

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Central Lancashire		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: <u><i>Stories by, with, and for disadvantaged young people: collaborative literacies for social and personal change</i></u>		
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:
Candice Satchwell	Prof of Literacies and Education	2012-present
Cath Larkins	Prof of Childhood Studies	2010-present
Bernie Carter	Prof of Children's Pain	2000-2017
Gail Davidge	Research Associate	2015-2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Stories created by, with, and for young people with disabilities and other forms of disadvantage (e.g. bereaved, in care, with mental ill-health or living in areas of deprivation) convey voices of young people seldom heard and have the capacity to enhance well-being and resilience. The research has enhanced the confidence, capabilities, social and literacy skills of a core group of 13 such young people and around 40 disadvantaged others they connected with directly. The team of academics, young people, Barnardo's, and community writers co-produced 48 short fictionalised stories. 100 sets of these have been distributed as print books throughout Barnardo's, in schools and colleges, and to social workers and healthcare professionals in training and practice in UK settings. Digital audio/video versions are accessible to diverse audiences through five co-created interactive story-telling artefacts, a free mobile app, and the project website, leading to changes in attitudes, agency and well-being in children and families, initially in NW England and now across UK and in international contexts, including Japan, Finland and Indonesia.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Children and young people are seldom taken seriously as experts on their own lives, particularly those who are marginalised due to disability, economic or social circumstances. Such children face discrimination and a lack of opportunities in education and future employment. This interdisciplinary research explores and harnesses the benefits of storytelling as a means of eliciting voice and empowering participants, while producing outputs accessible to wide-ranging audiences. The work draws together the fields of child and youth participation, health, social work, digital design, literature and creative writing to highlight challenges faced by children and young people with disabilities, learning difficulties, who are in care, young carers, or disadvantaged in other ways, while also harnessing their talents. The co-produced story outputs are used to help other young people and those who work with them to overcome adversity and challenge stereotypical identities. Stories2Connect was a three-year AHRC-funded research project drawing together five academics from three universities and a range of disciplines: Prof Candice Satchwell (PI), Prof Cath Larkins and Dr Helen Day, University of Central Lancashire; Prof Bernie Carter, University of Central Lancashire until 2017 then Edge Hill University; Prof Paul Coulton, Lancaster University, and in partnership with Barnardo's in Lancashire. Stories2Connect involved 13 disadvantaged young people (age 11-25) becoming a group of 'young researchers' collaborating with adult researchers. The young researchers interviewed one another and connected with around 40 other young people to collect stories of resilience and transformation. In workshops, which have continued at the University of Central Lancashire beyond the end of the project, the</p>		

young people learned a range of social and research skills, collaborated in designing story-telling devices, and helped to co-write fictionalised stories.

From approximately 100 peer-interviews we co-produced 43 illustrated short-story books [1], 28 short animated films [1], one documentary film about a deaf-blind child, and five co-created digital-story-telling artefacts comprising: a suitcase, a rabbit in a hat, an arcade machine, an advice machine, and interactive map with free downloadable mobile app [1]. These innovative digital machines contain audio-video versions of the stories to increase accessibility for diverse audiences. The team of adult and young researchers held three public festivals (AHRC story-telling festival 2015; ESRC social science festival 2017; Lancashire Science Festival 2016) and co-presented at conferences including a community-university expo in Vancouver and an exchange visit to Japan. Researchers engaged with teachers, children, social workers and other professionals in schools, universities, and community settings; the fictionalised stories in both digital and book forms are available for free distribution in educational and public venues. The research has provided methodological insights into participatory work with young people [2,6], and insights for community workers [4] and teachers using stories [5] for the benefit of both participants and audiences. As a result, we know more about: young people's perspectives on challenges and resilience [6]; literacies engaged in by young people; the meaning and impact of 'story' for a range of audiences; advances in co-design and co-writing with children and young people [2,3]; benefits for health and well-being associated with narrative research; and creating resources for professionals and educational uses of fictionalised stories [5]. The research was designed to have impact through the wider adoption of interdisciplinary approaches, innovative methodologies, and co-production techniques including the co-creation of print and digital artefacts for public use. Evaluation activities carried out included trialling story resources: with a home education group (July 2018), in a library (August 2018), at a Pupil Referral Unit (2017), in primary schools (2017, 2018), in FE colleges (2019), at the Lancashire Science Festival (2016 and 2017), and in therapeutic story-sharing seminars with young people with disabilities (2017, 2018). We have helped children, professionals and publics who work with young people to understand some of the challenges that disabled and disadvantaged young people meet, to celebrate their strengths, and to bring about changes which facilitate young people realising their potential, for example, through literacy and PSHE curricula and social work interventions. Further funding (all PI Satchwell) has allowed the application of the methodologies in different contexts: two projects on agency of young people planning their careers (Office for Students and Lancashire County Council funding); creating stories with deaf children and young people in Indonesia and forging a self-supporting relationship between deaf communities in Indonesia and India (internal HEI QR-GCRF); autistic children's responses to nature (AHRC/NERC) and marginalised children's perspectives on landscape decision-making (AHRC/NERC). Using funding from the latter, during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, we delivered arts materials to disadvantaged children's homes along with food parcels from a local charity and conducted online arts-based activities which encouraged them to engage with and experience the benefits of the outdoor environment during a period of extreme isolation and deprivation.

