

Social Exclusion in Later Life: Developing an Impact Narrative

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Translating Social Science into Public Policy: Challenges and Opportunities

8 December 2014, Manchester Museum



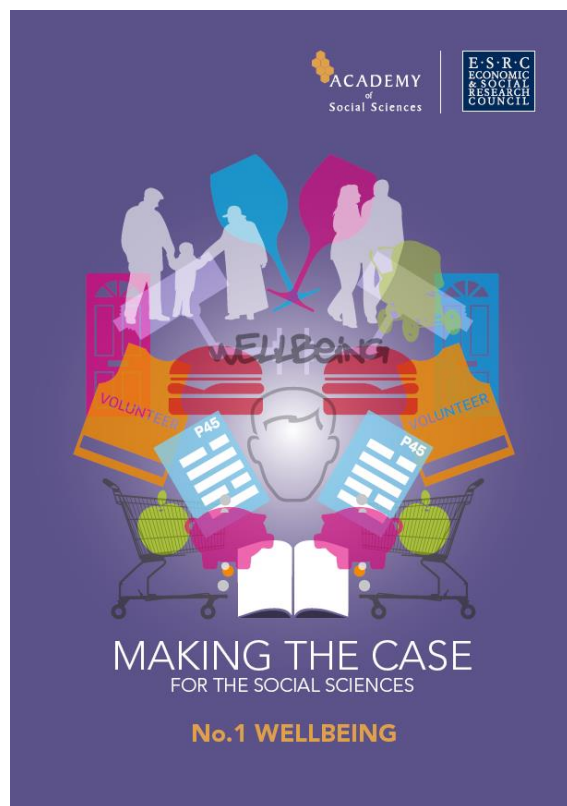
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Outline

- Situating impact
- Case study: ageing and social exclusion in socially deprived urban neighbourhoods
- Reporting impact: alternative narratives
- Impact as ongoing commitment
- Concluding thoughts



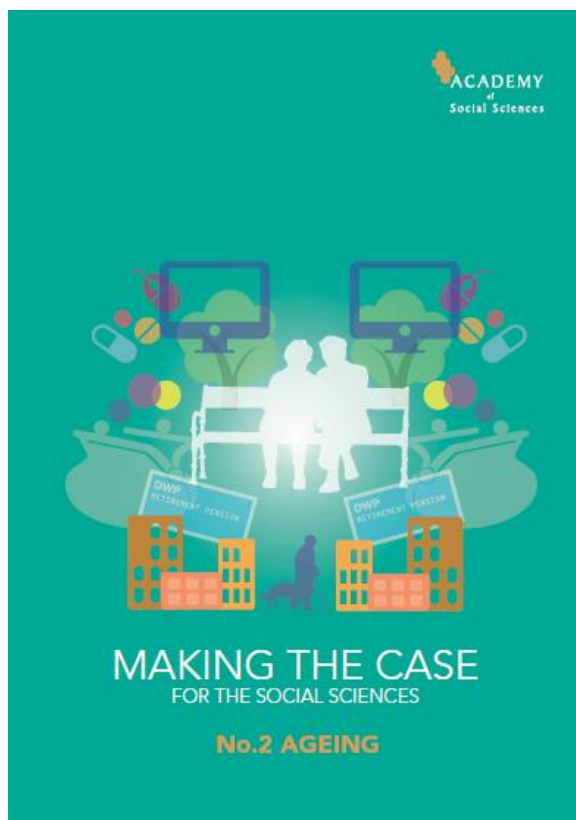
Situating impact in the social sciences



- Social science response to perceived threats and challenges
- Changing research funding environment: Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- Shift towards 'measuring and improving performance' (ESRC):
 - 'To demonstrate more rigorously the quality, outputs and academic/non-academic impact of UK social science research'



Situating impact in social gerontology



- Maximising impact of growing concern in social gerontology
- Relatively limited resources available for research on social aspects of ageing
- Collaboration of Academy of Social Sciences, Age UK and British Society of Gerontology on 'impact brochure'

