

Impact case study template (REF3b)
UOA: 22
Title of case study: 'Highlighting multiple forms of social exclusion: using research to inform policy, practice and public discourse'
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

This case study brings together research focused on the ways in which social groups defined by a range of marginalized identities are excluded from participation in economic and social opportunities, particularly in the North East of England. The research has informed public discussions of inclusion and policy debate at the national and European level and has influenced approaches and practices of a number of partner organisations in their attempts to facilitate social inclusion.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research is part of a broad programme of projects examining relations between socio-cultural identities and patterns, processes and experiences of social exclusion. These themes are examined across the distinct, yet related, policy fields of education, youth work, technology and public service provision through the following projects:

Socio-cultural and learning experiences of working class students in Higher Education

ESRC/TLRP research (2006-2008) led by Prof. Gill Crozier (University of Sunderland, now at Roehampton) and Prof. Diane Reay (University of Cambridge) with Dr. John Clayton (then Research Associate, University of Sunderland). All staff worked on the project for its duration. The research compared experiences of working class students in different types of HE institution and aimed to find out whether students felt the need to change to progress or resisted pressures to do so and how this impacted on their learning. Key findings:

- Structural inequalities between institutions enhance or undermine students' learner identities and dispositions towards learning.
- Working class student experiences are marked by competing demands within and outside of University

Just B Me Black Youth project evaluation, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

In 2009 the University was commissioned by the Scotswood Area Strategy (SAS) in Newcastle, to conduct an independent assessment of the Just 'B' Me black youth project. Dr. John Clayton was the sole researcher. The evaluation addressed geographical context, the role of management, youth work practice, outcomes and future directions. Key findings:

- Work both inside and outside of the local school provides positive activities, learning experiences and empowerment opportunities.
- This project has facilitated solidarity-building across the black community, but has begun to move beyond this.

Evaluation of Digital Inclusion Activities in Sunderland

Project (2008-2009), co-sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Sunderland Digital Challenge, assessed the extent to which Sunderland has transformed itself into a digitally enabled and digitally inclusive city. This included strategic analysis, impact on socio-economic data, questionnaires conducted in socially excluded neighbourhoods and interviews with respondents. PI was Dr. Stephen J. Macdonald and Dr.

John Clayton was the Research Associate. Both staff were based at the University of Sunderland and worked on the project for its duration. Key findings:

- Knowledge of overarching digital inclusion programmes is low. However, awareness of specific digital inclusion initiatives is greater and is growing and experiences are largely positive.
- Confidence and experience of technology as well as specific benefits are strongly influenced by occupation and disability.

Impact of Cuts to public service provision in the North East of England

Study (2010-2012) tracking the impacts of the comprehensive spending review and changes to funding on partner agencies to the Department of Social Sciences. Led by Prof. Catherine Donovan with co-researchers Dr. John Clayton, and Jacqui Merchant, both senior lecturers at the University of Sunderland, all staff worked on the project for its duration. This included a survey of agencies as well as interviews with service providers and users. Key findings:

- Reduced funding, planning and budgeting, reduction of staff numbers and ability to refer service users on all adversely effected – especially for smaller organisations
- Despite resourcefulness, this has resulted in the further marginalization of already marginalized groups and an emotional toll on staff and service users.

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

1. Reay, D., Crozier G. & Clayton, J. (2010) 'Fitting in' or 'standing out': working class students in Higher Education, *British Educational Research Journal*, 36, 1: 107-124. DOI: 10.1080/01411920902878925.
This article was 'Highly commended' by the British Educational Research Journal in their 2011 annual prize awards.
2. Reay, D. Crozier, G. & Clayton, J. (2009) Strangers in paradise? Working class students in elite universities, *Sociology*, 43, 6: 1103-1121. DOI: 10.1177/0038038509345700.
3. Clayton, J. (2009) *Just 'B' Me youth project: independent evaluation*. Sunderland: University of Sunderland. (Supplied on request from HEI)
4. Clayton, J. and Macdonald, S. J. (2013) The limits of technology: social class, occupation and digital inclusion in the city of Sunderland, England, *Information, Communication and Society*, DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2012.748817.
5. Macdonald, S.J. and Clayton, J. (2012) Back to the Future: Disability and the Digital Divide, *Disability and Society*. DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2012.732538
6. Donovan, C., Clayton, J. and Merchant, J. (2012) *Localism or Pulling the Plug on Public Services: Consequences of Austerity for the Third Sector in the North East* (Sunderland: University of Sunderland). (Supplied on request from HEI)

Grant funding was received to complete **Socio-cultural and learning experiences of working class students in Higher Education** project. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (£168,813) grant ref: ESRC RES-139-25-0208.