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

1. A multi-component output of 43 storybooks co-created by the Stories2Connect team, including children and young people, writers, illustrators and academics, 28 film versions of stories available via project website: <https://stories2connect.org/> and a number of Story-telling machines: suitcase; arcade machine; rabbit in a hat: Available from University of Central Lancashire.
2. *Satchwell, C. (2018) 'Collaborative writing with young people with disabilities: questions of authorship and agency', *Literacy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12146>. Winner of Wiley/UKLA Literacy Education Research Article of the Year 2020.
3. *Satchwell, C. and Davidge, G. (2018) 'The mismeasure of a young man: an alternative reading of autism through a co-constructed fictional story,' *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Special Issue on Creative Representations of Qualitative Research. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1430208>
4. Satchwell, C., Watson, D., Blatch, K., Brown, M., Davidge, G., Evans, N., Howard, M., Larkins, C., Piccini, A., Thomas-Hughes, H., Violet, A. (2018) *Collaborative Fiction Writing with Community Groups: A Practitioner Guide*. Published by AHRC.

https://connected-communities.org/index.php/project_resources/collaborative-fiction-writing-with-community-groups-a-practitioner-guide/

5. *Satchwell, C. (2019) Fictionalised stories co-produced with disadvantaged children and young people: uses with professionals. In Christine Jarvis and Patricia Gouthro (eds) *Professional Education with Fiction Media. Imagination, Engagement and Empathy in Learning*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783030176921>
6. *Satchwell, C., Larkins, C., Davidge, G., Carter, B. (2020) 'Stories as findings in collaborative research: making meaning through fictional writing with disadvantaged young people' *Qualitative Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120904892>

*peer-reviewed

Evidence of quality of the research

The Stories2Connect project was funded by AHRC; it was shortlisted for the AHRC-Wellcome Health Humanities Medal 2018 in recognition of its benefit to both culture and well-being. It won an EPSRC award of £10,000 in the Telling Tales of Engagement Competition in 2019. The project was long-listed for the NCCPE Engage Award 2016 and won the Educate North Award: Research Project of the Year 2019. Article [2] won UKLA/Wiley Literacy Research Award 2020 <https://ukla.org/news/ukla-announces-the-literacy-winner-for-the-ukla-wiley-research-in-literacy/>.

Two follow-on projects were funded by AHRC to implement the methodologies in the context of landscape decision-making with disadvantaged young people.

