Cultivating Citizenship through Connected Communities:

Challenging Intergenerational Loneliness through Youth Led Co-Production

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Connected Communities

Overview
Community
The research process
Connected Communities

*Action research* project to explore how the *community dimension* of people’s lives contributes to well-being and can be developed to analyse how different interventions build *resilient, inclusive* communities.

It also seeks to *empower* individuals to take greater *control* of their lives through relationships based on *shared concerns* and *mutual trust*. 
Geographically isolated

Post industrial area with Sellafield being a major employer

Polarised social demography

Pockets of very high deprivation

Limited services

Below regional and national averages of educational and employment
Community Researchers

Mirehouse

Primary School Setting

Girls and boys aged 10 to 11 years old (n=24)

Supported by the local police service

Woodhouse

Community Setting

Girls aged 11 to 12 years old (n=14)
The Centre for Citizenship and Community

The Research Process

Steering Groups → Identify key gatekeepers working with young people → Community engagement with young people → Community researcher training

Evaluation ← Co-Produced Interventions ← Community Playback ← Data Collection ← Research Design
Unexpected Outcomes

Mirehouse
- Primary School Setting
  - Girls and boys aged 10 to 11 years old (n=24)
    - Community Research
    - Social Action
      - Poster Campaign
      - Tea Dances
      - Book clubs
      - National and Local Policy Consultation
    - Inter-generational Projects (Youth Connectors)
      - Cooking Classes
    - Community Walks
    - Social Network Analysis (n=120)

Woodhouse
- Community Setting
  - Girls aged 11 to 12 years old (n=14)
    - Community Research
    - Social Action
      - Cake Sales
      - Litter Picks
      - Community Walks
      - Car Boot Sales
      - Sponsored Walks
      - Coffee Morning
      - Family Fitness
    - Inter-generational Projects (Youth Connectors)
      - National and Local Policy Consultation
    - Shared Stories
    - Quiz Nights
Cultivating Citizenship through Connected Communities:

Engagement, Exploration, Empathy, Empowerment
Youth Citizenship

Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violent and in accordance with human rights and democracy (Hoskins, 2006)

Policy Focus:
- Civil Society Strategy
- European Commission, Horizon 2020

Children are excluded from much of civil society (Larkin, 2014; Moos-Mitha, 2005)
Safe relational spaces are essential (Cockburn, 2007)
Methodology

• **Design:**
  - Peer interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Self report measures

• **Sample:**
  - Young People
  - Parents
  - Police officers

• **Analysis:**
  - Thematic Analysis
Engagement

Recruitment:
- Engaging
- Informed by local stakeholders

Retention:
- Rooted in context and action
- Youth Led
- Fun
Exploration

Creating Physical and Symbolic Safe Spaces for Exploration:

- Strong Collective Identity
- Building New Relationships
- Exploring New Places
- The Freedom to Express Ideas

Before I was really in a down place, I would get bullied, but now I know I can stand up for myself, its boosted by confidence a lot because [the group is] always there for you.
Empathy

Understanding the Needs of the Local Community:
- By learning and reflecting on the experiences of the community the young people were motivated to take action to support those most in need.

I’ve learnt that you can have some really sad stories and still be in a nice person

Some people were really lonely, she said she wouldn’t have spoken to anyone all day if we hadn’t called
Empowerment

- Critical Reflection on Role as an Active Citizen

- Social Action

- Co-production of Intergenerational Projects to Build Community Connections

As much as [the police] help us, I also think of it as we’re helping them, if we’re changing the community they’re going to be more free

I have found that not everyone is proud to call their community their home but as a group we know we can change that
Engagement
- Engaging
- Informed
- Rooted in connect and action
- Youth led

Exploration
- Collective Identity
- Relationships
- Exploring Places
- Supportive Spaces

Empathy
- Understanding
- Motivation

Empowerment
- Citizenship
- Social Action
- Community Capital
Who are Girls Gang?
Challenging Intergenerational Loneliness through Youth Led Co-Production
Intergenerational Interventions

“social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchanges of resources and learning among older and younger generations” (Kaplan, 2000)

“bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote great understanding and respect between generations” (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2001)

No clear definition:
• Disperse age ranges
• Diverse aims of interventions
• Diverse connections
The Intergenerational Intervention Continuum:

- Both groups as passive recipients of care
- Older people as active agents
- Children and young people as active agents
- Both groups as active agents

Issues of Power:
- Modernisation Theory (Cowfill & Holmes, 1972)
- Exchange Theory (Dowd, 1975)
Co-Produced Interventions

YOUTH CONNECTORS

- Youth Connectors is a partnership between the Howgill Family Centre, working with children to design, develop and deliver a range of inter-generational projects in their communities.

- The project is due to start in July 2019 and will run for one year.

- Children in two communities will organise a total of eight community connectivity events.

- Evaluations of these individual events and of the overall Youth Connectors project will provide evidence outlining the feasibility of this an inter-generational loneliness approach for future projects.
The Centre for Citizenship and Community

- Evaluation
- Data Gathering
- Event Design
- Community Connecting Event
- Group formation

Inclusion and Connected Communities in Policy and Practice
Promoting Agency Across the Generations: Pairing Citizenship in Young People with Participation in Older People

Children and Young People

Needs:
- Experience
- Knowledge

Capacities and assets:
- Energy
- Time

Develop Citizenship

Older People

Needs:
- Time
- Energy

Capacities and assets:
- Experience
- Knowledge

Enhance Connectivity
Thank you for your time. Any questions?

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