

Institution: University of Northampton
Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education
Title of case study: Children and young people's participation in decision-making
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>There is a strong tradition of qualitative research with children and young people at The University of Northampton. The Centre for Children and Youth (CCY) was constituted in 1997 and has completed fifty research projects funded by RCUK, national agencies and charities, and Local Authorities and service-providers. This case study focuses upon CCY's research on children and young people's participation in decision-making. This work has produced regional, national and international impacts: our evidence-based guidance has been influential and widely-employed within a broad, international shift towards the involvement of children and young people in decision-making in diverse educational, planning and policy contexts. In particular, this case study evidences CCY's transformative impacts upon the design of spaces for children and young people in educational and urban planning settings.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>To illustrate the breadth and reach of CCY's impacts, five research projects are cited in the impact case study. Projects 1, 3 and 5 were full, peer-reviewed grants awarded by UK Research Councils. Projects 2 and 4 were awarded after competitive, peer-reviewed tendering processes.</p> <p>1). ESRC award L129251031 (£141,811) (1996-99) explored the efficacy of school/youth councils in the UK. Prof. Hugh Matthews (Professor, University of Northampton (UN), 1992-2011) was PI, working with Dr. Mark Taylor (Research Assistant (RA), UN, 1997-2000). The project entailed qualitative research with practitioners and young people at 40 participatory projects convened by schools, Local Authorities and voluntary/third sector bodies. The findings evidenced the limited efficacy of most 'participatory' structures designed for young people. Data showing that most school/youth councils compound the marginalisation of hard-to-reach young people informed the development of recommendations and training materials on building a culture of youth participation in schools, services and urban regeneration contexts. The project established CCY's significant national reputation for participatory research with children and young people: evidenced by 50+ subsequent successful tenders for applied research funding in this field (e.g. projects 2 and 4).</p> <p>2). A Children's Fund grant (£30,000) (2004-06) established a programme of research on children and young people's outdoor play needs in the London Borough of Redbridge. Matthews was PI, working with Dr. John Horton (RA, UN, 2004-05; Senior Lecturer (SL), UN, 2005-12; Associate Professor, UN, 2012-present) and Dr. Peter Kraftl (RA, UN, 2004-5; SL, UN, 2005-07). Through qualitative research with 1,500 children and young people, the project gathered a major evidence base on experiences of public play spaces. A major finding was that many (especially minority ethnic) children experience purpose-built playgrounds as spaces of fear. Evidence-based recommendations were prepared for planners/policy-makers, evidencing positive outcomes of involving children and young people in play space design. Horton and Kraftl's collaboration on this project led directly to two successful bids for major RCUK funding (projects 3 and 5).</p> <p>3). AHRC/EPSRC award AH/E507026/1 (£319,165) (2007-09) explored pupil participation in school (re)design projects. Horton was co-applicant, with Prof. Andrée Woodcock (University of Coventry) and Dr. Peter Kraftl (University of Leicester). Through consultation with pupils, staff and architects involved in ten school redesign projects, the project produced case studies of practices/outcomes of pupil participation. The project found that many teachers felt intimidated by the 'ideal' of pupil participation in major school-refurbishment policies, even though they actively fostered creative, affirmative (though more 'modest') forms of educational participation. Evidence-based good practice guides were prepared for architects/planners and headteachers undertaking school (re)design and construction projects via <i>Building Schools for the Future</i>, <i>Academy schools</i>, <i>Primary Capital Programme</i> and <i>Free Schools</i> programmes in England and Wales. Horton was specifically responsible for leading the production and dissemination of the good practice guides. This project's impact strategy, collaborative approach to working with senior planners and policy-makers, and</p>

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thematic focus on young people and design/planning directly shaped the development of project 5.

4). Matthews, Horton, Prof. Andrew Pilkington (Professor, UN, 1998-present) and Dr. Victoria Bell (RA, UN, 2008-10) won a competitive tender for **Pears Foundation funding (£157,500)** (2008-09) to conduct a national study of impacts of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Through consultation with 2,000 young people engaged in the Award, plus adult leaders/stakeholders, the research produced a major body of data about diverse impacts of the Award. A key finding was that the Award had greatest impact on young people from deprived communities, where uptake of the Award is proportionally lowest. Evidence-based recommendations were prepared for those involved in executive international management and local delivery of the Award, particularly evidencing the importance of fostering youth involvement in decision-making. These deliverables have been used by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in 132 countries.

