

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

CIRCY

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH
IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH



US
UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

The cover image is entitled 'Heritage', and is by Jemima Dorling, aged 17 from Hampshire in the UK. Jemina told us that this picture showed her sister embracing her African heritage.

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Welcome

The Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY) is a pan-university research centre at the University of Sussex, with a membership that spans social sciences, arts, humanities, psychology, and professional fields including social work, law, education and health. CIRCY's research is innovative, interdisciplinary and international in scope, and aims to reflect and address real world concerns whilst developing new academic understandings. Our diverse research and scholarship are united by a critical engagement with children and young people's lives in time and place, and a focus on the rights, voice and welfare of the child or young person at the centre of inquiry. Considered together, the critical and multidisciplinary perspectives offered by CIRCY projects and outputs enrich understandings of childhood and youth within the fields of research, policy and practice.

Over this academic year 2020-21, the Centre has continued to grow, increasing our membership across disciplines, establishing new projects, and building academic and public engagement locally, nationally and internationally. The Covid-19 pandemic has restricted most face-to-face activities, but we have been very active online including with seminars, reading groups, networking events, and the support of research bidding and academic writing. A particular theme for this year was a sensitisation to #BlackLivesMatter and decolonisation of teaching curricula, theory and methodologies. Our reading group sought to reflect this through engagement with child and young adult fiction structured around themes of racism and colonialism in Benjamin Zephaniah's 'Windrush Child', Alex Wheatle's 'Crongton Knights', and Angie Thomas's 'The Hate U Give'.

We highly recommend these to our membership! It also influenced our selection for the front cover of Jemima Dorling's striking depiction of her sister embracing her African heritage.

CIRCY was established in September 2012, and as we move towards our tenth anniversary - and the University's 60th anniversary - in 2022, it seems a good time to reflect on achievements and future possibilities for the centre. So, through this year, we will be establishing a programme of engagement with key stakeholders from the university and beyond, including academics, practitioners, policy makers, children, young people and families, both from the UK and internationally, to explore CIRCY's aims and vision, celebrate what we have achieved so far, and consider how we might enhance the relevance and impact of our work.

As part of this 'Looking back, looking forwards' retrospective, our theme for the 2021-22 academic year will be 'Childhoods: Then, Now, and Future' - beautifully launched by Subhra Sundar's image on page 4 of how our planet might look in 30 years' time, depending on whether or not climate change is addressed. We will design our seminar series, reading group and community arts activity around this theme, and consideration will be given to the development of a journal special issue or edited book which offers inter- and cross-disciplinary contributions to constructions and representations of children, young people, childhood and youth over time. Our hope is that this will culminate in a 'blended' celebratory event next summer, with participants from near and far joining face-to-face and online.

Our research and knowledge exchange

In this report, we do not seek to document the whole of CIRCY's work, but rather to highlight examples that help to convey the richness and variety of our activity, in seeking to understand – and make a difference to – the lives of children, young people and families. A central feature are our 'Spotlights' - narrative discussions of some of our activities - including research projects, knowledge exchange activities, and doctoral research. By popular demand, these are lengthened this year to offer a fuller picture of methodologies, findings and activities, grouped via CIRCY's research themes:

- Emotional lives
- Everyday lives and extra(ordinary) childhoods
- Improving services for children, young people and families
- Imaginative methodologies
- Voice and participation.

These themes were established to inform and inspire our work and build synergies, not to categorise or set boundaries between studies or thematic areas. We conceive of our themes as underpinning concerns that intersect to inform the conceptualisation of childhood and youth across space and time, and to enhance the wellbeing and participation of children and young people in family, social and public lives.

The psychosocial challenge of COVID-19 has continued to pose practical and emotional challenges in the academic year 2020-2021. And yet, in spite of all this, so much exciting work has still been going on this year, including new initiatives to learn more about the experience of children, young people, and families as they grapple with the current crisis. Hence, many of our spotlights this year additionally highlight how our members and colleagues have adapted their methods of research and practice with childhood and youth in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The annual CIRCY community arts project

Building from our visual projects in 2017 on 'Picturing the Future', in 2018 on 'Picturing Kindness', in 2019 on 'What Nature and the Environment Mean to Me', and in 2020 on 'Through my Window – Images created during the Covid-19 pandemic', this year we invited children and young people to share their drawing and/or other art works on the theme 'Imagine if our world was ...'. The images submitted - along with the young people's descriptions of their work if they chose to provide captions - have illustrated this Annual Report. We want to thank all the children and young people from the UK, Chile and India that shared their art work with us. Over the next year, we will be working with children and young people to produce art work on the new theme of 'Childhoods: Then, Now and Future'.

On that note, we are delighted to let you know that we have created [an online gallery](#) with all the CIRCY community arts projects through the years. This public space enables children and young people, families and our members and colleagues to view and admire children and young people's meaningful visual creations. Please do take a look! We are currently considering some form of public engagement with children and young people around the images and welcome your ideas and suggestions.



'Our earth with and without climate change', by Subhra Sundar, aged 13, from India.

Subhra told us:

"My artwork is based on my thoughts and imaginations about the environment. Often I listen about climate change and how it affects our daily lives. While drawing this picture, I realised how important it is to save our environment. This artwork is a visual representation of my imagination. It is a promise to myself that protecting the earth is my responsibility'.

CIRCY Leadership

CIRCY is led by **Michelle Lefevre** (Social Work and Social Care) with the support of Co-Director, **Rebecca Webb** (Education) and **Loreto Rodriguez**, our Postgraduate Research Assistant.



Michelle Lefevre



Rebecca Webb



Loreto Rodriguez

We are lucky to have the advice and guidance of two important sources of support. Firstly, our Steering Group from across the University: **Robin Banerjee** and **Kathryn Lester** (Psychology); **Janet Boddy** (Education); **Dorte Thoreson** (Institute of Development Studies); **Nuno Ferreira** (Law); **Pam Thurschwell** (English); **Jo Moran-Ellis** (Sociology); **Liam Berriman** (Social Work and Social Care); and **Fiona Courage** (Mass Observation Archive).

During the last year, our Steering Group said 'goodbye and thank you!' to Hester Barron (History) and Anne-Meike Fechter (Anthropology).

The group meets termly to guide CIRCY's work intellectually and practically. Members also contribute regularly to CIRCY activities.

Secondly, CIRCY has an International Advisory Committee – academic and professional stakeholders with particular knowledges and expertise in the field of childhood and youth. This group meets annually to reflect on CIRCY's activities and outputs and consider how to develop our public engagement and reach.

Current members include:

- **Susi Arnott** - film-maker, media professional and co-founder of Walking Pictures
- **Susannah Bowyer** - Research and Development Manager, [Research in Practice](#)
- **Sara Bragg** - Centre for Sociology of Education and Equity, UCL Institute of Education
- **Jenny Clifton** - independent consultant (formerly Office of the Children's Commissioner)
- **Ros Edwards** - Professor of Sociology, University of Southampton
- **Ann Phoenix** - Professor of Psychosocial Studies, Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education
- **Heinz Sünker** - Professor of Social Pedagogy, Begische Universität, Wuppertal, Germany
- **Uma Vennam** - Professor of Social Work, Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam University, Turpati, India.
- **Saul Becker** - Emeritus Professor of Social Work and Social Policy, University of Sussex. Saul joins us fresh taking his retirement from Sussex earlier this year.

June Statham - Emerita Professor of Education and Family Support, UCL Institute of Education, stepped down from the CIRCY Steering Group this year.

CIRCY's involvement in teaching and learning

CIRCY's involvement in teaching and learning continues in its mission to provide a supportive and creative 'space to think with' for the academic community – building methodological capacity, opening up new interdisciplinary possibilities, and supporting the work of colleagues at all career stages. We have an active social media presence, with a Twitter feed and blog. This was the second year that students could register for the Childhood and Youth PhD and you will see spotlight contributions from **Loreto Rodriguez** and **Jimena Bernal** later in this report. Our taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses continue to flourish, and we are delighted to see our graduates thriving across a range of academic and professional roles with children, young people and families:

Childhood and Youth: Theory and Practice BA

Led by **Rachel Burr** (Social Work and Social Care), the Childhood and Youth: Theory and Practice BA has been ranked third best in the UK for Childhood & Youth Studies, according to the *Complete University Guide 2022*.

This summer, two of our students - Eden Franklin-Lester and Emma Beeden - were successful in their applications to the University's Junior Research Associate (JRA) Scheme. Students on this eight-week programme receive a bursary to work on their research full-time, training, and the opportunity to work closely with supervisors and network with other researchers. At the end of the scheme, they will produce a research poster which will be displayed at an Undergraduate Research Poster Exhibition. In their spotlight features (p8), the two successful applicants speak about the focus of their research and their motivation for conducting it.

Childhood and Youth Studies MA

The past 18 months of the Covid-19 pandemic have presented enormous challenges for students on the Childhood and Youth Studies MA (known colloquially as MACYS). The teaching team has been incredibly impressed with the ability of all MACYS students to continue producing fantastic work – not least as part of their research dissertations, which have taken place under very challenging circumstances.

Last year, MACYS students were unable to undertake primary research on topics related to childhood and youth, and so they had to creatively and imaginatively engage with desk-based methods - such as literature reviews, policy research, and secondary data analysis. In what follows, we provide a flavour of some of our students' research by shining a spotlight on last year's prize winning dissertations:

Re-imagining 'social justice': The ongoing impact of Covid-19 on children and young people in custody in England and Wales

Georgina Clutterbuck, a former English Literature student at Sussex, was the winner of last year's Barrie Thorne Prize for 'Best Overall Academic Achievement'. Their dissertation took the form of a critical policy analysis, examining how the youth justice system had been impacted by Covid-19. Georgina's interest in the topic stemmed from "*a desire to understand how 'justice' is conceived and enacted in relation to children and young people...*" and a concern that, "*after the first national lockdowns to affect the UK in March [...] children and young people involved with youth justice were being obscured from discussions about how to support those considered 'vulnerable' or 'at risk'.*" Georgina's timely research captured a key moment in the pandemic and highlighted how problems within the youth justice system have been exacerbated by the national lockdown policies.

**Criminalizing urban black queer students in American public schools:
An extended literature review**

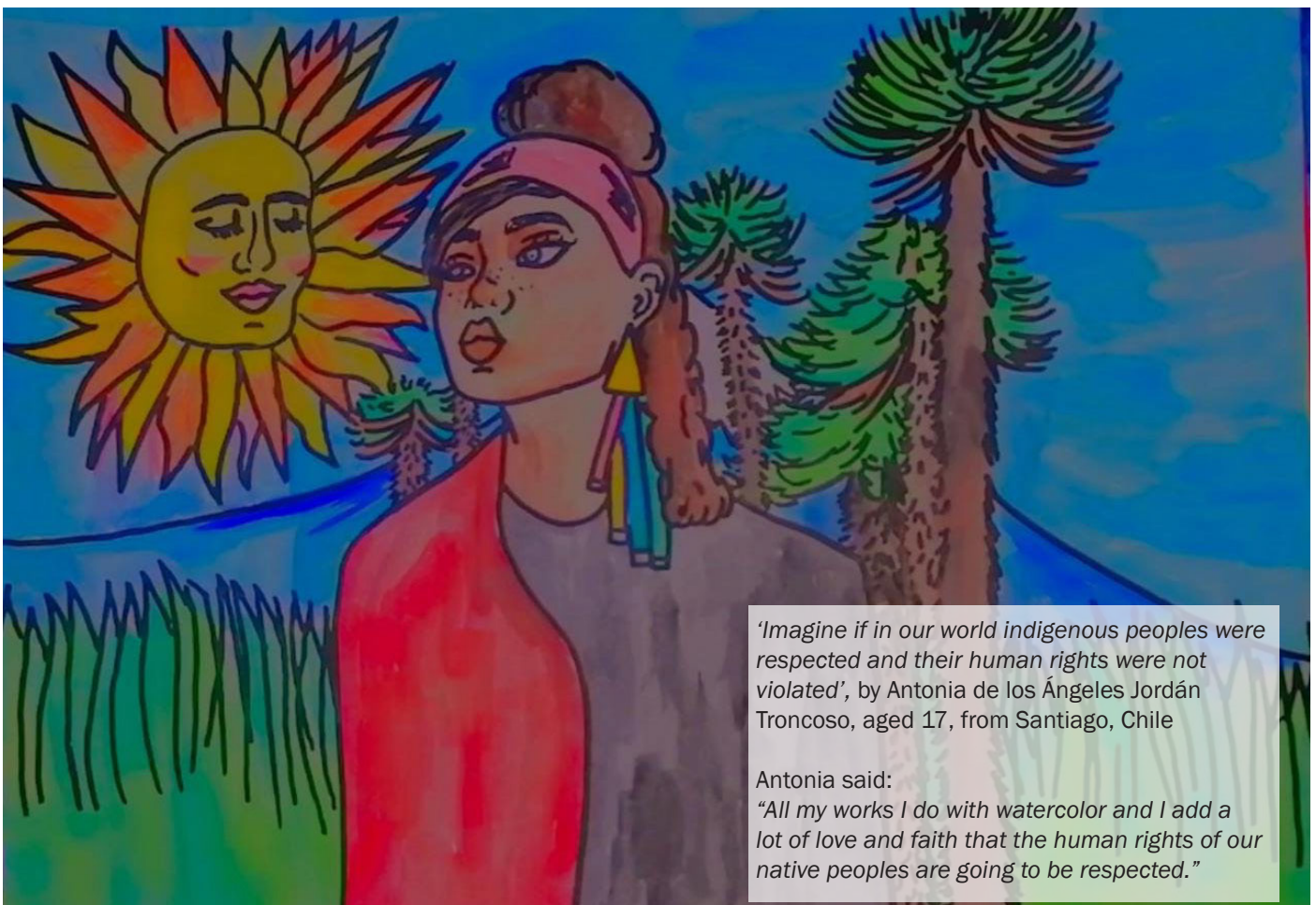
Kirsten Syberg was one of the joint winners of last year's Cathy Urwin prize for work with the greatest impact on practice. Kirsten had been keen throughout her course to tackle social justice issues that had arisen through the Black Lives Matters movement, and to combine these with concerns about queer youth experiences. Kirsten employed a literature review methodology to examine the experiences of black queer youth in the US public school system.

