

Institution: London South Bank University (LSBU)		
Unit of Assessment: 24 – Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism		
Title of case study: This Girl Can - Lambeth: enabling sustainable health behaviour change in inactive young women		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-ongoing		
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:
Steve Hunter	Associate Professor	1994-present
Katya Mileva	Professor	2001-present
Rita de Oliveira	Associate Professor	2011-present
Lisa Zaidell	Research Fellow	2014-present
Joanna Bowtell	Senior Lecturer	1999-2011
Jill Davies	Professor	1990-2005
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact LSBU's research with 5,329 young women in Lambeth provided insight into the factors that influence their participation and attitude to sport and physical activity. Professor Mileva's team formulated recommendations for effective strategies to engage young women that have informed the practice of exercise providers, shaped public health education, and community sports policy and delivery nationally and internationally. The recommendations have informed Lambeth Council's approach for future service commissioning and sport and leisure provision. The evidence has influenced Sports England's 10-year community sports vision, Uniting Movement, and was cited in The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences' evidence to the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's enquiry into 'Sport in our community' in 2020. The research and delivery model were internationally translated and have shaped physical education and sports programmes in the United States and Malawi.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research Only 22% of adolescents are sufficiently active, which drops below 10% in ethnic minorities and low-income families. Data strongly associates sedentary lifestyle in childhood with increased obesity and premature mortality in adulthood, and higher and more sustained physical activity levels with better health. Yet, the question remains: how best to achieve lasting change in physical activity behaviours, particularly in early age. To tackle this issue the LSBU team has undertaken an integrated multidisciplinary research programme concerned with the increasing physical inactivity and mitigating the incidence of poor diet in children and adolescents. The team adopts a co-production approach with all relevant stakeholders, in which mixed-method theory-driven research runs in parallel with programme design, delivery, outreach activities and efficacy evaluation.</p> <p>The research improved understanding of the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Effects of diet and physical activity on health.</i> Studies run since 2000 on the relationship between nutrient intake and energy expenditure in primary school children and adolescent females demonstrated that: (i) insufficient consumption of micronutrients leads to higher calorie intake particularly in already obese individuals; (ii) dietary restraints suppress physical activity levels, which explains the low popularity of exercise as a means of weight loss at this age; (iii) education on how diet and physical activity impact health, built on an understanding of girls' weight concerns, social pressure and socio-economic background, is critical for influencing their eating and exercise behaviours [R1]. 2. <i>Determinants of exercise participation and retention.</i> Data were collected between 2005-2011 from more than 500 patients referred by over 40 general practitioner practices and community mental health trusts to local exercise schemes or pulmonary rehabilitation 		

services. The ways individuals perceived themselves in relation to exercise (exercise identity) and the support and benefit from attending were identified as the core determinants of adherence behaviours. A new model of exercise behaviour was proposed and tested for clinical significance through efficacy analyses of exercise referral and community development programmes for tackling obesity [R2].

3. **Design of innovative programs tailored to individuals and communities.** In a pan-European partnership (2005-2008) the team explored the potential of communal sport delivery to catalyse social transformation and increased participation from marginalised groups. The findings evidenced the need for: (i) modular training of community-based adult activists, leaders and educators at Further and Higher education level to develop, deliver, support and assess such schemes; (ii) provision of web-based delivery and support; (iii) recognition of this education within the European credit transfer and accumulation system [R3]. Follow-up research (2009-2011) highlighted the benefits of using innovative approaches to motivate people to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. Linking the use of web-based services and pedometers to monitor activity levels with incentives for charitable causes produced superior engagement in more vigorous physical activity and mental health (lowered depression) improvements [R4].
4. **Requirements for sustainable exercise provision for young girls and women.** Inspired by Sport England's national campaign 'This Girl Can', a consortium of local partners delivered a large-scale community-based intervention and research programme 'This Girl Can Lambeth' [TGCL; 2016-2018]. LSBU studied the benefits from participation in communal sport and physical activities, the barriers and facilitators to participation and evaluated the cost-effectiveness of the service delivery. The project engaged 5,329 young women (14-25 years old, >50% BAME, 10% with disability) recruited from local schools and colleges (e.g. Notre Dame Roman Catholic girls' school, Graveney school, Platanos college, LSBU) and 5 wards of low participation and high deprivation in Lambeth (e.g. Coldharbour, Tulse Hill, Brixton Hill, Ferndale, Vassal). Data were collected through a registration database (Views, Substance, UK), health and fitness assessments, a RE-AIM (*Reach-Efficacy-Adoption-Implementation-Maintenance*; <https://www.re-aim.org/resources-and-tools/>) survey, focus groups and interviews. The research identified that: (i) sport delivery settings for young women are limited mainly to educational institutions and intervention effectiveness is mostly evaluated through intrapersonal factors, e.g. health benefits [R5]; (ii) participants perceive family, culture, instructors' competency and venue safety as their primary barriers to physical activity, whereas sport providers also identify organisational, environmental and legislative factors for sustainability of provision as key characteristics for program success; (iii) there is a need to align the often-contrasting expectations of participants and providers and the funding strategies and deliverables of all stakeholders [R6].