5). ESRC award RES-062-23-1549 (£623,904) (2009-13) explored children's citizenship in new urban communities. Horton was co-applicant, with Prof. Pia Christensen (University of Warwick) and Dr. Peter Kraftl (University of Leicester). The project involved qualitative research with 175 children in four newbuild communities in SE England. Horton had responsibility for developing collaborative impact activities with policy-makers; Dr. Sophie Hadfield-Hill (RA, UN, 2009-12; Lecturer, UN, 2012-present) led field research in two communities and contributed significantly to impact activities. The project produced a major body of evidence about children's everyday lives and participation in new urban communities. A key finding was that most children actively wish to have greater involvement in decision-making, but feel marginalised by planning/policy practices, particularly in contexts of austerity politics. A major dissemination/impact programme is ongoing, with more than 50 impacts/outputs already recorded by the RCUK Research Outcomes System. In August 2013, Hadfield-Hill secured **ESRC Future Research Leader award ES/K00932X/1 (£240,000)**, mentored by Horton, to continue and internationalise their research in this area.

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

All projects listed in section 2 have produced multiple empirical and conceptual papers in international peer-reviewed journals. An indicative output from each project is listed below.

- Project 1:* Matthews, H. (2003) Children and regeneration: setting an agenda for community participation and integration. *Children and Society* 17, pp.264-276 (doi: 0.1002/CHI.745)
- Project 2:* Horton, J. (2012) 'Got my shoes, got my Pokémon': spaces of children's play and popular culture, *Geoforum* 43, pp.4-13 (doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.07.005)
- Project 3:* den Besten, O., Horton, J., Kraftl, P. (2008) Pupil involvement in school (re)design: participation in policy and practice. *Co-Design* 4, pp.197-210 (doi: 10.1080/15710880802524946)
- Project 4:* Kraftl, P., Horton, J., Tucker, F. (2012) Introduction. In: Kraftl, P., Horton, J. and Tucker, F. (eds.) *Critical Geographies of Childhood and Youth: contemporary policy and practice*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp.1-24
- Project 5:* Kraftl, P., Horton, J., Christensen, P., Hadfield-Hill, S. (2013) Living on a building site: young people in new urban developments, *Geoforum* 50, pp.191-199 (doi: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.08.009)

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

References to corroborating evidence in section 5 are indicated in [square parentheses]. The wide-ranging impact of CCY's research within a broad, international shift towards the involvement of children and young people in decision-making is evidenced by:

Citation of CCY research and evidence-based guidance in operational documents of international, national and regional agencies which work with children and young people.

For example, project 1 continues to be widely employed in diverse international contexts:

- the Welsh Assembly Government's (2008) guidance on *Children and Young People's Participation in Wales* cites Matthews' research as central evidence for positive outcomes of participation for young people's emotional well-being.
- DfID's (2009) terms of reference on *Youth Exclusion, Violence and Fragile States* uses exemplars from Matthews' work to recommend youth participation as a strategy in international post-conflict contexts.

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- a 2009 report by the US Agency for International Development employs Matthews' concepts, data and guidance to recommend youth participation as a strategy for development and aid-delivery in developing world contexts [see section 5 – source 1a].
- UNICEF's (2009) Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation recommends Matthew's work as a key resource for stakeholders implementing a programme to promote children's civil rights in East Asia and the Pacific.

The project led directly to the formation of four Local Authority youth forums, which have engaged 100 young people per year in local democratic processes since 1999, and evidence, guidance and training materials from project 1 are routinely-cited as good practice in foundational and operational documents of Local Authority youth councils in every region of the UK [source 1b].

Recognition of CCY's role in transforming the ethos of voluntary/third sector organisations which work with children and young people. For example, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award recognise that CCY's research steered medium term strategic changes to the organisation's ethos and operational practices [source 4]. Based on our evidence-based recommendations, DofE constituted an international 'impact action group', charged with disseminating and implementing recommendations made in our good practice guides, to delivery partners in 132 countries. A national working group to foster young people's participation in decision-making around the Award was subsequently constituted in each country. A range of changes to governance and consultative practice within the Award were also informed by the research. Briefing notes for providers of youth volunteering activities and policy-makers were disseminated widely by the Pears Foundation, and directly led other major youth organisations (e.g. Girlguiding, Art Award) to commission national participatory research projects.

Recognition of CCY research as critical in changing the approach of UK national, regional and local policy-makers to children and young people. The following case studies evidence the multi-scalar impacts of CCY research upon policy-making – and particularly the **transformation of spaces designed/built for children and young people** – in educational and urban planning contexts, via projects 2, 3 and 5.