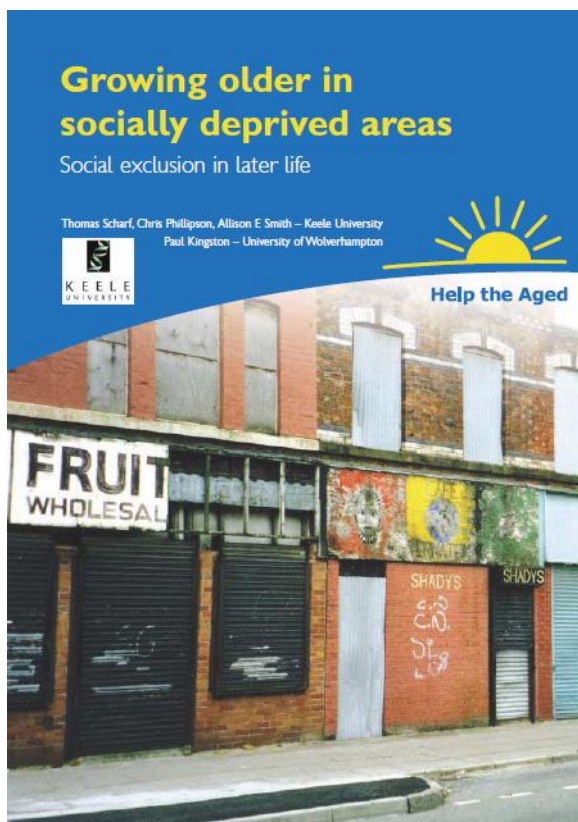


Situating impact in ‘critical gerontology’

- Impact as a reflection of value base in critical gerontology:
“a more value-committed approach to social gerontology – a commitment not just to understand the social construction of ageing but to change it” (Phillipson & Walker, 1987, p.12)
- Impact as a contribution to ‘passionate scholarship’:
“We hold out this hope for those of us committed to critical gerontology ... that we do whatever we do with passion and a belief that our scholarship can make a difference: that is move people to action” (Holstein & Minkler, 2007, p 26)



Case study



- Growing older in socially deprived urban communities (Scharf, Phillipson, Smith, Kingston, 2000-2003); ESRC Growing Older Programme
- Fieldwork in most deprived wards of most deprived local authorities
 - Group discussions (n=7)
 - Survey (n=600)
 - In-depth interviews (n=130)



Case study: key findings



- Social exclusion as multi-dimensional, dynamic construct:
 - Poverty/deprivation
 - Loneliness/isolation
 - Limited access to and use of services
 - Reduced civic participation
 - Neighbourhood influences
- High prevalence of forms of exclusion experienced by older people in deprived communities (Scharf et al., 2002, 2005)



Reporting impact: 'heroic' narrative



Improving Older People's Lives

Research Summary

Research by Professor Thomas Scharf, Professor of Social Gerontology at Keele University, and colleagues examined the lives of older people in socially deprived areas. It was undertaken as part of the ESRC's extensive Growing Older programme, a study of the quality of life in older age consisting of 24 separate research projects.

As well as producing new research knowledge, the programme sought to contribute to the development of policies and practices which might extend the quality of people's lives in older age. The continuing influence of the research led by Professor Scharf since the Growing Older programme was completed in 2003 demonstrates how this objective is being met.



