

Institution: University of the West of Scotland		
Unit of Assessment: 23: Education		
Title of case study: Transforming communities through critical community education		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 - 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:
Dr Annette Coburn	Senior Lecturer	2012 - 2020
Mr David Wallace	Lecturer	2014 - 2020
Dr Edward Beggan	Lecturer	2017 - 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Introduction of Community Empowerment and Equalities Department at Glasgow City Council, one of UK's largest local authorities, and organisational changes within local government in Scotland, stem from The Institute for Youth and Community Studies research on internationally recognised community work practices. In addition, sustainability of charitable community organisations has been ensured due to the vital role of our research. This has impacted on the service delivery and community development in three key areas: Strategic organisational planning at Glasgow City and South Lanarkshire Councils; Community beneficiaries in three fieldwork projects - leading to improved family and social relations, increased confidence, reduced feelings of isolation, and improved sense of identity and wellbeing, and National Level CLD Priorities (CLD Standards Council for Scotland).</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>Our research focuses on critical community education that is globally-relevant due to differing socio-political climates around the world. Critical community education is practiced across the UK within the professional field of Community Learning and Development (CLD), sometimes known as Youth and Community work or simply, Community Education. Characterised by work in priority areas, and engaging with priority client groups (as identified in Scottish Government Indices), the impact of our research chimes with the idea of the civic university. The movement for social responsibility in higher education equally encourages a drive toward meaningful community engagement and knowledge exchange for the common good [3.6]. The community development aspect of research conducted at the Institute is underpinned by democratic and participative traditions (e.g., transformative paradigm) in community education [3.2, 3.3].</p> <p>Strategic Policy Organisational Planning and Development <i>Glasgow City Council (since 2014) and South Lanarkshire Council (since 2018)</i> A new department in Glasgow City Council was developed from our research findings that had led to the embracing of a social justice model for equality [3.4]. This research had shown how principles for community development and empowering emancipatory practice could be used to engage communities in participatory decision making [3.3, 3.5]. This led to political action that transformed service delivery and community engagement in one of UK's largest local authorities [5.6]. Further impact is evidenced in the neighbouring local authority of South Lanarkshire, where the Community Engagement Manager worked with UWS through the Healthy Valleys research [3.2, 5.2, 5.5], in developing a community assets-based approach to neighbourhood development and community wellbeing [5.7].</p> <p>Community beneficiaries <i>Grassroots Evaluation (2013 to 2018) Community Health Café Evaluation</i> Our commissioned evaluation of Healthy Valleys' (HV) Grassroots Project (GBP15,763 over 3 years) reported on the experiences of beneficiaries who reported: improvements in self-confidence; provision of personal support to attend appointments and project activities; a reduction in feelings of isolation and creation of social networks; provision of information and advice to meet</p>		

personal needs; improved parenting with regard to learning, communication, nurturing and play; and greater resilience and wellbeing [5.2, 5.4 pg. 19 -21]. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2007): “the nurturant qualities of the environments where children grow up, live and learn –parents, caregivers, family and community – will have the most significant impact on their development. In most situations, parents and caregivers cannot provide strong nurturant environments without help from local, regional, national, and international agencies”. It is thus unsurprising that this research contributed to a successful application for funding (GBP455,268) from the Big Lottery that sustained the project for a second phase [5.3]. The Institute also researched the continuation phase (GBP5,000 over 2 years) to produce more detailed evaluative evidence and included data from partner agencies in the Voluntary Sector, Health Improvement, Midwifery Services, Health-Visitor Services and from Fire and Safety Services [5.2], which led to services being mainstreamed within HV and the range of partner agencies involved in supporting grassroots participants [5.8]. An additional evaluation of **Healthy Valleys’ Community Health Café** (GBP3,000) reported on the experiences of 31 beneficiaries in five locations across rural South Lanarkshire, and showed benefits in terms of reduced feelings of isolation and mental health, enhanced levels of social contact, and sense of belonging. Extended reach of the café was evident in findings which generated new referrals to different community services and also enhanced understanding of volunteers’ role in supporting the café infrastructure [5.5, 5.8].