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

Collectively the body of research has informed the evidence base for policymakers at regional

and national level as well as public discussion about different forms of social inclusion. It has also aided individual partner organisations to secure external funding and to adopt new practices.

In terms of public discussion, the project examining social class and higher education has been subject to significant coverage and debate through popular media. Key findings were reported by the Times Higher Education supplement (Attwood, 15/05/08) [1] and members of the project team have opened these issues up to wider audiences by appearing on 'Thinking Allowed' on BBC Radio 4 (03/03/10) [2]. The findings have also been used in commentaries on the inequalities within the British education system, for example, Chakraborty, (2011) in *The Guardian* [3]. The digital inclusion project received regional coverage including a discussion piece by Sunderland Software City [4], an organisation supporting the development of the software industry, ICT employment and digital literacy. This piece also includes recognition from the Portfolio Holder for Resources at Sunderland City Council who commented on the value of the project for judging the success of digital inclusion initiatives in the city, indicating that it was a 'good example of how the digital age is having an impact across Sunderland.'

The social class and higher education project has contributed towards UK HE policy debates around widening participation. The interim report of the '*National Strategy for Access and Student Success*' published by the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) (2013) [5], includes this research in discussion of student success and senses of belonging in HE. References also feature in the Department of Business Innovation and Skills' (BIS) Research Paper '*Understanding Higher Education in Further Education Colleges*' (2012) [6] which considers why working class students may be deterred from specific HE institutions. In the '*Response to the social mobility commission*' from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2008) [7] the research contributes to the evidence base around unequal experiences of HE and the importance of supporting students in accessing opportunities at university. Other policy related citations include the RSA's examination of the social class gap in educational achievement (2010) [8] which uses the research to argue for the need for policy innovation.

On the basis of expertise developed through the digital inclusion project, Dr. Clayton was commissioned by the Institute of Prospective Technologies at the European Commission to conduct an 'Exhaustive Locality Mapping' of organisations in Sunderland [9] which facilitate access to ICT. This has led to the design of a typology of ICT actors for use in a major survey mapping of e-Inclusion actors and their impact across Europe (MIREIA). This has therefore aided the development of a process led by the EC, which looks to monitor and improve levels of ICT access across the EU. The digital inclusion project has also been considered by the UK Government with regard to digital inclusion policy [10]. A representative of the Cabinet Office commented on the questions it raises around why socially excluded communities may not engage successfully with digital inclusion initiatives.

Following the evaluation work for the Just B Me youth project, the youth group were able to use the study as evidence of good practice, which enabled it to attract 3 years funding through the

Henry Smith Charity. It also helped to foster closer collaboration with the City Council. According to the Chair of the steering group it "...was influential in brokering discussions between the city council and the youth project about meeting the needs of BME young people in the west end of Newcastle." [11] The evaluation report had a major impact on the approaches of the Scotswood Area Strategy and its acceptance for a clearer focus on intercultural youth work. In relation to the 'impact of the cuts' project, partner organisations have fed back on the manner in which the research findings helped their ability to be more resourceful in coping with changes in funding. One participating group delivering services to Women and Girls, have used their experiences expressed through the research to secure funding from the local PCT and to make the case for how resources in Newcastle are being allocated in light of austerity. There has also been an impact on the work of regional third sector agency VONNE who have indicated that they will now consider the importance of recording and reporting on the impact of funding cuts on the well being of staff in local CVS organisations [12].

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

1. Attwood, R. (2008) 'Working class students have the right stuff to succeed' *Times Higher Education* (15/05/08)
2. Reay, D. 'Strangers in Paradise?' *BBC 4 Thinking Allowed* (03/03/10)
3. Chakraborty, A (2011) 'More modern, more open, but the posh are back in charge' *The Guardian* (01/2/11)
4. Sunderland Software City (2010), "Digital success assessed" (<http://www.sunderlandsoftwarecity.com/news/2010/11/12/42-digital-success-assessed.html>)
5. *National Strategy for Access and Student Success – Interim Report* (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/news/news/2013/NatStrat_interim_report.pdf)
6. BIS (2012) *Research Paper no. 69: Understanding Higher Education in Further Education Colleges*
7. *Response to social mobility commission from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills*
8. Perry, E. and Francis, B. (2010) *Social Class Gap for Educational Achievement: a review of the literature* (London: RSA).
9. Coordinator (2013) European Commission – written response concerning impact of Sunderland Evaluation on MIREIA framework developed by the JCR-IPTS at the European Commission (Supplied on request from HEI).
10. Senior Policy Advisor, Government Digital Service, Cabinet Office - written response regarding digital inclusion evaluation project (Supplied on request from HEI).
11. Chair of Just B Me steering group – response regarding evaluations report (Supplied on request from HEI).
12. Chief Executive, VONNE – written response concerning impact of impact of the Cuts' research (Supplied on request from HEI).