Key Findings

- About half of people aged over 60 in deprived urban neighbourhoods were affected by poverty.
- More than one in ten older people found it difficult to manage on their incomes.
- 15 per cent of older people had occasionally gone without food and half had gone without a holiday.
- Older people were particularly vulnerable to violent crime.

could restrict older people's opportunities to undertake social activities and community roles. Ethnicity was shown by the research to be a significant factor in multiple exclusion, which was far more likely to be experienced by older people from Somali or Pakistani backgrounds than those in the Indian or Black Caribbean ethnic groups. One of the key messages from the research for policymakers was that they needed to take

Impact

The research was conducted in the three most deprived wards of Liverpool, Manchester and Newham in London. It showed that the risks of being exposed to different dimensions of social exclusion were significantly higher for older people in deprived areas than in other parts of the country. Not only were such people twice as likely to experience poverty as their peers elsewhere, but they would more probably experience what the researchers described as a "disproportionate and intense degree of multiple deprivation." Such multiple deprivation could result in social isolation, loneliness and exclusion from civic activities and basic services. Fear of crime, for example – 44 per cent of older people questioned by the researchers said they would feel very unsafe when leaving home after dark –

- Impact as:
 - Individualistic
 - Carefully planned
 - Occurring in series of well-ordered chronological stages
 - Transparent, objective, measurable
 - Unproblematic
- Identifies clear causal relationship between reporting of research findings and reported impact(s)



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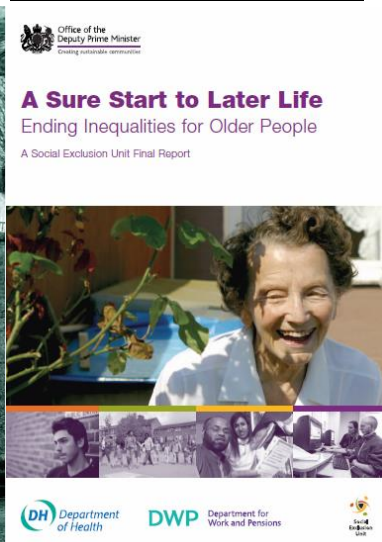
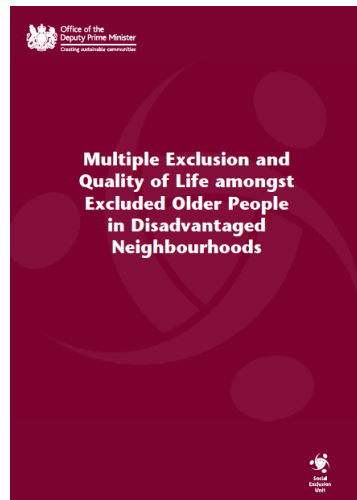
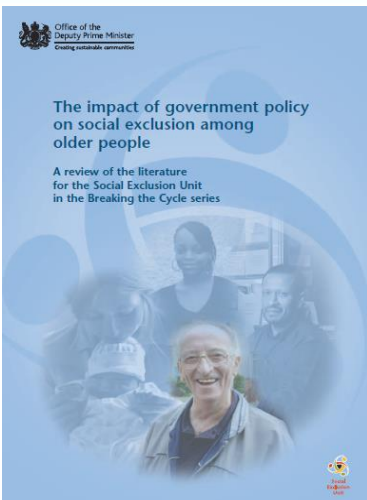
Reporting impact: 'realistic' narrative



- Impact as:
 - Collective
 - (Often) unplanned
 - Occurring in opportunistic and non-linear manner
 - Opaque, subjective, difficult to measure/quantify
 - Challenging/problematic
- Absence of clear causal relationship between reporting of research findings and reported impact(s)