3. References to the research

Outputs R1 and R5 were published in high-quality international peer-reviewed journals. Output R6 was an *Invited Keynote* at an international sport specialists' conference. Experts from the funding bodies rigorously reviewed outputs R2, R3 and R4 before recommending them for approval as final project reports.

[R1] Mulvihill CB, Davies GJ, Rogers PJ (2002). Dietary restraint in relation to nutrient intake, physical activity and iron status in adolescent females. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 15(1): 19-31; <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-277X.2002.00329.x>

[R2] Crichton N., Bowtell JB (2010). Evaluation of exercise referral schemes. Research reports to NHS Southwark/Fusion RCL and NHS Redbridge/Vision RCL.

[R3] Bowtell JB, Hunter SP. (2008). CODES: Community Development through Sport – Promotion of participation in physical activity through sport within the community. Report to EU lifelong learning SOCRATES Programme, Education and culture.

[R4] Allen M, Bowtell JL, Mileva K. (2011). Online technology and incentives for increasing physical activity Activity4Charity. Research report to MMVSense Ltd.

[R5] Hull R, de Oliveira R, Zaidell L. (2018). An ecological approach to exploring physical activity interventions aimed at young UK-based females: A narrative systematic review. *Special Issue on Psychology in Exercise and Sports. Psychology*, 9(14): 2795-2823, <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2018.914161>

[R6]de Oliveira R, Hull R, Zaidell L., Borges M., Mileva K. (2019). This girl can be active, can't she? Keynote to the conference of the European Network for Young Specialists in Sport Psychology (ENYSSP), Trieste, Italy.

This body of research was funded through competitive peer-reviewed funding schemes of governmental organisations (e.g., European Commission - Directorate General for Education and Culture; Sport England; Lambeth Council), clinical and charitable trusts (e.g. Vision Redbridge Culture & Leisure Charity, Fusion NELFT NHS Foundation Trust; Guy's & St Thomas' Charity) and health industry (e.g. MMVSense Ltd), amounting to GBP889,670.

4. Details of the impact

LSBU research has improved public health education targeted at young women, and has informed community sport and physical activity service commissioning, delivery and evaluation locally (Lambeth Borough), nationally (Sports England, House of Commons) and internationally (USA and Malawi). The primary beneficiaries are the local young women that participated in the TGCL project, community sports leaders, local, national and international sports service providers, and policy decision makers.

Improving physical health, mental well-being and attitude to sport of young women

In the period between 2016 and 2019, six local sport for development providers (Fight4Change; St Matthew's project; BigKid Foundation; Streatham Youth and community Trust; Sustrans and LSBU's Academy of Sport) engaged 5,329 young women in 2,538 different sport sessions, community-based activities (annual Lambeth Country Shows), empowerment days, nutrition, leadership and body image workshops, accumulating 51,823 contact hours and 30,714 participant throughput (visits). 30% of participants were previously inactive and 53% of them were of UK BAME origin representing the Borough's demographic profile, showing project effectiveness for reaching participants at risk of inactivity prior to participation. The participants benefited from improved physical fitness, mental health and attitudes to active lives all attained in a cost-effective manner (approximately GBP133 per participant; [S1]). One participant said: "*I remember my first ever session I was like the little scared girl in the corner 'cos I didn't know anyone, and I wasn't confident with anyone and it's like now I go there and I'm a bit too comfortable with some people*". 80% of participants stated that they were more likely to continue participation because the programme met their expectations and had made them enjoy sport and physical activity more than before: "*More self-improvement and becoming a better version of myself...seeing myself compared to how I was prior to boxing, erm, it kind of motivates me to keep going forward and see how far I can really go*" [S1].