Kirsten's research aimed to critically explore how *"Black and LGBTQ children and youth are punished at rates ... disproportionate to misbehaviour and ... funnelled into what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline"*. Kirsten's study sought to highlight how the pipeline emerges from *"hostile school environments that push students out of schools and into the critical justice system"*. Kirsten's research also highlighted how black queer youth are subject to multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalisation within US public schools, and how these issues need to be addressed at both a structural and local level.

**Children and young people participation between theory and practice:
A case study of the Child Friendly Cities initiative in Indonesia**

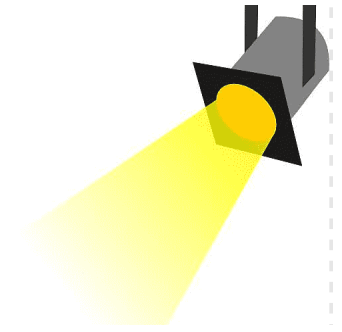
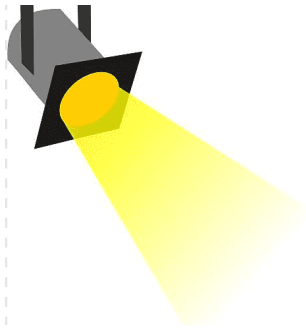
Monica Agnes Sylvia was the other joint winner of the Cathy Urwin prize. Her research undertook a critical analysis of publicly accessible materials relating to the Child Friendly Cities programme in Indonesia. Monica's primary interest was to explore how child participation was conceptualised in the programme, and to reflect on tensions between more 'universal' ideas of children's participation versus the more specific and local understandings of children's agency within the Indonesian context. Monica wanted to study the Child Friendly Cities programme in particular *"as it allows the exploration of children and young people's participation in public policy, program and decision-making from an interdisciplinary childhood and youth studies perspectives, and through the dynamics of international and local contexts"*.

Monica's findings included that the Indonesian CFC initiative often treated children's participation in a tokenistic way, and her dissertation argued for policy makers to consider the programme can be re-configured to work 'with' children.



'Imagine if in our world indigenous peoples were respected and their human rights were not violated', by Antonia de los Ángeles Jordán Troncoso, aged 17, from Santiago, Chile

Antonia said:
"All my works I do with watercolor and I add a lot of love and faith that the human rights of our native peoples are going to be respected."



Spotlight

Undergraduate Researcher 1: Eden Franklin-Lester

Research into deaf childhoods in relation to technology is limited, often focusing on assistive technologies rather than what adolescents using British Sign Language (BSL) utilise daily. If we view deaf BSL users as a language minority instead of a disabled group, we can encourage the growth and development of BSL in hearing societies.

My study aims to contribute new insights into the under-researched digital lives of BSL-using adolescents, and to address how we can increase exposure to BSL to encourage learning and empower those who use it to communicate.

My project looks at how young people aged 13-19 respond and relate to BSL through videos of signed songs on TikTok in order to understand if and how attitudes towards this language and its users have evolved with the new generation.

I aim to engage in content analysis of comment thread responses to signed song videos to explore how use of these songs can increase exposure to BSL and consider encouragement towards learning the language. I will analyse signed songs produced by deaf and hearing creators on Tiktok to survey concepts of empowerment for the language and its users, as well as discussions of representation.

This study is especially relevant now as, due to the Coronavirus restrictions, many young people use their social media platforms to communicate, relate and connect with each other. Addressing how we can integrate and normalise BSL in our communities would create a more accessible future for all.



Undergraduate Researcher 2: Emma Beeden

My research focuses on the experiences of young adults who received kidney transplants during childhood. My interest in this area is driven by personal experience, as well as what I have learnt about child-centred care on my degree programme. When I was nine years old, I received a kidney transplant. I now successfully manage all aspects of my care. However, as a teenager I often felt that I was navigating my journey in the dark.

The research will explore how young adults who have had transplants become more independent in adolescence, how their health conditions impact their ability to be as independent as their peers, and the coping strategies they develop during the process.

The group of young adults the research will focus on will have had a large amount of their childhood affected by the need for medication, surgery and treatment. This may have caused them to become mature and independent quicker, or it could have also caused them to become more rebellious in a desire to start living their lives and behaving equivalently to their peers. Or a combination of both. I will be interviewing people aged 18-24 via Zoom to find out how their transplant impacts their ability to be independent, and how this has affected their lives.

I will also be surveying professionals to see if their opinions match up with young people's. This will allow me to see whether the support currently in place is what young people want and need.

Spotlighting our research

Emotional lives

The theme of Emotional Lives sensitises us to the ways in which emotion expresses and confirms the materiality, relationality and sensuality of existence. The theme prompts critical thinking about affective practices and established and taken-for-granted issues in childhood, youth, and wellbeing.

The World of The Unknown

There was this dark mischievous world full of lost souls wandering through the night skies.
Through the planets and through space and time.
But through this world and other worlds spirits and angels guide us the right way.
They do this through signs, viruses and diseases.
Everything is something made by the holy ones of mother nature.

The reason why people die and suffer is to try and restore the balance of life,
and to teach us a lesson with mother earth and the elements around us.

But Yet, there is still so much more out there. Other worlds!

Life forces and planets that are supposedly meant to be a duplication of this world.
There is so much that we don't see or hear on a day-to-day basis.

The spirits of the trees whisper and talk to us through their heart and souls.
There is energy and voices all around our bodies flowing like the water that flows down a waterfall.

Animals speaking and trees screaming, every time we chop a tree down, they internally cry.
We all need to open our third eye,
so we can see the magic and spirit in everything the universe has to offer.
We can even open new doorways to new paths which have yet to be explored.

The depths of the earth hold a great power that can hold the roots of a single tree.

Mother Nature and Father Time are trying to tell us something.
That we need to embrace what we have around us.
The spirits of our lost ancestors are watching us as we get lost inside ourselves.
As we forget the wonders of the forest and as we blindly walk upon the earth.

Remember!
Remember, seeking of what we have forgotten.
Learn through our heart and souls.

Keep in touch with the beings,
with the holy ones and with Mother Nature.
Every death and every life can restore the balance of life.

This is what is needed.

This poem was written by a young person (who wishes to remain anonymous) in response to our theme of 'Imagine if the world was...'



Spotlight

Emotional Lives 1:

'The Rez: An Interactive Podcast and Comic to Support Adolescent wellbeing (that's also hilarious!) **Martin Spinelli, Senior Lecturer in Media and Film**

In 2019, my research partner Lance Dann (University of Brighton) and I published the first scholarly monograph about podcasting ([Podcasting: The Audio Media Revolution](#)). My favourite chapter looked at how young people were using podcasting to access new cultures and feel out new identities, but also as a means of expressing themselves and describing their own experiences in counterpoint to institutional media's often negative portrayals of youth.

As we sat down to brainstorm a new project in the wake of the book, stories of an adolescent mental health crisis were filling the news. Rates of anxiety, eating disorders, OCD and body image issues were spiking among the young, and there was mounting evidence that the way young people were relating to media - particularly social media - was a key factor. These issues were close to home for us, and our own extended families and circles of friends had direct experiences of teens and adolescents struggling with these serious and seemingly intractable problems. Our initial secondary research showed that teen depression started shooting up in 2012, and has steadily risen for teens and pre-teens ever since. In that same period, the number of adolescent suicides had also skyrocketed. Issues touching an increasingly large part of the British population. In late 2017, the British government acknowledged the severity of the crisis and issued the Green Paper, [Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision](#), which noted that one in ten children had some form of diagnosable mental health disorder - that's nearly three in every primary school class. While useful in focusing attention, the policies following from that paper were mainly about re-organizing existing resources rather than making new commitments to seriously grapple with the problems; just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic!

Lance and I decided to use our own substantial media production skills, research expertise and networks to try to do something about these problems ourselves, at least in some modest way. We began by making contact with **Robin Banerjee** (Psychology) and the CRESS (Children's Relationships, Emotions, and Social Skills) Lab. We asked Robin and his research colleague, Mark Wright (University of Brighton), to help us identify ways we might use a multi-media project to help make a dent in these problems, and to help pre-teens develop resiliency strategies to support them growing into healthy and well-resourced young adults.

We learned from Robin and Mark that lots of exposure to 'consumer culture ideals' in media (like acquisitiveness and appearance) had negative correlations with adolescent well-being. It was also clear that modelling kindness was a potential antidote to the problems that come with the 'recognition hunger' of social media.

Now the fun part: With empirical evidence on healthy media diets and kindness in hand, we set about building something really engaging for 8- to 12-year-olds. I pursued and won a large Arts Council England Project Grant and we began [The Rez](#) with creative workshops of ethnically and economically diverse young people around the country. Professional comic book artists Rachael Smith and Hannah Berry coached these pre-teens in the workshops to create their own comic characters and storylines - ideas that found their way into our story bible.

Then we assembled an ace team of writers from the BBC, ITV and other quarters to help us produce scripts for ten 15-minute podcast episodes (plus the comic). These were first and foremost fun, funny and fast-paced, but also subtly modelled those healthy pro-social behaviours.

We recorded the series remotely during the lockdown of summer 2020 with a very diverse cast of BAFTA winners, the star of Hamilton in the West End, and some of the most well-known children's media voice actors in the country (all fortunately available because the pandemic had closed theatres and halted most other media productions).

In the autumn, we secured a distribution arrangement with Gen-Z Media, the largest producer and distributor of youth podcast content in the world. The comic book launched alongside the podcast in April of 2021 on all major podcast aggregators, and at the time of this writing we have more than 50,000 downloads a more than 11,000 unique listeners. Our games-based website (jointherez.com) is collecting response data and feedback and we are in the process of massive roll-out to primary schools (funded by HEIF) with bespoke lesson plans for PSHE classes and focus groups happening to collect qualitative data on pro-social message absorption.

Now we are looking forward - applying for more Arts Council and AHRC money to produce the next versions of the The Rez, and to explore broader questions about how and why young people discover and choose cool things to listen to, and to further explore the best ways to use the contemporary media environment to support adolescent wellbeing and resilience.