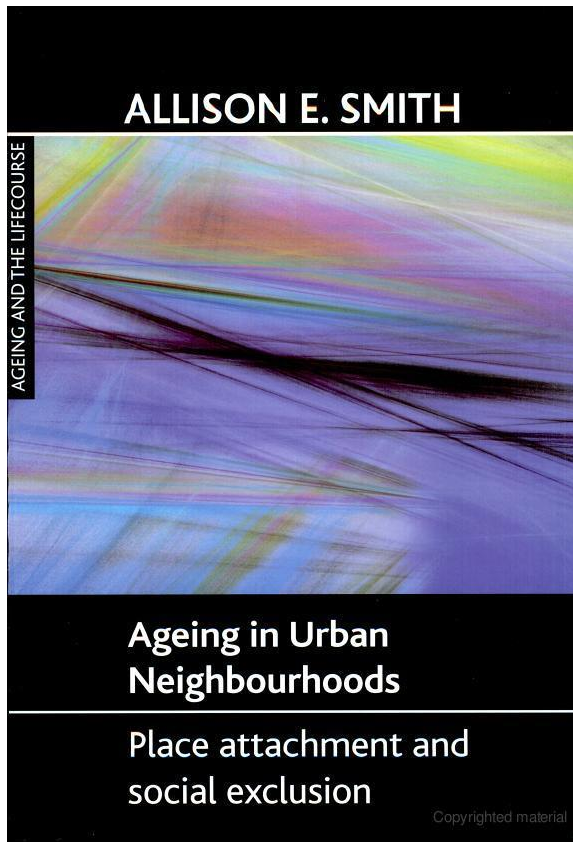


Better informed public policy making



- Reports for Help the Aged, Social Exclusion Unit, Commission for Rural Communities
- Presentations/discussions in Whitehall
- Shift towards preventative ageing policies (*LinkAge Plus* projects)
- Development of new material deprivation indicators for older people (DWP; Family Resources Survey since 2008)

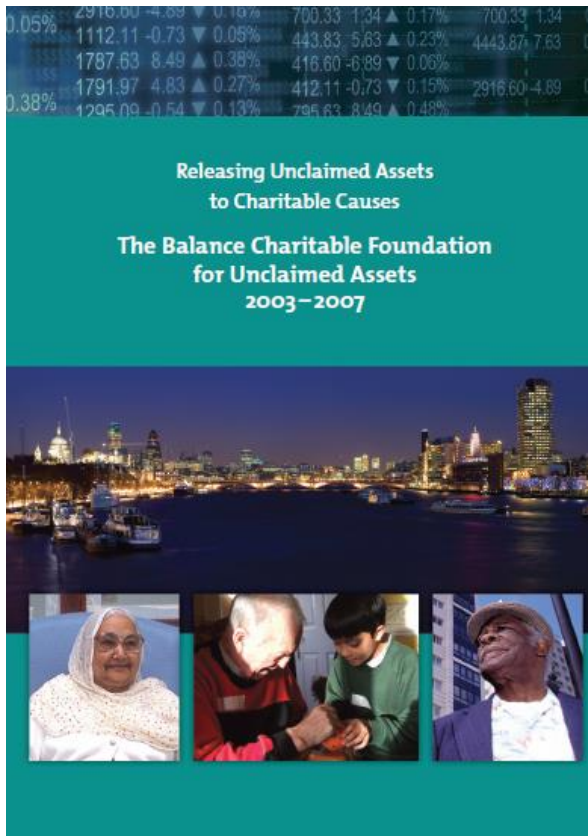
Highly skilled people



- Career/personal development of project's research assistant (Allison Smith – Cabinet Office; Royal Voluntary Service)
- PhD students (and postdocs) working in broad area of social inclusion/exclusion
- Contribution to academic programmes



Improved quality of life



- New Philanthropy Capital (2004) report 'Grey Matters'
- Guardian Christmas Appeal 2004/5 (ca. £230,000 raised)
- Balance (Gatsby) Charitable Foundation focus on disadvantaged older people (over £8m distributed to charities)