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

Working with young people to gain confidence, skills, and develop relationships

The project worked in partnership with the children's charity Barnardo's, whose Children's Services Manager wrote: **"The workers noted profound differences in the young people over the course of the 3 years of the project, and subsequently as they have continued to be involved in projects at UCLan. In particular the young people have grown in confidence, social skills, literacy skills"** [C, J1]. In an evaluation interview conducted by researchers a Young Researcher with autism said: **"I think I've developed amazingly. It hasn't just like made me have fun, it's actually improved who I am"** [A]. The young researchers and some of the children and young people with whom they conducted interviews have continued their connections to pursue further research, for example with Youth Councils against Knife Crime. Funding won from EPSRC for Telling Tales of Engagement brings the network of participants together to create a series of short interactive films about the impact of Stories2Connect, giving the young people a platform for telling their stories and demonstrating the impact of co-produced research (see S2C website). A manager at Barnardo's said: **"Creating a film has undoubtedly given a group of young people who have had many struggles throughout life the chance to see something they worked on become a live and tangible film and given them an absolute sense of achievement. ... also inspired other young people to get involved in projects where their voices can be heard ... and influence decision makers** [C, J1].

Feedback at a celebration event towards the end of the original project included: **"I have grown in confidence and I feel like I can tell people my story better"** (young person in care); **She's gained in confidence, pride and achievement, able to talk more freely to peers and learnt new skills relating to story writing. She has been able to talk about her feelings through her story"** (parent of child with autism) [B] and the **"Individual impact on the 13 young people has been significant ... 3 young people visited Japan and Canada and talked confidently with groups about their role as young researchers and the importance of having their voices heard"** [C, J1]. The stories have been distributed throughout Barnardo's in Lancashire and shared with the National Lead for Participation at Barnardo's to influence approaches throughout the organisation: **"We use the stories as a tool for children to realise that there are other people facing challenges and they are not alone. We are aware of the power of peer lived experiences in making sense of their own situations and being inspired by other children's stories."** [C, J1] A mental health social worker reported: **"The**

story [about coping with autism in school] was a godsend for helping a child to see humour and positivity in her situation” [5].

The methodology has had a therapeutic effect on some young people’s lives: **“When I was first asked to talk about my story I thought, oh no I don’t want to tell anyone because it was such a traumatic and emotional story, but after time I managed to open up to people because of this project”** (Young person in care) [B]. This young man has since engaged in further education after being disengaged and in trouble at his care home. A parent of a child with Down Syndrome said: **“His talking has really improved and he is getting so much better at having conversations now”** [B]. Participants have been empowered to take up new skills and educational opportunities: **“One young person was successful in gaining an apprenticeship and has just completed her Level 3 in Children and young people’s workforce and is intent on working with other young people and enabling them to access the opportunities and chance to develop that she feels she has had.”** [C, J1] A Gypsy Roma Traveller storyteller at a public event we held commented: **“Children from our community are just not represented in books. This is an example of a true collaboration between Traveller and non-Traveller communities.”** Further, he stated: **“What you’ve done is create a real launch pad for more innovative collaborative work. The event got people talking and then more seriously discussing ideas, and as such are keen for more. It has had a national impact not just because of the people who came, but through social media afterwards a wider UK and international one too.”** [I]

The stories and digital-artefacts produced as Open Access outputs from the project have been well received by children, young people and adults, via our website, YouTube (1.3k views across 28 videos), a museum, three libraries, three youth centres, four schools (including a PRU) and 16 colleges in NW England. A young person said: **“The project helps people everywhere who have had similar growing up stories (...) then they can talk about it and make friends through similarities.”** [B] The books have been recommended by parents and support workers as ‘just right’ for teenagers or young adults with learning disabilities. One parent said: **“They are all age appropriate, use language that is easily accessible and have themes that would be good to discuss. There is little of this kind available for young adults.”** [B]

In the Indonesian follow-on project, deaf young people in story-making workshops reported benefits including: **“deaf children will be able to understand our stories”**; **“It was nice to share our similar experiences”**; **“I feel proud that we can share our stories on YouTube”** [J2]. During lockdown in Lancashire, researchers worked with an artist to engage disadvantaged children in arts-based activities which charity workers described as therapeutic and calming, and which encouraged the young people to engage with one another socially and to experience the outdoors when they would normally have stayed inside. For one child, it was **“the only thing she engaged with as she refused to engage with school”**. [G, J3] The charity workers also claimed that family relations were improved as a result of the study, with parents taking children out to take photos and collect items to make a collage.