Informing and shaping sport and physical activity provision in Lambeth

Despite COVID-19 pandemic drastically reducing communal sport delivery during 2020, our research has helped TGCL delivery partners improve their services via diversification of their offers to better engage with the targeted (sub)populations: "*The annoying thing about lockdown is the stop and start because we know it takes time to lead in that recruitment and when you stop you have to go back. But the sessions we did do, the feedback is the girls loved it, but it was also a referral into the program from Active Community Network who run a boy's programme, so it was a crossover of them asking the boys to tell their sisters, which was another bit of the research that came out*" [S2].

The research showed that young women need role models to influence their attitudes to active and healthy lifestyle and respond better to a focus on both mental and physical health benefits: "*...[this activity] improves your mental state and not just your physical state*" [S1]. This evidence was quickly adopted by the sport providers and used to enrich their programme content by mixing sport sessions with empowerment and educational workshops: "*We want to continue with the empowerment days ...to also incorporate females ...from the estates that they live that have maybe gone on and done something... they want to see role models that are in their area...they want to see people from their ethnicity from their background people athletes, businesspeople, lawyers, accountants. Makes it an achievable aim and goal and it becomes more realistic to them*" [S2].

The research highlighted the particular importance of the instructor's personality and skills for keeping young women engaged [R5-R6]. A sport provider shared: *"Since the research I've actually hired a female lead...an England international brilliant boxer...part of that empowerment role model stuff that we looked at. She's got a lived in experience of mental health, homelessness and domestic abuse in her childhood so when we talk about hiring the right individuals and the right coach which I think came out in the research, it has to be that right person"* [S2]. The importance of coaches' competence also influenced the training programs of LSBU's Academy of Sport, which prepares and engages students for community sports coaching and volunteering. The Senior Sport Development Officer stated: *"The evidence produced by the 'This Girl Can-Lambeth' project was used for development of the LSBU Academy of Sport's Sports Ambassador scheme and the new branch-out targeted intervention 'Yes she can!' to educate and empower young people as activists promoting physical activity to the target population."* Since 2016 the scheme has educated and trained 300 ambassadors who have been commissioned by local organisations and charities to deliver sports activities to over 2,000 local children [S3].

Informing local governance and national policy for communal sports

The research has influenced and informed the local council's vision, providing them with data and insights on how their health and wellbeing strategy should be re-shaped to engage young women in sport and physical activity: *"...previously it used to just be increase female participation that was always the case now it might be a bit more defined in terms of age groups or ethnicity or focus on a disability or an impairment so it can be a little bit more refined because of the availability of data"* [S4]. The evidence informed the council's approach for future service commissioning: *"I think we will move away from the current contract which is very input based...it will be much more output-based and target-based"*; resource development: *"the recommendation around the improved safety of locations ... is something that I believe we can bring in to the Lambeth Made Safer for Young People strategy"*; and local sport provision in the Borough: *"[TGCL] is an important study particularly as we start shaping what we're going to do with our leisure provision in the future and the sport facilities and parks as well...it is an important study that we really need to utilise in shaping our services and where we go in the future"*. TGCL research provided supporting evidence to the council's efforts to improve departmental coordination for more efficient resource allocation: *"... council departments ... work in silos and are probably inadvertently funding the same project twice over quite often so that's a bit of work we've been trying to do internally"* [S4].