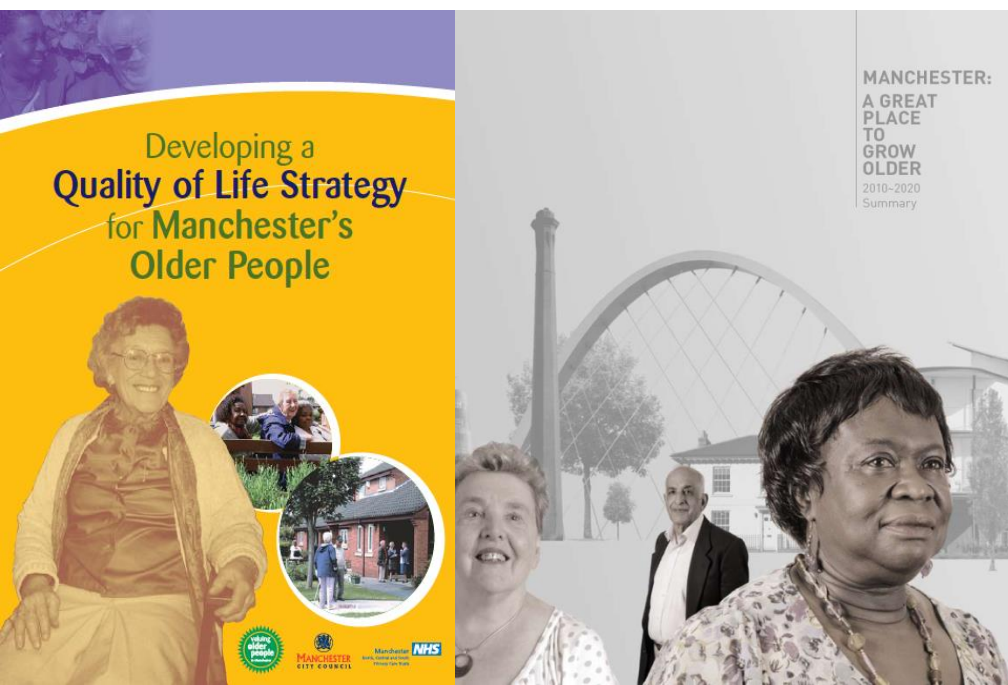


Impact as ongoing commitment



Partnership working with Manchester City Council

- Manchester Ageing Strategies (2004; 2010)
- ‘Key issues for an ageing society’ (training)
- Manchester Ageing Studies Certificate
- Cultural events
- Joint PhD studentships



“Content was very diverse and delivered in a clear and easily understood way.”

Impact as ongoing commitment



- CALL-ME Project with Manchester City Council
 - Promoting independence and social engagement amongst older people in disadvantaged communities
 - Supported by Research Councils' New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (2005-2012)



Impact as ongoing commitment

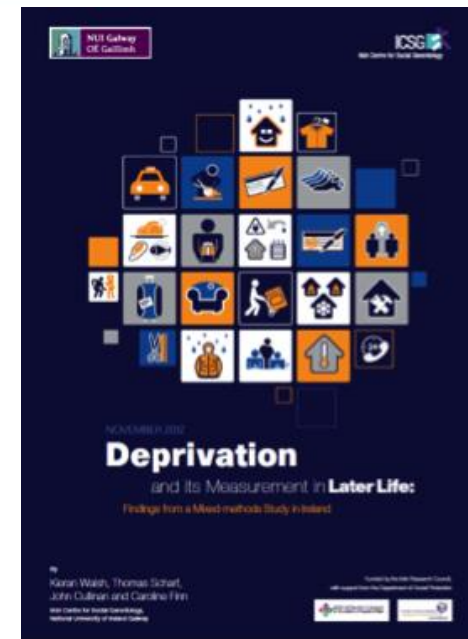
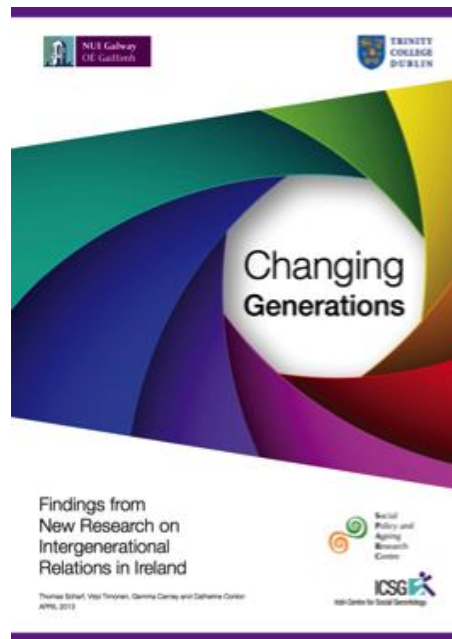
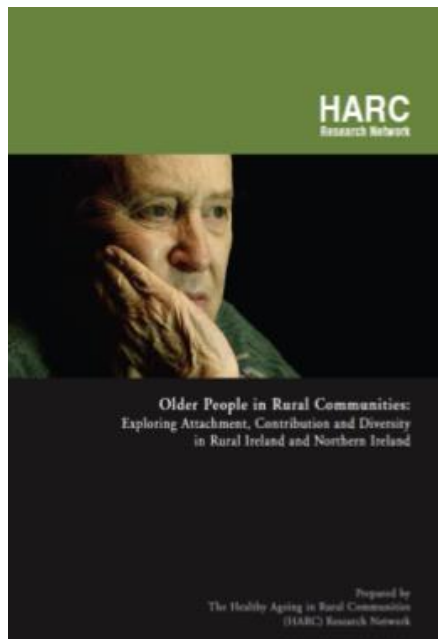
Safeguarding the Convoy
A call to action from the Campaign to End Loneliness