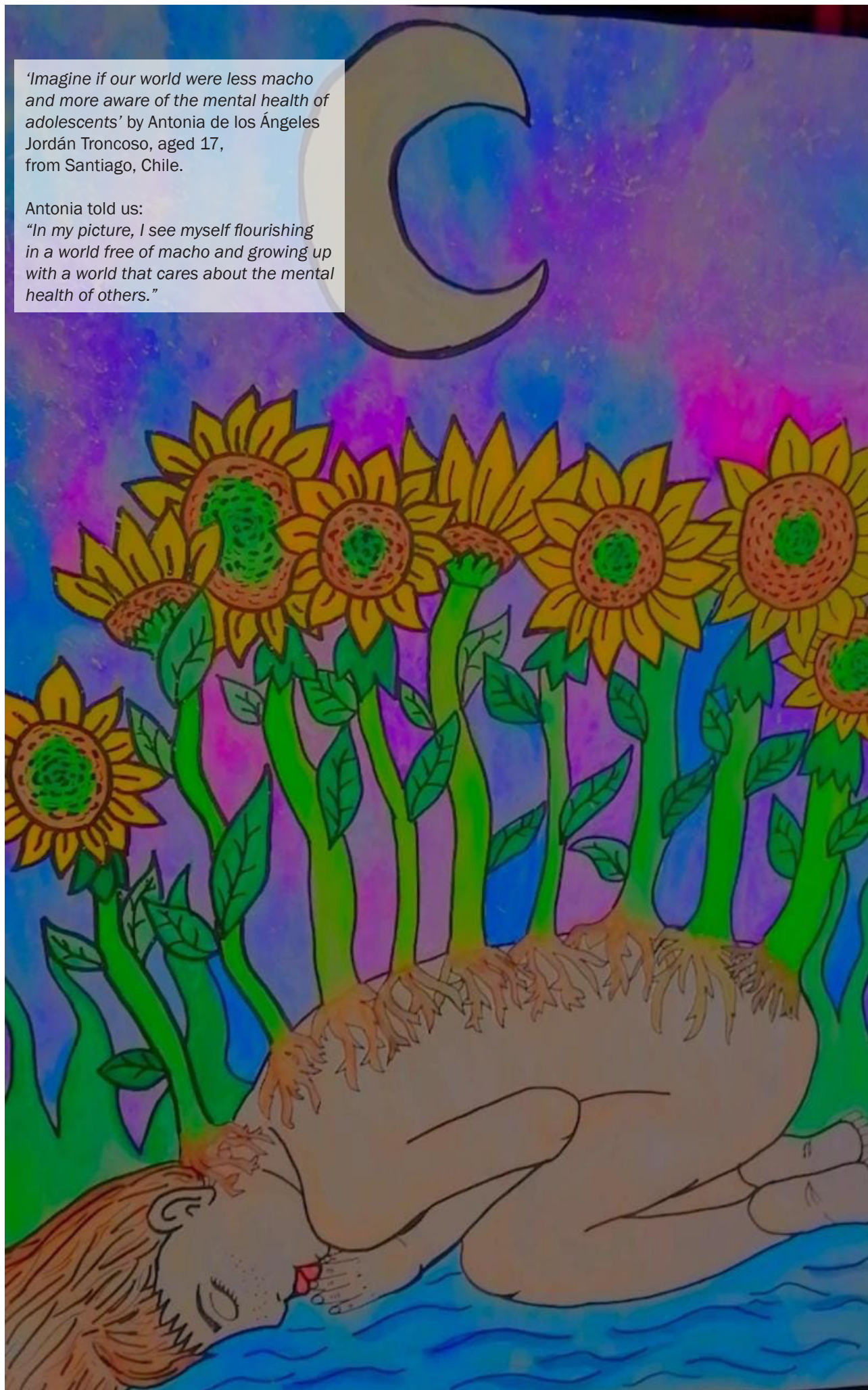
Spinelli, M. and Dann, L. (2019): [Podcasting: The Audio Media Revolution](#), Bloomsbury.

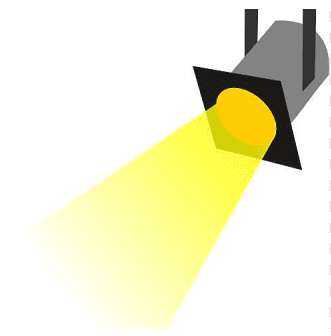
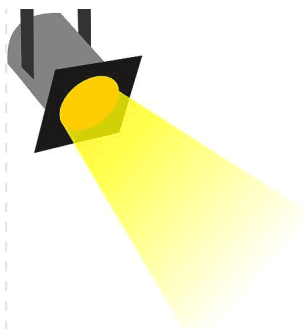


'Imagine if our world were less macho and more aware of the mental health of adolescents' by Antonia de los Ángeles Jordán Troncoso, aged 17, from Santiago, Chile.

Antonia told us:

"In my picture, I see myself flourishing in a world free of macho and growing up with a world that cares about the mental health of others."





Spotlight

Emotional Lives 2: **'Supporting Bereaved Pupils within their Primary School Communities'** Alka Townend (Education)

As a teacher educator, I am interested in the growing multiplicity of wellbeing support required of primary practitioners in today's classrooms. A recent personal experience of observing the impact of parental death on children's mental health instigated my interest in the role that schools play in supporting bereaved children within their communities. Research by [Child Bereavement UK](#) (2017) indicates that approximately one child in every class in the UK has been bereaved of a parent or sibling, which suggests that many school staff will be faced with offering support to a bereaved pupil at some point in their career. The current UK death toll from Covid-19 has been recorded at over 150,000. For school practitioners, this means they may be more likely to encounter children who have experienced loss in unprecedented circumstances (as well as encountering loss themselves).

For children, the loss of an immediate family member is a traumatic event often associated with an increase in prolonged physical and psychological distress. Schools play an important role in supporting children's welfare in such situations, yet very few British schools have planned responses to bereavement. In fact, it is not mandatory for schools to have support systems or training in place for bereavement, and there is little government guidance on how schools might approach this in terms of the curriculum, staff training or within a policy framework. This is despite the policy emphasis placed on role of the school environment in promoting mental health and wellbeing for pupils (DfE, 2019).

The significance of this has been further strengthened in the wake of the pandemic and its effect on children's wellbeing (DfE, 2021).

This led me to focus my research on the gap in understanding of how schools currently support bereaved pupils and identification of any factors which might influence the prioritisation of bereavement within their wellbeing provision. My research study, *'Supporting Bereaved Pupils in their Primary School Communities'* was undertaken in April 2020 with the aim of seeking insights into teaching practitioners' perceptions of bereavement support, including investigation of how teachers currently approach this phenomenon without statutory guidance. My research was constructed around an exploratory framework because I wanted to "throw light" (Newby, 2014, p. 54) on the subject of child bereavement based on my knowledge and experience in supporting a close family friend who had lost her husband unexpectedly, leaving her as a widow with four children. Anecdotal evidence from her children indicated that they had not received appropriate bereavement support in school, and had in fact felt isolated from their peers, unable to broach the topic with their teachers, and reluctant to engage in school work.

My chosen methodology was a qualitative case study, as my research questions reflected an aim to explore the phenomenon of child bereavement and a quest for data that offered individual insights, hermeneutic description and interpretation into this phenomenon (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2018). My research was thus designed as an exploratory, instrumental case study with the boundaries set around participants who were senior leaders in primary schools.

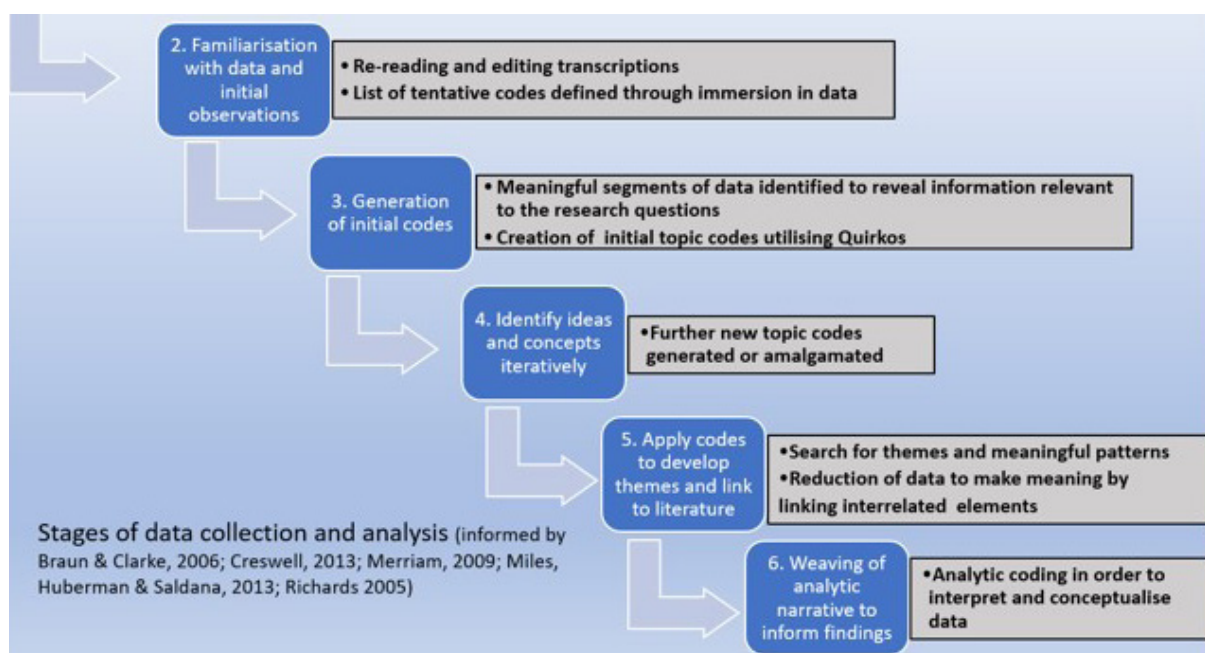
I sought to explore participant attitudes towards prioritising the subjects of death and bereavement within the classroom, including educating pupils about death (loss education), bereavement training for staff, and the introduction of a school bereavement policy. Data was firstly collected via questionnaires followed by six semi-structured interviews.

Subsequently, statements of relevance to my research questions were coded and categorised by using thematic analysis, (see Figure on opposite page).



Outcomes from my small-scale study indicated that bereavement provision in schools is discretionary and predominantly reactive, with a significant reliance on external agencies and/or practitioners' inherent pastoral abilities to support pupils' bereavement needs. Whilst participants valued the expertise of external agencies, they acknowledged that familiar figures such as the class teacher and an empathetic peer group may offer greater reassurance to a recently bereaved child. Outcomes further revealed that schools would be willing to engage in the development of proactive bereavement approaches, including the introduction of loss education, if they were provided with some practical guidance on appropriate ways to embed the concept of death and the language of loss within their pedagogy. The concept of a bereavement policy was perceived to be an enterprise to be approached collaboratively so that it reflected the ethos and cultural views of individual school communities. All participants were in favour of some form of bereavement training to commence within Initial Teacher Education but felt this training should be part of a wider programme of well-being training on other forms of childhood loss such as divorce and separation.

Collated responses from my study suggested that a comprehensive and cohesive school approach to bereavement training might offer teaching practitioners a sense of professional security at a time of heightened emotional uncertainty such as experienced during the pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 has further highlighted the prioritisation for bereavement training within schools and consideration should be given to how this might be achieved practically and financially. As a teacher educator, engagement with this study has highlighted a potential need to develop wellbeing training on ITE programmes and this might incorporate consideration for different forms of loss as well as the notion of loss education. If I were to engage in future bereavement research, I would adopt the approach of Potts (2013) and provide participants with fictionalised narratives of bereaved children in order to elicit their interpretive response. My rationale for this would be that "we all have to learn to put ourselves in other people's shoes" (McNeill and Chapman, 2005, p.19) in order to understand the lived experiences of others.



Spotlighting our research

Everyday lives and (extra-)ordinary childhoods

In some contemporary work that focuses on childhood, children may be defined in ways that can seem abstracting, isolating, or objectifying: the child at risk, the child at play, the child who needs educating. This conceptual area encourages CIRCY members to engage critically with normative assumptions about 'ordinary' childhoods, and to recognise the diverse and contingent meanings of childhood, as well as the ways in which global processes may cut across these.

Some discourses may covertly express powerful ideas of what a 'good' or an 'ordinary' childhood or family life should or could be: CIRCY's work seeks to explore and expand conceptions of family life – for example, **Janet Boddy's** spotlight on researching family narratives below. Children are always engaged in social networks and activities and, in our digital age, have access to a multitude of mediated public spheres; the child alone in their bedroom is, more often than not, engaging and participating agentically in a range of ways. As will be seen through this report, CIRCY members have a particular interest children's everyday digital lives.

Some research within this theme also considers categories of children and young people whose circumstances are 'extraordinary', placing them outside of normative ideals or expectations. Other areas of critical inquiry prompt us to consider the ways in which categorisations of vulnerability or difference may function as a dividing practice, neglecting the 'ordinary' aspects of 'extraordinary' lives, practices and relationships, and potentially adding to the stigmatisation and disadvantage that young people face.

Here are a few examples of current and new studies illustrative of this theme, which also prefigure our coming theme for the next year of past, present, and future childhoods.

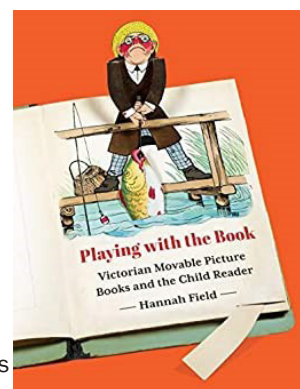
Pam Thurschwell (English)

As part of her continuing work on and around adolescence and music, Pam reviewed both of the Taylor Swift albums that came out during the last year: 'Evermore' and 'Folklore'.