- **Pupil participation in school (re)design.** Within individual schools and architectural practices, there is evidence that participation in project 5 was important in facilitating more effective and participatory decision-making, and more broadly shaping an ethos of inclusion/participation, in school refurbishment projects [source 3a]. During the project, Horton was interviewed by the think tank Demos, and key messages about youth participation in design/architecture, drawing directly upon project findings, were incorporated into their major *Seen and Heard: Reclaiming the Public Realm* report (2008). The good practice guides produced in project 5 were disseminated to every Local Authority in England and Wales, and published online. To give one example of how these were used by organisations beyond those involved in the original research, contact from senior officers in Leicester City Council evidences that the guides were used by the Council's Youth Engagement team to conduct a city-wide consultation of 450 school pupils in 2009, which informed the refurbishment of 16 secondary schools, producing a range of positive documented outcomes for pupils, staff and stakeholders [source 3b]. The guides have subsequently been recommended as good practice by Architecture and Design Scotland, Pupil Voice Wales and the US National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.
- **Enhancing outdoor playspaces.** Data from project 2 were disseminated to Redbridge Borough Council via workshops/presentations. These activities directly underpinned the Borough's *Play Strategy 2007-12* which instigated a Borough-wide programme of improvements to outdoor playspaces. Between 2008-11, the strategy ringfenced £150,000 for playspace improvements, and £850,000 for adjacent traffic calming measures [source 2a]. Enhancements were thus made at 12 playgrounds, 3 parks, 2 country parks and 5 school grounds, and new minimum standards regarding play provision were introduced in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance and area regeneration strategies. During 2007-09, Horton was invited to act as expert advisor when senior officers of the Local Authority developed plans/actions relating to children services. Project 2 was thus explicitly cited as core evidence in the shaping and benchmarking of 14 Borough-wide policies between 2008-12, including the Borough's new *Children and Young People's Plans* (2007-11 and 2011-14), *Children's Services Capital Programme* (2008-09), *Safer Redbridge Plan* (2009) and *Safeguarding Action Plan* (2010). CCY's recommendations were also cited in

children and young people's plans in 4 London Boroughs (e.g. Dagenham) and 3 Local Authorities (e.g. Hertfordshire) not involved in the original research. In the current REF period, the research also impacted upon national play policy in England and Wales: (i) findings about play needs of young Muslim females were key evidence in DCSF's (2008) feasibility study for the *Play Pathfinders* Scheme, which subsequently invested £60million in playspace refurbishment in 30 deprived communities [source 2b]; (ii) CCY's evidence/recommendations were included in *Play for a Change* (2008) – a major NCB/Play England review and good practice guide about the state of UK playspaces.

- Planning newbuild housing developments.** Throughout project 5, the project team worked closely with Local Authorities, planning agencies, housing associations and service-providers to ensure that project outputs were impact-full and user-friendly. Four workshops engaged regional planners and policy-makers in activities with children and young people. Feedback indicates that these events prompted a greater degree of collaborative, multigenerational practice, by 'acting as a bridge' between local communities, young people, policy-makers, and planning agencies: as evidenced in the development of 'strong, persuasive' consultative bids for funding for play equipment, with 'hard evidence' drawn directly from project 5 [source 5a]. The project also provided briefing papers and expert guidance, and facilitated consultations with young people, for Senior Planners within North Northamptonshire Development Company (NNDC), contributing directly to the North Northamptonshire Infrastructure Plan for the next three decades, producing cost savings and skills development for NNDC, and ensuring provision of community participation opportunities within the development of the region over this timescale. Feedback from Senior Planners – and revisions to the Infrastructure Plan – testify that the project has thus 'added value to and impacted significantly on' infrastructure planning in this region (which has 300,000+ residents), principally by fostering a culture of multigenerational community consultation [source 5b]. Five good practice guides for planners, policy-makers and architects have been produced and disseminated to Senior Planners via the Housing Supply and Markets Division of DCLG. Evidence from the project has also been submitted to: Sustainable Development Commission review of outcomes for young people; Big Lottery Fund call for evidence about priorities in provision for young people; and the DCLG Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment. Impact and dissemination activities are continuing and Hadfield-Hill and Horton's collaboration around the ESRC Future Research Leader award on Young People and New Urbanisms in India (see section 2) will continue to extend and internationalise these impacts into the next REF period.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Project 1

Source 1a – US Agency for International Development (2009) *Youth Councils*. Washington DC: USAID, endnotes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 24 (held on file)

Source 1b – Statement from Community Development Manager, Northamptonshire County Council (held on file)

Project 2

Source 2a – London Borough of Redbridge *Play Strategy (2007-12)* (held on file)

Source 2b – DCSF (2008) *Feasibility Study: equality impact assessment for Play Pathfinders scheme*. London: DCSF (on file)

Project 3

Source 3a – Horton, J. and Kraftl, P. (2012) School building redesign. In: Brooks, R., Fuller, A. and Waters, J. (eds.) *Changing Spaces of Education*. London: Routledge, pp.119-130 (on file)

Source 3b – Statement from Youth Engagement Strategy Lead, Leicester City Council (on file)

Project 4

Source 4 – Statement from UK Services Director, Duke of Edinburgh's Award (on file)

Project 5

Source 5a – Statement from Chair, Residents' Association in case study community (on file)

Source 5b – Statement from Senior Planner, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (on file)