

Why we did a tracer study*

	Botswana	Ireland	USA	Kenya
Why we did a tracer study	we wanted to know if the work was useful, were we affecting the drop-out rates? could we counter the scepticism we met?	we wanted to demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach, to see if the work continues to have an effect after some years	to find out if there could be any traces left of programmes nearly 20 years after the event	it is a training programme and people always talk about the teachers; after 30 years' work we wanted to see what was happening to children
Whose agenda was it?	ours	ours, we were trying to convince the Health Board to take a new approach	ours and BVLF's	ours
What audiences were being aimed at?	ourselves, the communities, the teachers; we didn't think about dissemination when we started	parents and the Health Board. It is good to share it with a wider audience now	primarily High/Scope and BVLF, possibly policy-makers, teacher trainers	government, policy-makers, funders, communities
How did the study fit other research/evaluation activities?	none of us were researchers, we had an open agenda, allowed ourselves to be informed by the process	the programme has been evaluated from the start but this was independent of other studies	very well: we have been able to combine the findings with earlier work in a new publication	there has been much research and evaluation but mostly on processes
What are the uses of this approach?	we used the results to improve the programme, to work with primary schools	the results have contributed to policy changes	we were quite surprised to find as many traces as we did, suggesting durability of intense training	many of our findings were unexpected
What are the limits of this approach?	the official records were unreliable, this study couldn't give overwhelming proof		there have been many changes in the context over the years, especially mothers into the labour force	the long interval between the children leaving the programme and the study – so many other variables have intervened

* From the Following Footsteps workshop, Jamaica 2002

	Jamaica	Trinidad	Colombia	Israel
Why we did a tracer study	we wanted to know what had happened to the mothers and the children	we wanted to know how the programme had impacted life choices	it follows on from 30 years of collecting data, we wanted to demonstrate change and impact	to find out how the children from this very distinctive group have fared
Whose agenda was it?	the impetus came from BVLF, the study was designed locally	the impetus came from BVLF, the study was designed locally	ours	the impetus came from BVLF, the study was designed locally
What audiences were being aimed at?	donors, the parish, the media	ourselves, donors, government, community	other projects in other parts of the world, funders	the implementing organisation
How did the study fit other research/evaluation activities?	it was a good follow-up to our earlier research	our other evaluations have been descriptive	it fits our whole package of evaluations and our work in the Effectiveness Initiative	the programme has been evaluated from the start but this population has been over-researched
What are the uses of this approach?	we were able to find new kinds of information because of the qualitative approach	we could see the effectiveness of the programme	the research began as quantitative, it took a long time to see change in indicators; this last part has been qualitative	we found that the programme had made a tangible difference to children's lives
What are the limits of this approach?	subjectivity, lack of a 'pure' comparison group	attributing change when so many other things happen		so much data are gathered – how can this be handled?