Campaign to
EndLoneliness
CONNECTIONS IN OLDER AGE

- Campaign to End Loneliness
 - Charities Evaluation Services review suggested during first three years Campaign had ‘exceeded expectations’.
 - Review document commends Campaign’s ability to raise awareness and commitment, mobilise support and encourage policy change, all with very limited resources and in a short period of time.

Impact as ongoing commitment

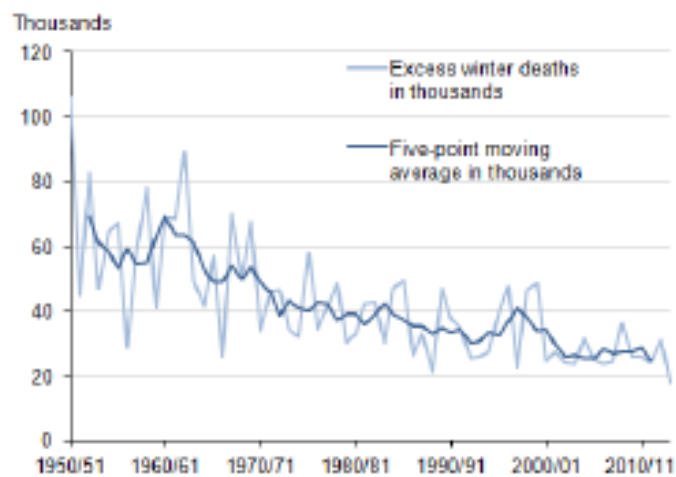


Since 2010, work continuing at Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUI Galway



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Impact: a reality check



Breakthrough
Britain

The
Forgotten Age

Understanding poverty and social exclusion in later life

An Interim Report by the
Older Age Working Group
Chaired by Sara McKee

November 2010

THE CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL
JUSTICE

Support by
CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
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ageuk
Improving later life



- Office for National Statistics (2010) report on 'Inequalities and poverty in retirement' shows that income of bottom quintile group of retired households fell from 13% in 1977 to under 10% in 2007/08
- National Equality Panel (2010) report emphasises persisting nature of inequalities in later life based on such factors as gender, ethnicity, disability and social class
- Good research, unfavourable outcomes

Concluding thoughts

- Demonstrating impact as central concern of social sciences
- Effective impact typically requires ongoing personal commitment of social researchers
- Researchers can often shape their own impact narratives
- Scientific excellence underpins worthwhile impact
- Impact is always challenging, but can be enjoyable and rewarding



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