The unfunded Mass Observation Archive Research by **Rebecca Webb** and **Perpetua Kirby** (both Education) has been considering 'What can Mass Observation Archive Diary Entries May 12 (2020) tell us about children and young people's hopes and uncertainties and how might this shed lights on their educational experiences?'. This is leading to a co-written paper with Michela Villani, Université de Fribourg, Switzerland, on 'Grappling with uncertainty: children and young people across the world write about their experiences of Covid-19'. This is to be submitted for a *Children and Society* Special Edition on 'Children and Young People's Perspectives on and Experiences of COVID-19 in Global Contexts'.

Rebecca and Perpetua were awarded a grant from the ESW KEF 'Capacity Building Fund' for their project 'Building capacity with 'TRANSFORM-IN EDUCATION': enhancing interactivity of digital sustainability resources for professional development locally and internationally with teachers and sustainability practitioners'. They will develop their [Transform-in Education website](#) to share outputs from their research in the UK and Global South, and to engage site users in further dialogue and knowledge creation about alternative decolonising 'uncertain' approaches to sustainability/climate education.

We are delighted to announce that **Hannah Field's** book *Playing with the Book: Victorian Movable Picture Books and the Child Reader* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019) won the 2021 Children's Literature Association Book Award for an outstanding book-length contribution to children's literature history, scholarship, and criticism.



Ben Highmore (Media and Film) has been awarded an AHRC Leadership Fellow award for his project *'Playgrounds: A Material Cultural Study of Post-1945 Playgrounds'*.



The award starts in October 2021 and continues to March 2023. **Hannah Field** is the named researcher on the award. Outputs will include an edited collection by Ben and Hannah, and a monograph by Ben, as well as a programme of public engagement and workshops.

The above image is 'Hackney Marshes Adventure Playground, 1978'



Spotlight

Everyday lives and (extra-)ordinary childhoods 1: 'Researching Family Narratives' Janet Boddy (Education)

Researching Family Narratives, a new Sage volume (edited by Ann Phoenix, Julia Brannen and Corinne Squire), documents the work of [NOVELLA](#), an ESRC National Centre for Research Methods investment that began in 2012. The acronym NOVELLA refers to 'Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches', and all of these projects were concerned with the everyday practices of families – frequently taken for granted, but also negotiated within family relationships. NOVELLA involved five projects (three core studies and two collaborations with other NCRM methods investments), all of which used narrative methods and made secondary use of existing data sets in various ways.

I was privileged to be part of NOVELLA, leading one of the core projects: Family Lives and Environments, which was concerned with understanding meanings of environment within everyday family lives in India and the UK, drawing on existing data from the [Young Lives](#) study. I also contributed to the project Possibilities for a Narrative Analysis of Paradata, which applied narrative analytic methods to interviewer notes and marginalia in Townsend's landmark [Poverty in the UK](#) study.

In our chapter on 'The Ethics of Data Reuse and Secondary Data Analysis in Narrative Inquiry', Virginia Morrow (from Young Lives) and I reflect on the experience of applying a secondary narrative analysis to family interviews conducted in India for Young Lives, drawing broader lessons about the ethical and methodological challenges and benefits of that work. Our learning from that analysis, and our collaboration with Young Lives researchers in India and the UK, was fundamental to the second phase of the project: the linking of India and the UK in new data collection with families. My chapter with Ann Phoenix, Catherine Walker and Uma Vennam on Multi-method Approaches in Narrative Family Research Across Majority and Minority Worlds, addresses that second stage of work. We consider how narrative data and their analysis can help disrupt simple notions of comparability across these very different global contexts, illuminating the negotiated and situated complexities of diverse family lives within and between India and the UK.

Our chapter on the Paradata project – with Heather Elliott, Ann Phoenix and Ros Edwards – documents the process and insights derived from applying narrative analytic methods to the original archive of surveys conducted for Poverty in the UK. It shows how the material and graphic nature of the data – different coloured inks or handwriting, and even a child's fingerprint – can inform a narrative analysis, illuminating the ways in which data collection is personal and relational, and historically and culturally situated.

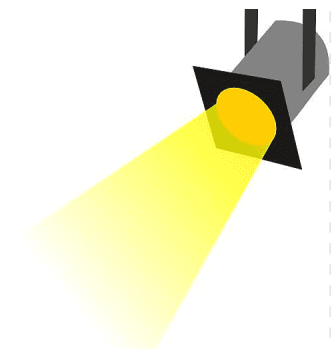
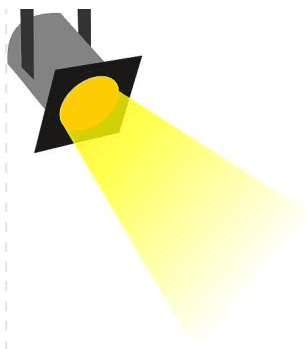
Across all the projects, and as an investment in methodological innovation, NOVELLA made it possible to engage with new forms of methodological uncertainty. In large part, that risk-taking worked because of the research relationships involved and the value of the connections across our projects: NOVELLA was always a learning project for everyone. I have sometimes joked to people that it was like my second PhD (albeit more fun and less solitary!). Working with narrative methodology for the first time in my career taught me to embrace the uncomfortable feeling of being uncertain, to recognise the value of an opportunity to step beyond the familiar. Especially as we get further into our careers, academics can get very fixed on doing what we know – there is the pressure to be the expert, and reliably perform our very specific expertise. I was able to learn as much as I did in NOVELLA because we didn't fall into that role. We worked differently, using our expertise to help each other to work with innovation and uncertainty, to question and discover new ideas, and to challenge what we might otherwise take for granted in supportive ways. In CIRCY we talk about this in terms of creating 'space for not knowing'.

NOVELLA exemplified the importance of learning through research relationships, and the value of that collective can be seen in the book. Mutual learning also shaped us as a group of researchers and thinkers. For me, the work we did collectively – thinking and talking and reading across projects – switched on a narrative sensibility which I have found particularly fruitful in working with people in child welfare and social care contexts, which has been the main focus of my research over the years. The work of NOVELLA has given me the conceptual and methodological resources required to understand complex narrative sense making, avoiding assumptions of simple narrative coherence and recognising and respecting the dynamic complexity of interconnected lives. This understanding also helps to address a critical risk in so much research that is focused on people who live with risk or disadvantage – whether in the context of global inequalities, or in child and family welfare contexts within an affluent country like the UK. I would argue that a narrative sensibility helps us as researchers, to ensure that we do not reconstruct stigma or create false binaries – of the ‘normal’ and the ‘other’ – in the narratives that we create about the lives of the people we research, especially when those lives are different to, and less privileged than our own. So NOVELLA has opened my eyes to new ways of thinking and working, and I think I am a better researcher as a result. I’m delighted that the book gives us the chance to share our collective learning more widely – and I hope it will change other researchers, as it has changed me.

Phoenix, A., Brannen, J. and Squire, C. (eds) (2021): *Researching Family Narratives*. London: Sage.



These are two children's images of their local environments, taken by Rahul in India and Solomon* in the UK, as part of Janet Boddy's 'Young Lives' study*



Spotlight

Everyday lives and (extra-)ordinary childhoods 2: **'Researching Developing New Ways of Representing Childhood and Youth'** May Nasrawy, Doctoral Researcher, Social Work & Social Care

This piece is based on key findings from my doctoral research study, which highlights the importance of understanding the different ways in which young people, in Jerusalem, perceive and experience 'wellbeing'. The aim of the study, which combined a qualitative design with a phenomenological methodology and used creative and arts-based methods, was to advance the understanding of 'wellbeing' in Jerusalem. Significantly, it was to engage with meanings young people attach to 'being well'. The research generated fundamental methodological and theoretical insights into researching 'wellbeing' in conflict-affected contexts using current normative and essentialising definitions of 'wellbeing'. These definitions underestimate the impact of living with political conflict, and the impact of these on the development of trauma and PTSD. My doctoral study introduced a relational, psychosocial model and perspective for understanding the wellbeing of young # people living in these complex contexts (White, 2010). The model takes into consideration existing social and cultural meanings young people attach to being well, which have not been studied in this context before.



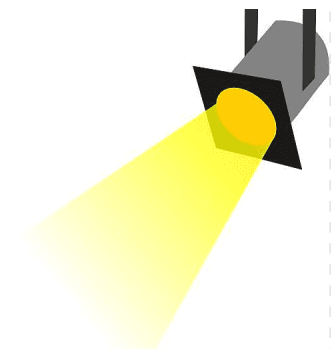
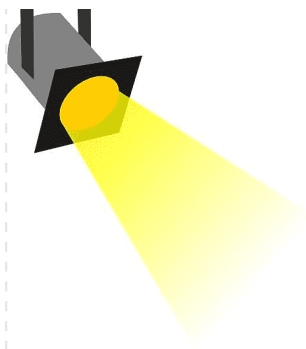
Utilising a psychosocial lens (Goldstein, 2013), the study concluded that young people's views and experiences of wellbeing are shaped and affected by their wider experiences, and the increasingly violent environment they interacted with in their everyday lives at home, school and community. It also highlighted the extent to which young people experience different forms of violence in their everyday lives and spaces. This shed light on the significance of understanding the everyday lived experiences of young people in Jerusalem, and emphasised hearing their voices which have long been silenced.

Focusing on the everyday lives of young people enabled me to identify their real needs as the young people articulated them, the support required to enhance and maintain their wellbeing and the steps needed to ensure their active engagement and participation in programs and interventions which are designed to directly respond to their needs. It also reaffirmed that in order to support young people's wellbeing, we need to first listen to and understand their experiences and we need to ensure they are truly participating in programs which respond to their needs and work towards achieving the changes they wish to see (Hart and Forte, 2013).

Children's agency is crucial to promoting and maintaining their wellbeing (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010).

Key implications from my study also showed that any intervention to support the wellbeing of young people, particularly those affected by violence and political conflict, needs to be inclusive and holistic, in order to allow young people to actively participate in the design, planning and implementation of these interventions, and include activities which speak to and engage young people's cultures and environments. Contextualising interventions is more than just acknowledging language and cultural differences, it is also about promoting connection with the place, identity, culture and community (Kalmanowitz and Ho, 2017). It was clear from the findings that young people thrived on creative and arts-based activities. They reported that these connected them to their community and culture, and provided a safe space where they could express their thoughts and emotions. This is especially important at a time when constant political violence, exclusion and social inequality has somewhat fractured connections and feelings of safety for the young people within their communities.

Young peoples' stories that were an element of the creative practices that were generated in this research, revealed the power of sharing stories. This became apparent on a research and practice level (Iriss, 2013), and also on a theoretical and epistemological one. From a research and practice level, stories place the individual at the heart of the conversation, which gives participants a voice and allows for the assertion of personal individual and collective meanings attached to individuals' experiences to be communicated in depth. Stories also have the capacity to reveal harmonies and contradictions in individuals' lives. This enables researchers and practitioners alike to better understand the personal and collective experiences of individuals, especially in relation to social and political structures they live within. Young people's stories in my study conveyed an important message about their wellbeing. They told that the major challenges they face to attaining good wellbeing are structural, shaped by multiple layers of power within overall social and political systems. Their voices articulated the struggles and suffering they encountered on a daily basis, and how they found ways to cope with a complex reality of oppression and inequality.



Spotlight

Everyday lives and (extra-)ordinary childhoods 3: **'Kinship Care: Recognition for what it is, rather than what it is not'** Paul Shuttleworth (Social Work & Social Care)

While undertaking my PhD research into 'What Matters to Children Living in Kinship Care', I was persuaded - but also often confounded - by the many binary arguments about how to view kinship care.

Kinship care is the long-term caring arrangement within the family constellation for children who cannot remain with their birth parents. Despite being the most prevalent alternative care arrangement for children throughout the world, there is a lack of research on kinship care and even less that solely explores children's views. This study was the first in England.

For children and family social workers, kinship care is typically viewed as a placement that is an alternative to state care. Also, in research and policy, it is often forgotten that kinship care is also a family way of life specific to its cultural context. It is usually seen more as a technology and a service rather than, as Harmony in my study stated, "another way of being a normal family".

How we view kinship care has enormous implications on how it is supported, regulated and financed. If it is considered a placement, it is often regulated and problematised through fostering and adoption procedures and legislation. This is described as fitting a square peg into a round hole.

If kinship care is viewed as just family support, there can be an over-reliance on non-statutory support, extended family members, peers, and neighbours. However, kinship care involves a dislocated family life and complex ongoing family connections by its very nature. Kinship carers are also more likely to be isolated, older, experiencing financial hardship, lack space, and more likely to be experiencing physical and mental health issues. Therefore, despite research stating that outcomes for children in kinship care are as good as or better for children than for other types of non-birth parental care, it is also a risky permanence option.