TGCL research also informed Sport England's current *Local Delivery Pilot* program and their new strategy for tackling inequalities going forward. The 10-year vision *'Uniting the Movement'* builds on successful approaches identified by TGCL such as *"the value of co-design with communities, the importance of developing meaningful impact assessment (quantitative and qualitative), and developing leadership across a whole system"*. This is evident in the strategy's whole systems' approach for movement, sport and physical activity and focus on creating positive experiences for children and young people, connecting communities and realising the power of people and leadership. The Local Pilots and Priority Places Manager at Sport England said: *"The learning from TGCL provides an aligned local perspective on this national challenge and is well aligned with local partners to reduce inequalities in physical activity participation."* [S5].

The TGCL evidence on the facilitators and barriers to female participation in physical activity across the whole system, from individual through to policy levels, was referenced in the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences' recommendations submitted in December 2020 to the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on what actions the UK Government can take to guarantee the future survival of the community sports sector and people's return to sports and physical activity in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic [S6].

Influencing community youth sports schemes in the USA and Malawi

TGCL research and recommendations were widely disseminated via national (e.g., BASES 2017 conference; the UK Sport for Development Network conference 2019; [S7]) and international

conferences (e.g., American Association of Adapted Sports Programs 2018, Canada; the European Federation of Sport Psychology; and the European Network of Young Specialists in Sport Psychology 2019) to sport practitioners, charities, researchers and decision-makers. This has attracted international interest in the TGCL programme and created opportunities for using the findings to inform projects and shape practice for engagement of young women in sustained physical activity in other countries.

In 2017 the research team won support from the UK Fulbright Commission and the US Department of State to host two visits to LSBU of Dr Leeja Carter, a feminist applied sport psychologist from Long Island University in New York, as a Fulbright Specialist, to explore the potential for translation of the unique scope and processes TGCL project in the USA [S8]. Dr Carter said: "...TGCL provides a diversity of physical activity and sporting opportunities to marginalised girls using a mechanism of their current school environment as well as partnering with outside sport programs...the whole introducing girls to something new but in a way that's controlled and there's this additional element of emotional and social empowerment ...[I] felt that this is something that is needed in the US". Following a return visit from the LSBU team to New York in 2019 to assist programme translation, Dr. Carter initiated work to secure funding for replication of the TGCL program in New York and Chicago: "I see the long term benefits and how that could be very helpful for particularly women of colour in the US". The COVID-19 pandemic has postponed the launch of the programme in Brooklyn schools, but plans are in place to get it underway as soon as it is safe to do so" [S9].

Through LSBU's sport ambassadors, TGCL research has shaped sports activities delivered to school children in Malawi. In 2019 student and staff ambassadors from LSBU delivered over 1,000 hours of voluntary sports coaching to over 4,000 participants from local primary schools (Nakundu and Kalenjeka) in Malawi. LSBU's Senior Sports Development Officer said: "The Sports Ambassadors supported the Charity in the development of local community and school sports education programme as well as informed the local staff training to maintain the sports programmes, which was in line with TGCL project research outcomes" [S3]. The CEO of Naturally Africa Volunteers said: "The partnership with LSBU has given a real boost to our sports activities in the local primary schools that we assist. ... developing a passion for, and skills in, a variety of sports that would otherwise not be possible" [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [S1] Lambeth Council's full report to Sport England, 2018 and LSBU's "This Girl Can- Lambeth", project evaluation and monitoring report, 2019.
- [S2] Testimonial from Fight4Change, Sport for development Charity.
- [S3] Testimonial from LSBU's Academy of Sport.
- [S4] Testimonial from London Borough of Lambeth.
- [S5] Testimonial from Sport England.
- [S6] "BASES evidence to the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee" in response to the inquiry into "Sport in our communities - what can be done to secure the future of sport in our communities?", December 2020, <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/647/sport-in-our-communities/>.
- [S7] Booklet from the 9th Conference of the UK Sport Development Network: "Sport for Development: What are we developing?", July 11-12th 2019, London, UK, <http://www.activecommunities.org.uk/uksdn-2019-conference>.
- [S8] Letter of approval by the United States-United Kingdom Fulbright Commission of LSBU Fulbright Specialist project proposal "Interdisciplinary Approaches to Female Health Behaviours", 2017.
- [S9] Testimonial from the Dr Leeja Carter, United States.
- [S10] Video testimonial from Naturally Africa Foundation.