE projects.

Based on a meta-summary synthesising the findings for the systematic review, we modelled the structure of the identified mechanisms of change and how they work synergistically. These moved from the creation of a protected 'play' space based on mutual trust and respect, through various forms of relationship building, offering young people a mechanism for freeing them (in a temporary and boundaried way) from everyday social rules and pressures. It also opened up possibilities for creating a more positive self-narrative based on the discovery of new strengths, identities, and skills through deeper engagement in facilitative PAB activities and practices which in turn gave rise to a number of outcomes linked to well-being.

In CREATE we are in the process of testing and refining this model to develop a more granulated understanding of key context-mechanism-outcome pathways across the diverse ABP that the young people have engaged with. Findings from workshops conducted with YP with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in ATTUNE provide an independent source evidencing similar mechanisms. In this talk we will illustrate our findings by focussing on selected key mechanisms, including the building of a protected space and its interconnection with a sense of freedom, group processes (moving from an I to a we-self and the development of a sense of belonging), new experiences of the self, and experiencing positive emotions.

Evidence collected from the three sources collectively suggest that mechanisms of change are resonant with therapeutic processes proposed in individual and group therapies. Additionally, PAB programmes appear beneficial to young people by fostering a therapeutic space characterised by subverting restrictive social rules, communitas that is not perceived as coercive, and inviting play, new ways of experiencing the self, and embodied understanding.