Such quandaries on how to see kinship care are highly relevant to current debates in social work, especially with the controversy surrounding the 'Independent Review of Children's Social Care', de-regulation possibilities, and suggesting reliance on impoverished communities to decrease statutory intervention. Nevertheless, I tried to place such febrile adult-centric arguments to one side. The research took the view that policy and practice should be shaped around the children's own recognition of permanence and safe care by family.

Recognition constitutes a vital human need. Recognition is especially true for these children living in set-ups that others often perceive as unusual or somehow worse than being brought up by birth parents. The children in the study stated they want their specific family lives to be acknowledged, their needs appropriately supported, and their rights and safety to be paramount. They want their family lives to be recognised as normal but not typical. They celebrate diversity rather than difference. Kinship care, then, should be viewed as one of the many family practices that need particular family support. However, the children also stated that it is essential to acknowledge kinship care's interdependence with their right to be protected, social services, the welfare system, and often courts. Therefore, the dialectical, the dialogical, the both/and, and the in-between spaces should be acknowledged. Kinship care is a family practice that is also used, at times, as a service. We must not describe it as either/or - the children don't.

To some, this may seem like a challenging cultural shift. For many years academics, policymakers, charities, lobbyists, and practitioners have tried to fit kinship care into existing fostering and adoption notions and procedures and traditional family ideals. Shifting how we think about kinship care means not only not comparing potential foster carer assessments to potential kinship carers assessments but also resisting comparing fostering rates to allowances given to kinship carers. It means not pushing the narrative that kinship care is a cheaper alternative placement that will save local authorities time and money. Such (mis)recognition only serves to perpetuate endless binary debates and does not fully reflect the realities of these children's lives.

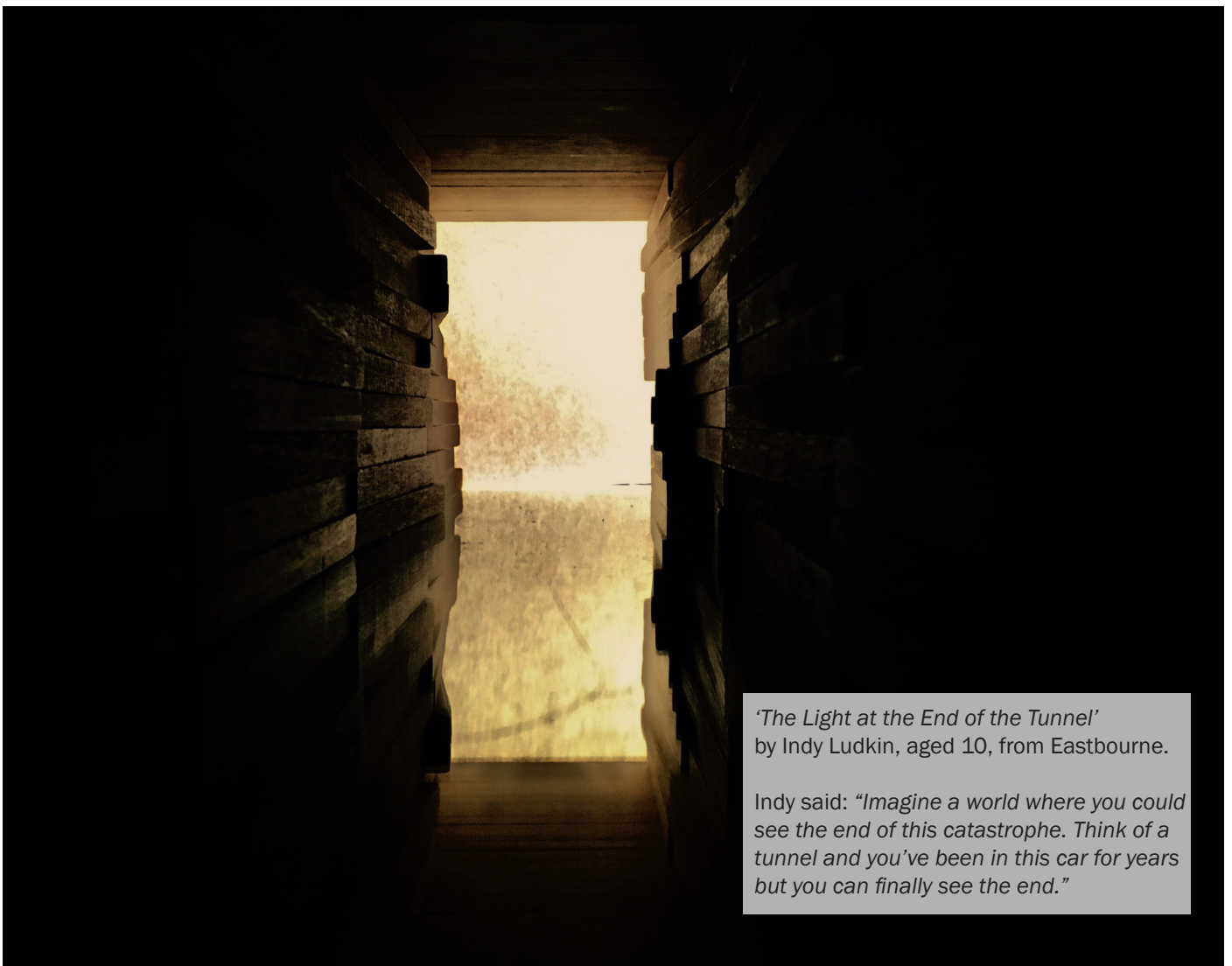
Kinship care is a complex family arrangement that lies between private and public care. It is a complicated permanency option that lies between substitute psychological parenting and parenting by birth families, least intervention and familial risk, doing family and theories of multiple family affiliations. The children in the study were clear it is not one thing or another. This is why kinship care policy and practice must be based on real accounts of the children's lives. With a meaningful and ethical methodology, children can provide real insight into what kinship care is, rather than what it is not.

The PhD study was funded by SeNSS/ESRC and involved collaboration with CoramBAAF and Kinship

Shuttleworth, P. (2021): [What Matters to Children Living In Kinship Care: "Another Way Of Being A Normal Family"](#).
Doctoral Thesis

CIRCY is delighted to announce that Paul received an unconditional pass for his doctoral viva on 20 May 2021.

The examiners described his thesis as "an impressive, exceptionally well-conceived, well theorised, and compelling piece of child-centred work, with the potential for a strong influence on the research, policy and practice fields."



'The Light at the End of the Tunnel'
by Indy Ludkin, aged 10, from Eastbourne.
Indy said: "Imagine a world where you could see the end of this catastrophe. Think of a tunnel and you've been in this car for years but you can finally see the end."

Spotlighting our research

Improving services for children, young people and families

CIRCY members continue to work on a range of interdisciplinary projects funded by the government and large NGOs to research services and professional interventions that involve children, young people and their families, reflecting our concern with children's real world experiences. These include evaluations of new practice systems and methods as well as more exploratory or bottom-up studies researching service needs and concerns of children, young people, families and professionals.

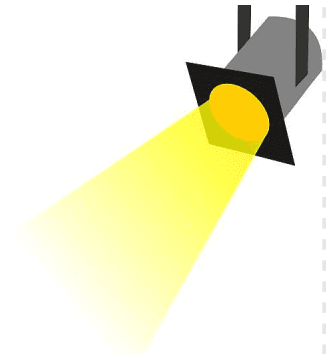
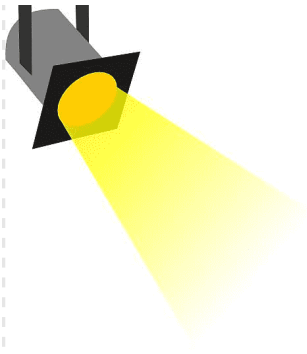
Robin Banerjee (Psychology) is principal investigator of two studies: the Evaluation of the Beacon Pilot Project, funded by the Coventry Diocesan Board of Education; and the Best Practice Learning Review of the Whole School Approach Within Mental Health Support Teams, funded by the Kent, Surrey, and Sussex Academic Health Science Network. In addition he is leading the groundbreaking [Sussex Kindness Research centre](#), funded by the Pears Foundation.

Michelle Lefevre (Social Work & Social Care) is funded by the Department of Education to evaluate the embedding of a new approach to addressing extra-familial risk and harm - Contextual Safeguarding - in the London Borough of Hackney. This follows [her report of the piloting and initial implementation of the approach, published in September 2020](#). The research team includes Sussex colleagues Robin Banerjee (Psychology), **Kristi Hickie** and **Tam Cane** (both Social Work & Social Care), as well as colleagues from Research in Practice and the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford.

The National Evaluation of the [A Better Start \(ABS\) Programme](#), is a consortium partnership comprising NatCen Social Research, University of Sussex, Research in Practice, the National Children's Bureau (NCB) and RSM Partners. This National Evaluation is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. University of Sussex' co-investigators **Robin Banerjee** (Psychology), **Janet Boddy** (Education), **Gillian Hampden-Thomson** (Education), **Rebecca Webb** (Education), **Jessica Horst** (Psychology), **Kathryn Lester** (Psychology) and **Harm Van Marwijk** (BSMS) will develop qualitative and ethnographic mechanisms to include voices of A Better Start participants (0-3 years of age) in the evaluation, using rights-based participatory approaches which explore ways of involving children as expert advisors.

The [Innovate Project](#), led by **Michelle Lefevre**, launched its website and began fieldwork. This four-year study is in collaboration with the Universities of Oxford, Bedfordshire and Durham, and the NGOs Research in Practice and Innovation Unit. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, it explores innovation in social care to address extra-familial risks and harm experienced by young people, such as child exploitation and serious youth violence. The website is full of information, including [blogs](#) and [vodcasts](#), and you will find some spotlights on various aspects of this project within this report.

The 'Our Stories Project' is a ESRC grant (Feb 2021-Jan 2022) held by Professor **Nicola Yuill** (Psychology, ChaTLab and ACoRNS) and Professor Sarah Parsons and Dr Hanna Kovshoff from the University of Southampton. It will investigate new ways of using shared video stories developed in Southampton to support participation of autistic individuals in their health, education and social care when they may not necessarily verbalise their experiences, by using a strengths-based approach. They are working with Brighton & Sussex Medical School's 'Time for Autism' programme and the Brighton & Hove 'Just Right' emotion regulation programme in schools.



Spotlight

Improving services for children, young people and families 1: “They Don’t Know We’ve Got Legs”: What’s the future of therapeutic conversations online Nicola Yuill, Professor of Developmental Psychology & Director of Children and Technology Lab (@ChatLabUK)

So much has been written about the negative effects of isolation and exhaustion of online meetings enforced by pandemic restrictions, and there is much excited anticipation about getting back together in person. The Zoom or Room project, carried out in the last 6 months of 2021, took the opportunity of the sudden move to online therapeutic conversations to ask what can support a well-attuned online conversation. The project was funded by the National Institute of Health Research Applied Research Consortium Kent Surrey and Sussex (NIHR ARCKSS) and run by Nicola Yuill and Devyn Glass of the Children and Technology Lab (ChatLab), in the School of Psychology at Sussex, and Zubeida Dasgupta, a trainer and supervisor in Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). VIG is an intervention that focuses on identifying positive attuned moments, through fine video analysis, to support professionals, parents and others to communicate well with children and young people.

Although people will be getting back to in-person meetings, the restrictions pushed us to think seriously about the new opportunities opened up for different models of therapeutic meetings. Many of the 13 practitioners we interviewed in-depth commented about increases in reach: they had met some clients who had proved hard to engage in the past, had met more fathers than before and found it easier to tweak meetings, for example, pausing a call while a parent settled their baby or easily rescheduling without concerns about travel or childcare arrangements. Meeting clients virtually in their homes also helped some clients have a greater sense of control and comfort in the meeting and could give the practitioner a much closer insight into the challenges and environment of the home context.

Of course, this picture has to be balanced by the restrictions imposed by online work. In the online survey of 72 practitioners in education, health and social care, respondents reported that some clients felt less comfortable with technology or did not have access to reliable broadband and devices. Although this project did not have the scope to survey clients’ views, we had help from the NIHR Young People’s Advisory Group in constructing our survey questions. Practitioners especially noted difficulties for children and adolescents using mental health services (CAMHS), with specific concerns about clients who were uncomfortable or anxious meeting online and about safeguarding, for example in knowing who else was present in the home setting and in lacking the opportunity to wind down from a difficult conversation that is often provided by a journey back from a clinic setting.

