



Charlemont grant report

Recipient name:	Dr Alison Herbert
Discipline and subject area:	Humanities and Social Sciences; Sociology, Political Sciences and Social Sciences
Amount and year awarded:	€2,335 in 2020
Title of project:	An exploration of the relationship between remote rural living and perspectives on ageing amongst midlife women in the Outer Hebridean islands of Scotland



Summary of findings:

Preliminary findings of research show a direct relationship between place and perspectives on ageing amongst all 12 research participants. Diversity lay in the nuanced degree of place attachment amongst participants. All participants expressed positive attitudes towards ageing on the islands. There appears to be no clear division of perspective amongst those indigenous to the research area and in-migrants.

Whether native to the islands or not, participants reported positive perspectives on ageing resulting from living on the Outer Hebridean islands. The Hebridean islands do not boast comprehensive medical facilities. The HQ of all governmental, health and education institutions are based on Stornoway, Lewis, and are still relatively remote to those living in other Hebridean islands. As a result, all participants of the North and South Uist islands perceived themselves to be at a disadvantage in accessing resources compared to those living in the islands of Lewis and Harris. Intra-island differences in perspective did arise amongst participants regarding the nature of 'the other'. That is, those in the North Uist islands and those in the South Uists perceived the other as holding different cultural belief systems. These views were stronger amongst those who were native to the islands and who had grown up there as children. Divisions in religion (Catholic and Protestant) between the North and South Uists, and in the Outer Hebridean islands of Harris and Lewis (not explored in this research project) played a prominent role historically. However; the perception is that such divisions are no longer as clear-cut. There still exists however some differences in cultural perspectives between the North and South Uists regarding community participation and individualism. How all of these factors impact on ageing at mid-life and in older age will be teased out and explored during my analysis and interpretation of participant narratives.



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Plans for continuing collaboration:

I would like to continue this research project by exploring perspectives on ageing and place on the Outer Hebridean islands of Lewis and Harris and compare these to the Inner Hebridean island of Skye. I would seek to compare the less accessible islands of Lewis and Harris (joint population of around 21,500 persons) with the more accessible island of Skye (population of around 10,000 persons).

Published work and publication plans:

I have begun transcribing my 12 participant interviews. Once this is done I will begin the process of analysing and interpreting the data from a constructivist grounded theory perspective. I will then write an academic paper to be submitted to a peer-review journal such as 'Ageing & Society' or 'Journal of Woman and Aging'.

I will write an article for RTE 'Brainstorm', which publishes on-line and is accessible by both academia and the public.

I will write a Policy Brief for NUIG's Whitaker Institute and present my findings and analysis through the Whitaker Institute's seminar series.





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Dissemination and plans for future dissemination:

I intend to present my findings and analysis from this research trip at the British Society of Gerontology annual conference in July 2022 at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Collaborations and planned collaborations:

I am open to collaborate with any interested Body, particularly in Scotland, that can make use of my findings.

Outreach and engagement activities:

I met and discussed my work with the Editor of the local newspaper, 'Am Paipear'. As a result the editor has stated that he will publish a short article and photo on my work in the Outer Hebrides.