Helping professionals to understand young people’s difficulties and how to help them

The stories cover themes including mental health problems, bereavement, experiences of the care system, bullying, discrimination, disability, independent living, and job-seeking, while also enhancing print and digital literacies. Professional authors and members of Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators recognised the significance of working on real-life stories [H], which have been distributed to professionals who work with marginalised young people including child psychologists, social workers and teachers. A headteacher at a Pupil Referral Unit reflected on the value of the stories for developing literacy in young people; while the young people themselves responded enthusiastically to a story about a divided family. Their teacher said: **“You could hear a pin drop. I’ve never seen them like that before.”** On request, an invited talk at a conference for teacher educators from 14 FE colleges (18.3.19) provided each college with sets of resources for engaging their teachers and students: the invitation came from a teacher educator who had attended a presentation and said **“The young people represented in the stories are tomorrow’s FE students”**. After receiving a set of resources an FE teacher educator said: **“These stories are useful for the students themselves, but also for trainee teachers learning about diversity.”** Another stated: **“the books are really useful as mini**

case studies for looking at inclusivity and developing learner profiles.” [E] The stories are used in teaching social workers and childhood studies students at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland [J5], the University of Central Lancashire, and Bristol University [E]. A storytelling machine and books at an Equality and Diversity Conference at the University of Central Lancashire resulted in reported increases in understanding from attendees. A Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Officer and a Child Psychologist both emailed feedback to us after a staff training day where children from Stories2Connect presented: the SEND Officer said that **“The presentation, and its engaging delivery, enabled us to critically reflect on our personal lives, as well as our professional roles and processes. Vitally, it reminded each of us about the power of hearing through the voices and stories of the young people we support, and, how important it is to ensure that they are given a platform and a voice in their local and wider communities. Your Research Project not only meant a great deal to the participants, but also impacted on our SEND Team, who were privileged to witness the empowerment of young people.”** [D] The Child Psychologist noted that **“I felt reconnected with why I became an educational psychologist in the first place. The young people really have blossomed.”** [D] The Practitioner Guide [5] we created informs future practitioners about the methodology of collaborative writing with community groups. A range of charity workers and arts practitioners have learned how better to support children through arts-based activities. The artist employed during the lockdown activities wrote: **“I learnt new ways of using technology to share my creative processes with young people. Above all feeling that the work I was being paid to do was of great benefit to vulnerable young people felt vital, important and meaningful.”** [F, J4] This work was shortlisted for the Curious Minds Lockdown Inclusion Award Oct 2020. The Director of charity Aspired Futures stated: **“The virtual sessions very quickly demonstrated that although nothing can take the place of face to face contact for creative working, it was possible to bring a group of children together with an unknown adult to them and within 6 weeks have nurtured a safe and respectful professional relationship with the children whereby they are comfortable and willing to share and engage”**. [G, J3]

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

- A. Transcribed evaluation interviews held with 13 young people who participated, demonstrating individual social, emotional and educational benefits.
- B. Feedback from parents/carers/young people/Barnardo’s workers on impact on young people – in interviews, evaluation forms and emails. Confidential documents available from HEI.
- C. Testimonials from Barnardo’s Manager to corroborate impact on children and young people and Barnardo’s practice using stories and storymaking as therapeutic tools. [J1]
- D. Emails from SEND Officer, Child Psychologist, and Social Worker to demonstrate impact of the project and its outputs on professionals. 3 emails available on Impact Tracker.
- E. Emails from teacher educators on benefit of resources for working with trainee teachers and EFL students. Feedback from evaluation of resources with lecturers and students at Bristol University – collected for chapter for publication [5].
- F. Benefits for artists working with disadvantaged children. Testimonial from Green Close [J4].
- G. Benefits for charities working on arts-based projects. Testimonial from Aspired Futures [J3].
- H. Feedback from collaborators – students, writers, artists, staff – email survey sent out (Feb 2018). Examples in [REF 5] and by email.
- I. Email from Gypsy Roma Traveller storyteller on impact of research.
- J. Corroborating Contacts available on submission system