Militating against the idea of online meetings is a powerful social media trope about online conversations being second best, though these claims are generally accompanied by anecdote rather than systematic evidence. The Zoom or Room project’s third method, beyond the survey and interviews, was to make fine analyses of existing recordings of real therapeutic meetings (VIG) in-person and online to identify what worked well and what difficulties arose. VIG is an ideal vehicle for the project because practitioners are focused on identifying small moments of attunement in videos of the clients (such as a parent and child) and then in creating a well-attuned conversation with the client, where they review selected clips from the video to guide the clients to recognise moments of successful attunement, and to understand how those have been created.

Initial analyses of the videos showed no significant differences in warmth, responsiveness, giving time and space, and the balance of the interaction, with only a slight reduction in client responsiveness in the online sessions. This is consistent with what practitioners told us about the need to lead more when meeting online than in person. There is no doubt that meeting online does pose a challenge to the microscopic timings in the to-and-fro of interaction, given even small delays in video and audio, and the reduction in broader information about bodily movement, both through video, audio and tactile information. Practitioners talked about the ways they had adapted their behaviour for meeting online.

This is where new opportunities are created: if clients have the choice of meeting online or in person, each can construct their own treatment plan that best suits their needs and have more of a say in their care.

This research was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey, Sussex.

*The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR
or the Department of Health and Social Care.*





Spotlight

Improving services for children, young people and families 2: **'Transitional Safeguarding: Addressing the service gap for young people moving into adulthood'** Nathalie Huegler, Jeri Damman and Gillian Ruch (Social Work & Social Care)

The Transitional Safeguarding strand of the [Innovate Project](#) is examining whether and how this emergent approach might provide a useful framework for developing services and interventions for young people who are experiencing safeguarding risks and harms beyond the family home (such as criminal and sexual exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, and gang affiliation). We are currently looking at innovations in professional systems and practices in two areas – Hackney and Sheffield – starting with interviews with professionals and online ethnography (observing meetings which explore the new approach or which consider risks and interventions for young people). When public health guidelines allow, we will go on to explore the views of young people and their parents or carers, and look at whether young people's wellbeing and safety improves.

The term and concept of Transitional Safeguarding was originally outlined by one of our partner organisations, Research in Practice (RiP) and Research in Practice for Adults (RiPFA) in 2018. It highlights the need to improve safeguarding responses to better recognise the developmental needs (social and neurobiological) of teenagers and young adults and aims to bridge the service gap between children and adult social care services. Although Transitional Safeguarding is emerging as an innovative approach in the field of safeguarding, there are antecedents – such as Transitional Safeguarding for young people leaving care or with disabilities – alongside a widening safeguarding focus to include extra-familial risks and harms.

Transitional Safeguarding recognises that, in the context of harms such as sexual and criminal exploitation, neither the risks nor their consequences stop just because a person reaches legal adulthood at 18. However, the policies, systems and services for children are structured very differently from those for adults. Arguments for Transitional Safeguarding also include the idea that offering support during the transition to adulthood may help prevent the cyclical, 'revolving door' nature of support interventions over the life course (e.g. health, mental health, criminal justice).

Transitional Safeguarding considers safeguarding through perspectives of participation, rights, and wellbeing. It aims to achieve 'whole systems' change and includes both extending the age remit of children's services upwards and a 'drawing down' of adult social care ideas, principles, and resources. The approach unsettles the binary between children's and adult services, acknowledging the 'in-between' position of young people and young adults, which challenges normative notions of victim and perpetrator that are typically ascribed to children and young adults respectively.

Both sides of such a binary view are problematic, and these are echoed in the ways in which services have 'traditionally' sought to respond to young people on either side of the child-adult divide: on the one hand, welfarist perspectives and concerns around protection have dominated interventions from children's services, often neglecting participation and young people's agency (with many young people then voting with their feet and withdrawing from interventions by going missing or otherwise 'rebellious' against 'being treated like a child'). On the other hand, once young people reach 18, they often hit what is referred to as a 'cliff edge', where support drops away, and they are faced directly with the much harsher conditions of adult systems – often in the realms of the criminal justice system.

While it has in recent years become more possible for care experienced young people to return for support in their twenties, which might be the point when they feel more ready for this, similar systems are not usually in place for young adults who haven't been in care.

Both the Transitional Safeguarding innovations and our research are at an early stage. What Transitional Safeguarding has involved so far in its short journey of development, is a range of activities at local levels that seek to get services and organisations for children and adults together, to specifically look at the support that exists for young people during transition and into young adulthood to make service experience more seamless. This includes the pooling of resources between services, identifying and mapping existing services and how they work together, as well as some models involving specific transitions-based support. Transitional Safeguarding is not a quick innovation, but instead involves getting a wide range of agencies and young people themselves together to find out what change is needed to make local systems and services better at supporting young people in transition.

So far, we're seeing some examples of local networks and agencies consulting with young people, though this has been made more difficult with the pandemic and these processes require a lot of support and commitment to ensure the voices of those most in need are included.

What we have found so far is that there are some tensions around how widely or narrowly Transitional Safeguarding is framed: should the preventative work tackle specific issues (e.g. homelessness, substance misuse) or is it best to start with strengthening connections between children and adults safeguarding services? There aren't yet answers to these questions, but what is already interesting are the diverse ways in which this innovation framework is being interpreted and operationalised by both children's and adults social care, and who is leading the way in each site.

Huegler, N. and Ruch, G. (2021) '[Risk, vulnerability and complexity: transitional safeguarding as a reframing of binary perspectives](#)', *Practice*, Published online: 17 Jun 2021





Spotlight

Improving services for children, young people and families 3: 'Understanding Safeguarding Risks Posed by Young People's Networks and Contexts Beyond the Home' Michelle Lefevre (Social Work and Social Care / CIRCY Director)

Exploring how welfare services might best address the safeguarding risks posed to young people outside of the family home has been a significant strand of CIRCY research over the past five years. As well as examining specific areas of risk, such as child sexual and criminal exploitation (e.g. Lefevre et al., 2020a), we have studied new approaches to addressing these risks. This spotlight focuses on our study of the Contextual Safeguarding approach.

Originated by our collaborative partner in the Innovate Project, Dr Carlene Firmin, at the University of Bedfordshire, Contextual Safeguarding Theory recognizes that, during adolescence, relationships, environments, and other contexts beyond the family home exert an increasing influence over young people's lives. Their relational and social groups, and certain locations they frequent, have been strongly associated with exploitation, serious youth violence, and peer-on-peer abuse. Traditional safeguarding systems, which tend to focus on whether and how parenting and family systems have contributed to young people's exposure to such harms, are often unable to identify and address risk. Contextual Safeguarding, in contrast, seeks to understand and intervene directly in the contexts generating concern.

This radical new approach received funding in 2017 from the Department of Education's Innovation Programme for new systems and tools to be developed and piloted in the London Borough of Hackney. The University of Sussex, with our partner Research in Practice, was commissioned 2018-20 to evaluate the work through a multi-method study, incorporating elements of pre-post and comparator methodology. Our evaluation report (Lefevre et al., 2020b) was published by the Department of Education in September 2020 and remains the only independent evaluation of Contextual Safeguarding published to date.

During the evaluation we gathered valuable data with young people in schools and youth hubs across the borough through focus groups, community mapping, and standardised measures to explore whether population-level Contextual Safeguarding interventions had addressed environments of concerns and enhanced young people's sense of safety, community and belongingness. However, accessing the young people at highest risk for qualitative interview, both in Hackney and a comparator local authority, was much harder. Their key workers were to facilitate our involvement, but some practitioners saw 'their' young people as 'too vulnerable' to be approached. As we have written elsewhere, young people's own agency and right to participation seemed to be sidelined by professionals' possible over-protectiveness. Other workers were too taken up with their own difficulties in engaging the young person to prioritise our research.

Such barriers are not easy to resolve: the lives of young people at extra-familial risk often feature crisis and change; they commonly 'go missing' from home, school and foster care; their relationships with professionals can be contested and conflictual. But the result is that the views of some of the most vulnerable young people remain absent from the literature and, hence, less influential on service provision and development. This has prompted us to start to exploring more creative and participatory ways of overcoming this hurdle within The Innovate Project, where we are starting to plan fieldwork with young people receiving intervention based on Contextual Safeguarding, Trauma-informed, or Transitional Safeguarding approaches.

A further complexity was posed in the evaluation when we sought to compare existing administrative data in Hackney and three local authorities to ascertain whether the new ways of working were improving welfare and safety outcomes for young people involved with children's social care. However, variability in the quality and consistency of this data within and between local authorities soon became apparent, posing some barriers to fully identifying and monitoring extra-familial risks and harms at a child and local level. Our subsequent paper (Preston et al., 2021) co-written with CIRCY colleague Janet Boddy (Education), following her evaluation of the Pause project (Boddy et al., 2020) builds on this work to suggest that statutory bodies consider imposing some standardisation on local authority data systems to allow for more meaningful insight into the outcomes of service approaches.

An important finding of the evaluation was that Contextual Safeguarding Theory could provide a workable framework upon which safeguarding systems could be built to address extra-familial risks and harms facing young people. Robust partnership arrangements had been put into place across all relevant agencies and with local communities in the borough. New system structures and practice methods had been trialled and the Implementation Toolkit produced through the project offered a valuable set of resources which other local authorities and organizations could use to develop their own systems. An extensive programme of training had shifted the culture from an over-emphasis (sometimes assumed) parental inadequacies, and increased practitioner knowledge, skills and confidence.

However, the final system configuration in Hackney was not yet clear, new practice approaches were not consistently in place, and there was no clear evidence of improved outcomes in relation to young people's welfare, safety or service experiences. In our view, this was not due to a failure of Contextual Safeguarding as an approach. Our strong message was that complex social care innovation such as this requires much longer for new system configurations, tools, and training to be embedded such that enhanced outcomes are the end result. Staff churn, resource limitations, and the impact of other external factors (in this case, the burden of an Ofsted inspection), should be considered as central rather than peripheral issues in making sense of practice methods and systems. We argued that funders, project leaders and evaluators need to build this into timelines and expectations.

With this in mind, the Department for Education has funded a further period of embedding work in Hackney, which we are now evaluating (to report in April 2022). A specific challenge which we are facing in this phase is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people's lives and service provision. The lockdown in the first part of 2020 led to some reduction in 'county lines' criminal exploitation, gang activity, and serious youth violence as young people's street activities and travel on public transport was constricted. However, once this eased, the ongoing closure of schools meant young people were less under the eye of interested professionals and risk seemed to proliferate. Practitioners found themselves needing to experiment with online engagement with young people, or using PPE, in order to intervene safely. Hence, we will need to consider carefully how such contextual shifts might provoke 'noise' in the data, making longitudinal comparisons rather tricky...

Further details:

Lefevre, M., Hickle, K. and Larkin, R. (2020a): 'Child Criminal Exploitation in the South East of England: Family Experiences and Professional Responses'. Unpublished research report.