The Street (2013 - 2017)

The Street project is located within **Regen:fx Youth Development Trust**, which aims to identify, design and deliver new and innovative solutions to ease youth poverty, its associated anti-social behaviour and provide youth diversion activities. The research found The Street to be effective in contributing to young people’s learning [3.1, 5.1] and provided impact in affirming the methodology to local agencies, Police Scotland and MSP’s during the first phase launch event. In regard to initial sustainability concerns, the research findings were used as evidence in securing much-needed National Lottery funding (GBP150,000), which was effective in allowing the project to flourish [5.9]

National Level Community Learning and Development (CLD) Priorities

CLD Standards Council for Scotland and Equalities Reference Group (since 2018)

Demonstration of impact is characterised through using our research informed expertise to engage with our **CLD Standards Council**, as a means of directly influencing **Scottish Government, Education Scotland** and workforce development in regard to professional standards and equalities [3.2-3.4]. This impacts on CLD policy and practice in regard to development of a research culture across an emerging professional area [5.10].

3. References to the research

3.1 Beggan E., Coburn, A., (2018) Creating ‘one big masterpiece’: synthesis in creative arts youth work, *Concept*, 9(2). <http://concept.lib.ed.ac.uk/article/view/2806/3875>

3.2 Coburn, A., Gormally, S., (2018) Defining well-being in community development from the ground up: a case study of participant and practitioner perspectives. *Community Development Journal*, 55(2): 237-257. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsy048>

3.3 Coburn A., Gormally, S., (2017) *Communities for Social Change: practicing equality and social justice in youth and community work*. New York, Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/b11265>

3.4 Coburn, A., Gormally, S., (2015) Emancipatory Praxis: A Social Justice Approach to Equality Work. In C., Cooper, S., Gormally, S., Hughes, G. (Eds) *Socially Just, Radical Alternatives for Education and Youth Work Practice: Re-Imagining Ways of Working with Young People*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 65-84. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137393593_4

3.5 Coburn, A., Wallace D., (2020) Critical Community Education: The Case of Love Stings. In S., Steinberg and B., Down *The SAGE Handbook of Critical Pedagogies*. London, Sage, 1036-1053. <http://doi.org/10.4135/9781526486455.n95>

3.6 Wallace, D. (2020) Identifying with Borders and Boundaries: The Place of Critical Pedagogy as Social responsibility Education. In E., Sengupta, P. Blessinger and C. Mahoney. (Eds) *University-Community Partnerships for Promoting Social Responsibility in Higher Education* (Vol.23) Bingley, Emerald Publishing, 139-154. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2055-364120200000023010>

4. Details of the impact

While the following impacts exemplify our direct contributions, the community impacts are non-linear in that our research with communities we serve is resulting in UWS being among the sector leaders in widening participation (In 2017/18, 27.7% of Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants came from the 20% most deprived postcodes – an increase of 1.8% compared to the previous year (National Measure 2a). The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants came from the 40% most deprived postcodes also increased by 1.6% to 49.6% (National Measure 2b).

Strategic Policy Organisational Planning and Development [5.6, 5.7]

There were clear and tangible impacts in strategic policy through the application of research findings that led to the creation of a pioneering Empowerment and Equalities Department at **Glasgow City Council [5.6]**. This was initiated by an invitation to contribute to community empowerment jointly with elected members and council officers. This initial dialogue developed over a period of two years, as our research was used as a catalyst for action to shift Council policy towards community empowerment. Collaborating directly with the Council's Deputy Leader created new possibilities for a social justice approach to equality work **[3.4]**. This led to a radical overhaul of local authority planning as part of a city-wide strategy for the eradication of poverty. The specific structural changes which occurred as a result of this impact included the development of **23 Citizen's Panels** across Glasgow.

Changes in **South Lanarkshire Council** were grounded in evidence from research undertaken at **Healthy Valleys**, where an assets-based approach was identified as a means of maximising community engagement in rural South Lanarkshire **[3.4, 5.5, and 5.2]**. This research offered compelling evidence for taking a community development approach in a broader community engagement context. This convinced sceptics and local community activists that authentic participatory grassroots community development methods were helpful in applying a socially just model for equality **[5.2]**, where engaging 'with' rather than working 'for' communities was important in strategic neighbourhood planning **[5.7]**.