Lefevre, M., Preston, O., Hickle, K., Horan, R., Drew, H., Banerjee, R., Cane, T., Barrow, M. and Bowyer, S. (2020b): [Evaluation of the Implementation of a Contextual Safeguarding System in the London Borough of Hackney](#). Department for Education

Preston, O., Godar, R., Lefevre, M., Boddy, J., Firmin, C. (2021): ['Considerations in the use of local and national data for evaluating innovation in children's social care'](#), *Journal of Children's Services*, earlycite online, ISSN: 1746-6660, Article publication date: 22 June 2021

Boddy, J., Bowyer, S., Godar, R., Hale, C., Kearney, J., Preston, O., Wheeler, B. and Wilkinson, J. (2020): ['Evaluation of Pause'](#), Department for Education

Spotlighting our research

Imaginative Methodologies

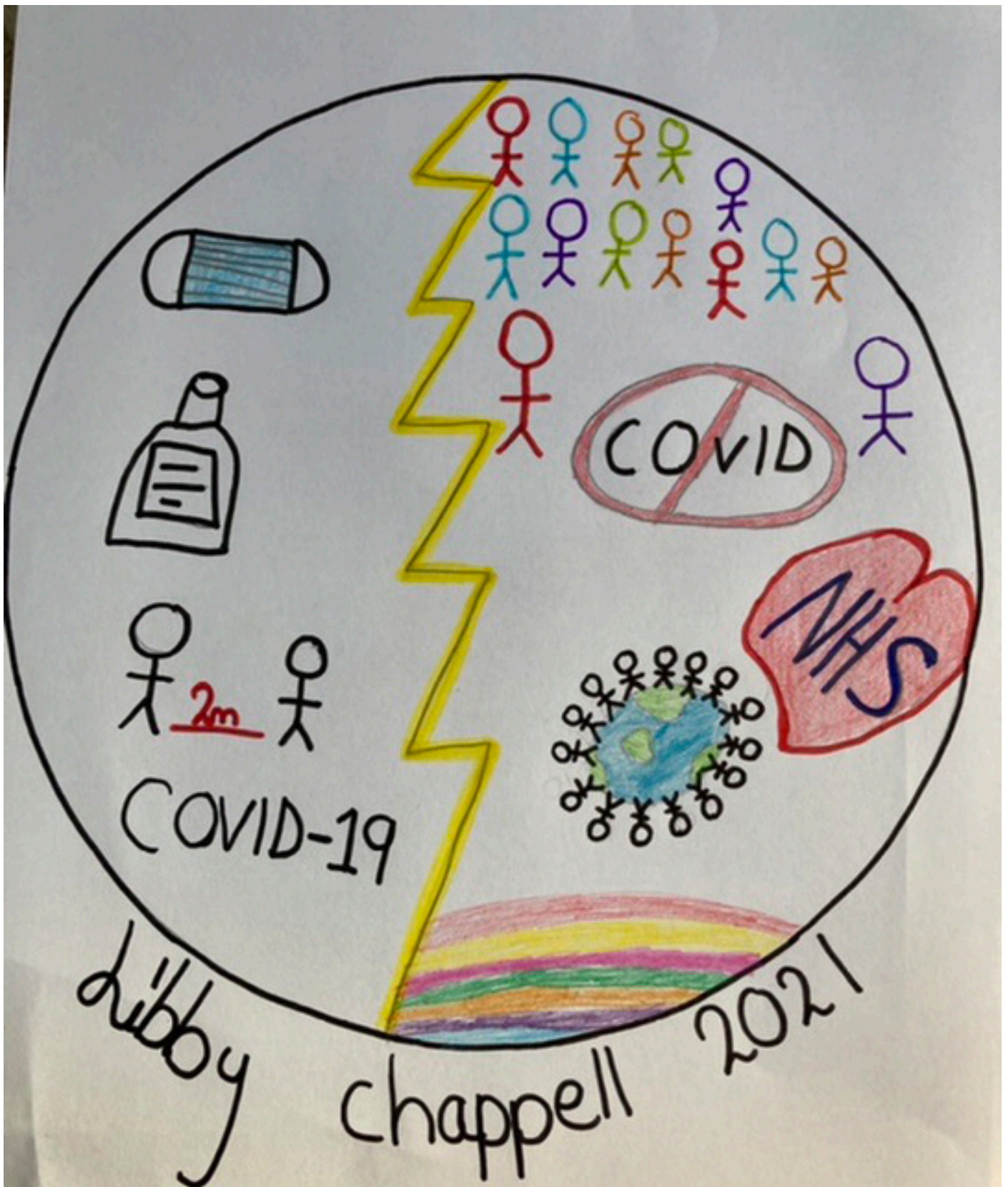
Over the last eight years, CIRCY has built an international reputation for methodological excellence, engaging in international advisory work and collaborations. CIRCY has also provided a critical space in which to interrogate the meanings of methodological innovation across disciplines. Central to our work is the pursuit of imaginative methodologies – sometimes the search for new, innovative approaches, sometimes the reimagining and repurposing of traditional methods – which underpins our fundamental concern with keeping the child or young person at the centre of our thinking. Regardless of discipline, our methodological approach depends on how we conceive of the child, and we challenge CIRCY researchers to imagine alternatives to reductive, static or objectifying lenses on childhood and youth. In this way, our emphasis on imaginative methodologies provides a distinctive conceptual space that connects our expertise in temporal research methods, in participatory approaches, in research ethics, in cross-national methodology, and in creative, digital, sensual and psychosocial approaches.

One such example is the ‘Reanimating Data Project – experiments with people, places and archives’, led by **Rachel Thomson** (Social Work & Social Care) and funded by the ESRC’s Transformational Research programme. The project team includes **Ester McGeeney** (Social Work & Social Care), **Sharon Webb** (Digital Humanities) and **Rosie Gahnstrom** (Childhood and YouthPhD), in collaboration with Niamh Moore at the University of Edinburgh. The Feminist Approaches to Youth Sexualities (FAYS) is a new open access archive that showcases the data set from a landmark study of youth sexuality conducted in 1988-90 as well as methods for sharing and reanimating this material with youth groups in contemporary times. To find out more about the study [watch the film](#) and [enjoy the archive](#).

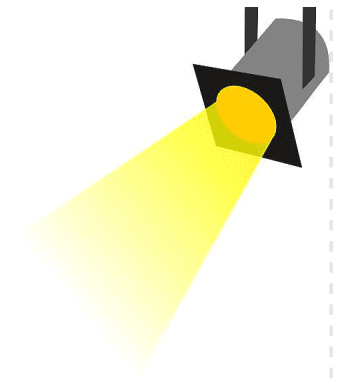
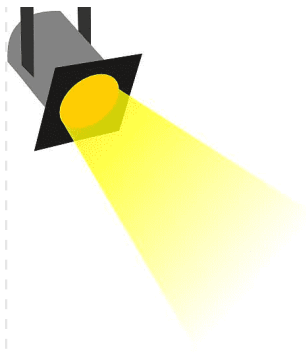
The Reanimating Data team are currently developing educational resources based on this work which will be ready for sharing by the end of the year. They recently gained a ESRC Covid extension grant of £53,000 to continue their work. [Follow their blog](#) to keep in touch.

Jimena Bernal (Childhood and Youth PhD) is doing her doctoral research based on creative practice, taking into account how doing creative practices together with young children can build on existing knowledges of participatory methods and artistic research on performance. Jimena has been working on methodological innovations around equality and co-creation to diminish existing boundaries between adults who engage in creative practice, including herself, and young children. The findings of this PhD project contribute to the academic literature in musical composition/improvisation and can be applied not only in the context of childhood, but also in the wider context of musical composition.

Nicola Yuill (Psychology) gained a research grant 2020 of £15,000 from NIHR ARC/Kent Surrey Sussex for the project ‘Zoom or Room and Covid-19: Effectiveness and Guidance for In-person versus Online Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) intervention sessions’. The project is looking at how meeting online changes the nature of an interaction. With parents getting advice about family relationships and children being assessed for their needs over video rather than face to face, how can we ensure that communication is as attuned as possible? The project will develop guidelines for online therapeutic discussions. You can read more about this project in the Spotlight feature on “They don’t know we’ve got legs”: What’s the future of therapeutic conversations online?” on pages 22/23.



'Imagine if our world was...' by Libby Chappell, aged 11, from Lincoln.



Spotlight

Imaginative Methodologies 1: **'Getting Lost with Transform-In Education'** Rebecca Webb and Perpetua Kirby (Education)

This has been a year of convoluted, unexpected and unmarked pathways for TRANSFORM-IN-EDUCATION', the thinking space we facilitate between all those interested in achieving the balance between conformity and transformation in education. After the disappointment of a 'No thanks' from the Arts Humanities Research Council (AHRC), last summer, and the inevitable sense of deflation and the question of, 'what and where next', we have been reflecting on the nature of the unexpected for our joint CIRCY endeavour. As we have struggled with, and continue to struggle, with a sense of 'getting lost' in these unprecedented times, the irony of our work together effervesces. Our research and practice champions the imperative of occupying and embracing multiple uncertainties of the 21st century (including those associated with the effects of climate change, mass migration, rapid digitalisation, automisation, and threats to democracy) captured in our recent piece for The Financial Times. We apply a focus on 'uncertainty' to education, and especially globalising schooling systems as they mould and shape young people (and teachers), and where the default is often one that assumes an assertion of 'knowns'. We recognise (as we shuffle uncomfortably) that we find the uncertainty of the pandemic anxiety-inducing and discombobulating ourselves, even as we assert the existential need for embracing uncertainty and not-knowing within the social worlds of educational practice.

Our main piece of recent work has been as a consequence of a Sussex Sustainability Research Programme (SSRP) grant, for our research entitled: "Hope in the present": uncertain pedagogies for youth and community resilience in India and Ecuador'. We are researching with colleagues at Sussex in Life Sciences (Dr Mika Peck), Environmental History (Professor Vinita Damodaran and artist, Zuky Serper), with Dr Citlalli Morelos-Juarez from the Tesoro Escondido Reserve, Ecuador, and Dr Anindita Saha, in the Sundarbans, West Bengal, to explore two questions: is there a role for 'uncertain pedagogies' in supporting young people to express relationships with, and responses to, intersecting sustainability, livelihood and Covid uncertainties?; can we study changes in young peoples' shifting narratives of hope and action as they participate in uncertain pedagogies to address sustainability issues?

We have worked intensively as a team online to explore the methodologies, pedagogies and ethics of what might be possible to undertake in both country locales with groups of young people where the uncertainties of climate change and biodiversity loss are experienced, often intensely, daily. Due to the constantly shifting pattern of Covid-19, we find that even as we tentatively set-off down one possible design and fieldwork pathway, we have to double-back and take another tack. Individually and collectively, we experience feelings of disappointment, loss and intensive anxiety about the toll of the pandemic, particularly in India, whilst reminding ourselves that our collective learning is about having something to say about coping and 'being with' onto-epistemic uncertainties. However, even as I write, para-biologist community researchers from the Tesoro National Park are preparing to undertake creative photography and filming work with some young people there, and Indian colleagues are looking ahead, re-imagining arts-based practices that might inspire young people in one school, as it re-opens in a Covid-secure context. The hope and ingenuity of the talented team with whom we work is inspiring and unbounded.

In terms of our work more locally, prior to the pandemic we had had a pivotal experience, one where we learnt far more than we 'taught' colleagues in a schools event we hosted with some ESRC IAA impact funding. Our workshop on the relationship of uncertainty to climate change education, misjudged that colleagues were already on their own clearly-defined path in terms of their direction of travel of a climate change curriculum that had its own history and synergy across its locale. We ate Humble Pie, recognising our miscalculation and our need to remain more 'uncertain' about how we assume the productiveness of 'uncertainty' in different contexts. We re-evaluated and connected instead with education colleagues in our local city area at an earlier stage of thinking about what climate change curricular and practices might look like, posing the question, 'What is it that we each think that young people need from their schooling to address climate change?' This re-focusing became pertinent in opening spaces for co-production. We had one outdoor event in an autumnal 'window' of togetherness before moving to on-line workshops. These came together to support the writing of this paper for the Association of Primary Education (ASPE), and a paper, imminently to be published in a Special Issue on youth climate activism in Educational Review. The serendipity of our false start, in combination with the effects of COVID, meant we had become networked with the Brighton-Hove Environment Education (BHEE) advisor and with other parts of B&H Local Authority online sustainability and climate change education initiatives, involving further discussion and input. Since the start of 2021, we have delivered online workshops for teachers and environmental educators: on opening spaces for uncertainty in outdoor education for the Southdowns National Park, and on the implications of uncertainty for decolonising a climate change curriculum for the Brighton-Hove Headteachers conference (see resources here).

There remain the constant and unintended consequences of the pandemic, where our research, impact (and now new Knowledge Exchange Funding), twists, somersaults, informs and intertwines with our writing in unexpected ways, often taking us down new tracks (including our research related to the Mass Observation seminar series – see here).

Like other colleagues, no-doubt, we feel the intensity of this time, its affordances and costs, yet try to hold in mind the privileged position of research and reflexivity.





Spotlight

Imaginative Methodologies 2: **'Moving Ethnography Online: Observing Children's Service during the Covid-19 pandemic'** Carlie Goldsmith (Social Work & Social Care) on behalf of the Innovate Project

As noted above, the [Innovate Project](#) is exploring the process and impact of innovation in services for young people exposed to extra-familial risks and harms (such as child exploitation). Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was planned that we would investigate this by embedding ethnographers over a period of two years in six local authorities or charities across the UK who were developing new services or interventions using [Trauma-informed Practice](#), [Transitional Safeguarding](#), or [Contextual Safeguarding](#) as an underpinning framework.

The role of the ethnographer was to capture the geographical, political and socio-economic context in which the innovation was taking place, observe the spaces and places in the organization or service as the innovation was explored, discussed and deployed, and see how the innovation affected professionals and practice at all levels from strategic leaders to operational managers and frontline practitioners. Vivaly, through being a consistent presence in sites, ethnographers would meet young people and their families and explore what difference, if any, the innovation made to their experience of care within services.

As soon as the pandemic hit, children's social care services went through a process of rapid adaption and transformation. Sites and offices closed, face-to-face contact for all but the most vulnerable children stopped, and professionals and practice moved online. Suddenly, the services and communities we had spent so long planning and imagining ourselves in no longer existed and the young people and parents we had hoped to create trusting relationships with over time in physical settings had been evacuated into the altogether less certain and concrete online world, a world that for some already posed significant risk of extra-familial harms.