Community Beneficiaries

Grassroots Evaluation (between 2013 and 2015, 2017 and 2018) [5.8]

Impact was demonstrated in community development methods that supported the life chances of children and families impacted by rural poverty, and led to three years of continuation funding **[3.4, 5.2]**, whereby 10,172 project beneficiaries (male - 3,518/female – 6,654; age range 0-15 5,018, 16-64 3,994, 65+ 1,160) engaged in services across rural South Lanarkshire. This was a community project, within the multi-award-winning Healthy Valleys Initiative, which offers support to vulnerable parents and their pre-5 children in rural south Lanarkshire. There was residual impact in that, information provided, was typical of other participants. The Grassroots evaluation involved 1,366 impacts among beneficiaries including: 74 families supported, 19 volunteers, 90 health care appointments, 954 volunteering hours and 229 community activity sessions **[5.4 p.19-21]**. There were 72 people who participated directly in the research process via observation of activity sessions, such as: teddy bears picnic, ball pool café, healthy eating, and individual or group/family interviews with researchers. Phase two evaluation took a more nuanced depth of analysis in working with nine beneficiaries to produce detailed case studies that show the transformative aspects that they claimed were due to participation in Grassroots **[5.2]**.

Community Healthy Café Programme (2018-to 2019) [5.8]

There were 31 café beneficiaries who participated in providing evidence for this evaluation through café observations and field notes, appreciative inquiry small group exercises, and small

group/individual interviews. Café beneficiaries reported impacts in the following areas: having regular access to a nourishing and healthy meal; building self-confidence and motivation, offering the possibility of a positive routine that is something to look forward to; breaking a cycle of isolation by affording the possibility of social contact with others; providing the possibility of counselling, advice and information/referral to wider Healthy Valleys services; and providing a safe haven [5.5]. This was a community project within the Healthy Valleys Initiative which responds to indices of poor physical and mental health and social isolation. Five community cafés operated within Healthy Valleys, providing a community response to issues of food poverty, poor mental health and social isolation.

Regen: FX Youth Trust (2013 -18) [5.9]

The award-winning “The Street” project offers a unique approach to tackling youth disorder. It involves a promenade theatre to engage young people who, as performing and social actors, shared stories and experiences of life on the streets. In struggling to identify sustainable funding, we were approached to evaluate and exemplify this newly-created practice method. Data was drawn from 70 workshops, involving 620 young people (which included family and friends of ‘cast and crew’) and 96 youth workers from as far afield as Falkirk, Fife, Dunbartonshire and Glasgow, who had participated in “The Street” experience. An initial report [5.1] was launched in the Scottish Parliament, gaining wider recognition, extending reach and helping secure undisclosed funding from Police Scotland. We demonstrated to the wider public that “The Street” method is promoting informed discussion of critical choices, and that connecting creative arts with youth work created an alternative learning environment in a former industrial unit [3.1]. The benefits for young people who participated in workshops and those involved in development, scripting and ‘acting’ out the ‘scenarios’ were identified as: encouraging young people to talk about taboo subjects and the emotional impact of their experiences of hanging around with friends on the street; creating a credible learning environment that resonated with lived experience; and created capacity for social change.

National Level CLD Priorities

CLD Standards Council (Since 2013)[5.10]

Researching impact in an emerging professional practice was pioneering in developing a body of knowledge that impacts on the development and sustainability of the CLD workforce as a community of practice [3.5], and contributed new knowledge of CLD practices that assist in raising professional standards [5.10]. This was achieved with the professional body for people working in CLD with responsibility for approval of qualifying programmes in Scotland and other parts of the UK. In the specific area of community education and CLD, there is no critical mass of research and so, the impact that provision of an official narrative for those involved in practice development cannot be directly measured. However, our research does contribute to the articulation of ideas around which community educators have coalesced within a new community of practice.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Coburn, A. and Miller, J. (2013) Street Happens: A youth work response to young people’s experiences of the street (Research Report)

5.2 Coburn, A. and Wallace, D. (2013- 2018) *A Longitudinal Study of Grassroots Project*. Healthy Valleys, Project Report

5.3 Grassroots project MSP ref to research:

<http://www.aileencampbell.scot/1038-campbell-welcomes-healthy-valleys-funding-announcement>

5.4 Grassroots Research Launch Event HV Annual Report p.19

[https://healthyvalleys.org.uk/assets/files/Annual%20Report%202015-2016%20Final\(1\).pdf](https://healthyvalleys.org.uk/assets/files/Annual%20Report%202015-2016%20Final(1).pdf)

5.5 Wallace, D. (2019) An Evaluation of Healthy Valley’s Community Café (Research Report)

5.6 Testimonial from the Depute Leader of the Council, City Convenor for Culture, Vibrancy & International Co-operation

5.7 Testimonial from the Community Engagement Manager Finance and Corporate Resources, South Lanarkshire Council

5.8 Testimonial from the Executive Manager of Healthy Valleys

5.9 Testimonial from the Trust Manager of Regen:fx Youth Trust

5.10 Testimonial from the Director of CLD Standards Council for Scotland