The repercussions for our project were immediate: we had to decide if and how to proceed, given both ethical and practical considerations. Our decision was to postpone the direct engagement with young people and their parents until face-to-face work could resume, and to immerse ourselves until then in the online world of the services that they have been receiving. Here are a few issues that have emerged for us.

In the field, ethnographers can act independently to negotiate and seek access to the spaces, places and people they think are important or relevant, while participants can allow access, provide an alternative choice, or choose to withhold. Online, the balance of control has shifted so the research sites have had a higher level of control. Whilst we still 'snowball' from opportunities as they arise, seeking invitations when we learn about a forthcoming meeting, for example, most of the time site participants decide what events to tell us about; they know where researchers are and control how long we are there for. So, building trust quickly has been essential, to encourage gatekeepers to invite us to what are often very sensitive meetings and discussions.

We haven't been able to rely on our usual face-to-face strategies, such as being warm and friendly in incidental informal interactions in the tea-room; so building initial relationships through email and being punctual, reliable and discreet in online encounters has taken on a particular importance.

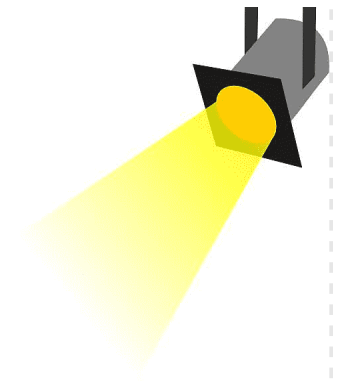
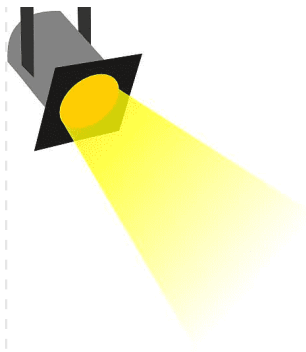
Such online gatekeeping limits immersion and potentially reduces, at least in theory, the risk of a free-range researcher chancing upon the kind of difficult but revealing situations which are central to good ethnography. We wondered initially whether this would result in a 'thinner' or more superficial ethnographic experience for us. Online, you are reliant on sight and sound – you cannot 'smell the coffee' – and even those senses are restricted, e.g. you cannot view people who leave cameras off or see the nuance of their body language in response to each other, as you would in person.

However, there are also advantages. Ethnographers usually spend time managing their physical presence in offices and meetings and go to great lengths to not be seen to be 'doing' research, by limiting note taking, for example. Online, our cameras and microphones have been muted and so we have been largely invisible – and perhaps quickly forgotten. We have not had to worry what or who we look at and for how long, or how extensive our notetaking is. Rather than feeling distanced from the interactions, we have experienced an equally high level of sensitization to the feelings, emotions, and power relationships 'in the room'.

In meetings where young people's experiences of risks and harms are discussed, the nature of the material often provokes strong emotions, even triggering feelings of distress and anxiety in all involved, including researchers. In the field there is often the opportunity for immediate informal or follow-up conversations with those being observed, which can offer reassurance to the ethnographer about the safety and welfare of a young person. Online, this has not been possible to the same extent, and researchers have noted more unresolved emotional impacts. Our 'psychosocial ethos' means that we consider such emotional responses as inevitable, normative, and informative as part of research data, and we bring our reflections regularly to individual and group supervisions to provide insight into our work, as well as offer and gain emotional support. Nonetheless, the potentially traumatizing impact on researchers of observing encounters which are about children's trauma, should not be under-estimated.

We have now been conducting online ethnography for six months. In ethnographic terms this is a relatively long time and yet the curtailment of essential elements of the process, such as building trust, operating choice, and being serendipitously present when important things happen, has perhaps inevitably impacted on the nature of what we have learned about our research site. While we are involved and warmly greeted when we join meetings, we remain relatively unknown guests. Nevertheless, we have been gathering data that is providing essential and sometimes unexpected insights that will be invaluable when we enter our sites in person in the not too distant future.





Spotlight

Imaginative Methodologies 3: 'Happy (Data) Endings: Research with young children during Covid' Kathleen Bailey, Doctoral Researcher in Education

The circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic have substantially affected how I conducted my doctoral research which concerns children's understandings of nature in relation to sustainability. In particular, the constrictions of public health guidelines led me to relocate from two Early Years settings, to a community Forest School. Here, I recruited my 34 participants (aged 1- 9) and facilitated five, one-and-a-half-hour, art-making research sessions. I audio recorded these sessions and took over 1000 photos.

Inspired by Karen Barad (2007), I utilise a diffractive approach to analysis. To do this, I read the diffractive patterns that are created when entities meet, such as child and matter, that then affect one another to create new phenomena. I now share a snippet from my Chapter on 'Nature' in Solvason & Webb (2022, forthcoming) to suggest that the change of location makes visible phenomena that might otherwise have gone undetected.

The photos are laid out in a pattern reminiscent of a scrabble board, sequences of photos like words, radiate out from a photo where children gather around a table, they lean in dabbing and stirring at paint pails with brushes. As I read out from the source the materials seem to become more agentic, initial intra-actions appear controlled i.e. two girls with artists brushes paint geometrical shapes on a canvas. Gradually the materials become more visible/tangible in the intra-actions. Artists' brushes are exchanged for painters' brushes, paint slops onto the canvas... then skin and body parts touch material/matter, atom to atom (Taylor et al.,2020). A four-year-old brushes thick grey clay on to her hands enveloping them. Hands mould clay, clay prints on white canvases and muddy footprints join in. A muddy puddle sucks at welly boots, pulling them, water laps at rims, overflowing them, soaking trapped feet, and children squeal. Nearby, clay paint works its way up pink puffy coat sleeves, the coat and owner roll in the puddle. It is as if, the longer the children intra-act with the materials, the more 'messy' and involved they seem to get, they escalate from tentative, to states where materials and children seem to have reached 'inseparableness' what/who constitutes who/what, is no longer discernible (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

The initial intra-actions remind me of the kinds of activities that enable easy assessment of children's development using '[Outcomes for Early Years' education standards](#)'. Perhaps children perform what they feel is expected of them given such materials under the surveillance of adults. I wonder if even outside the context of Early Years, the existence of 'Outcomes' moulds and governs what children might do with materials on a surface level (Lenz Taguchi, 2011).

The handprint images are reminiscent of those deployed to advertise the messy charm of Early Years settings, suggesting that there is an acceptable and expected way for children to be messy that sits comfortably within the boundaries of 'normal/everyday' Early Years practice. I ponder on whether messy-hand-prints become token gestures to children's desires to become inseparable with materials whilst remaining directed activities where hands can be easily washed. On the other-hand, hand-print messiness may bridge the known and acceptable messy with what might be, where might it lead when materials lead children into states of inseparableness.

Equally, I might read my data through a Foucauldian lens of subjectification (Davies, 2006). In the main the children in this session are new to me, we are just getting to know each other. How might I seek to maintain order, what will I permit? How might the children resist my authority as an adult? (ibid) – what Judith Butler describes as a process of “simultaneous mastery and submission, entailing a necessary vulnerability of the other in order to be” (ibid, p. 425).

Read through a lens of child developmental psychology, my actions or lack of might be interpreted as permissive (Bee and Boyd, 2007). I do not prevent children from getting messy. Still, I might argue that my expectations are high, in line with the Early Years Teacher’s Standard 1: ‘Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge all children’ (NCTL, 2013), and my approach nurturing, enabling children autonomy in what they do (Bee and Boyd, 2007).

A lack of boundaries may well lend itself to children and materials intra-acting without restraint, yet arguably a supportive context may have its own effects on the possibilities that emerge (Barad, 2007). Significantly, parents are standing by at the ready to whisk cold-wet-unhappy-children away.

In this short piece I seek to highlight one phenomenon that my Covid related changes make possible. My analysis reveals something about the way the institution of Early Years affects and perhaps also governs children and adults in their intra-actions with materials, and hence the possibilities that may then open-up or become foreclosed. The Lack of Early Years parameters in the field seem to make me notice that they are still somehow present during the research and outside of the Early Years setting context, which then emerges during the analysis. For my research the way Early Years effects opportunities for and occasions of child/material inseparableness matters, if perhaps ‘inseparableness’ is conducive to children coming to know their worlds intimately... and if sustainability is of importance.

Solvason and Webb, (2022, forthcoming): *Re-imagining and Celebrating the Early Childhood Practitioner: an English Context*, Routledge; London



One Diffractive Source



Puddle/Children/Children/Puddle

Spotlighting our research

Voice and Participation

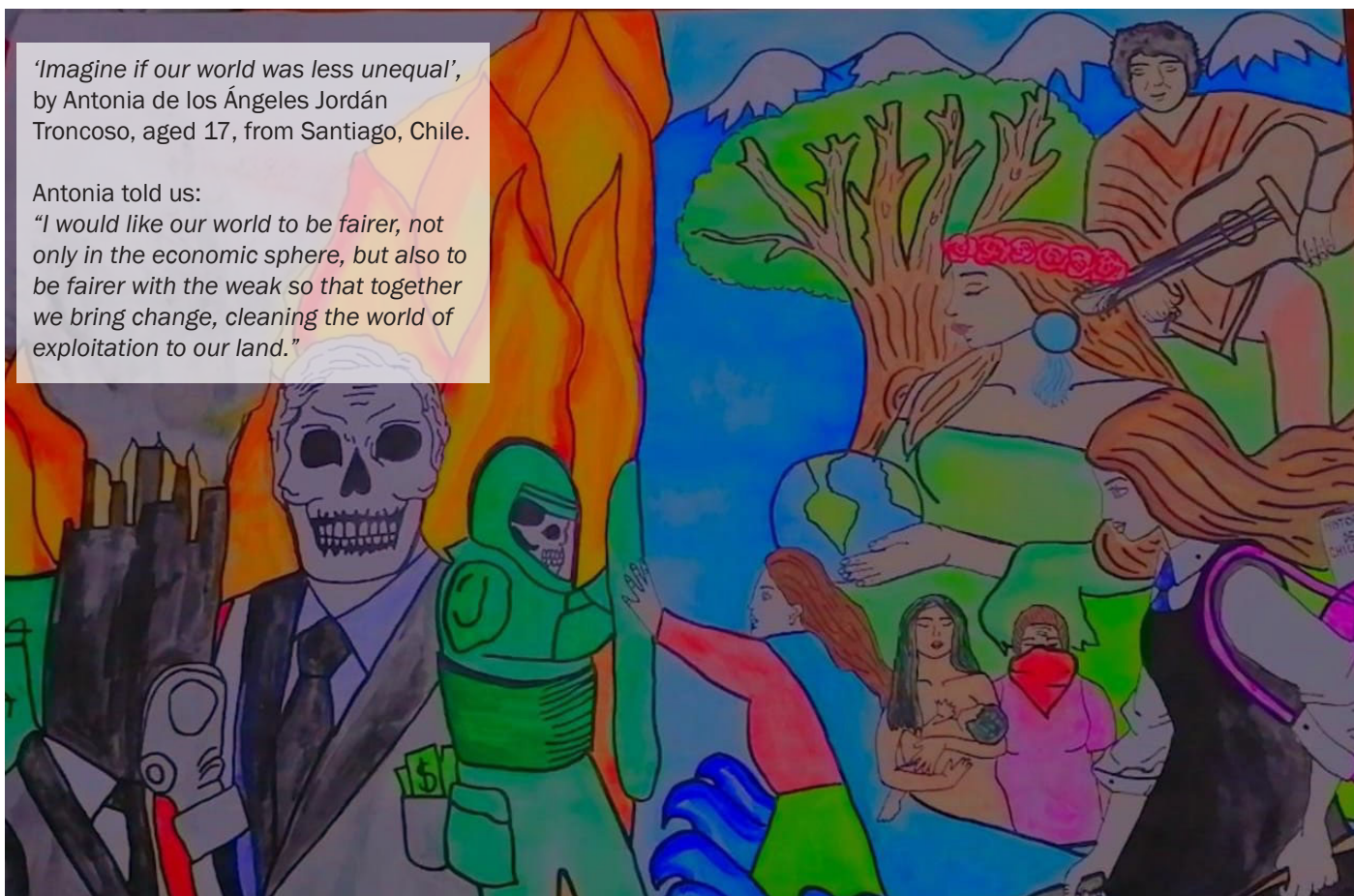
One defining feature of many CIRCY projects is their aim of foregrounding children and young people's views and perspectives, particularly in respect of topics and issues which are of central concern to young people and are poorly understood by adults. This theme overlaps with 'imaginative methodologies' in many ways, as we seek to find more flexible and constructive ways of ensuring young people are central to the research in every way.

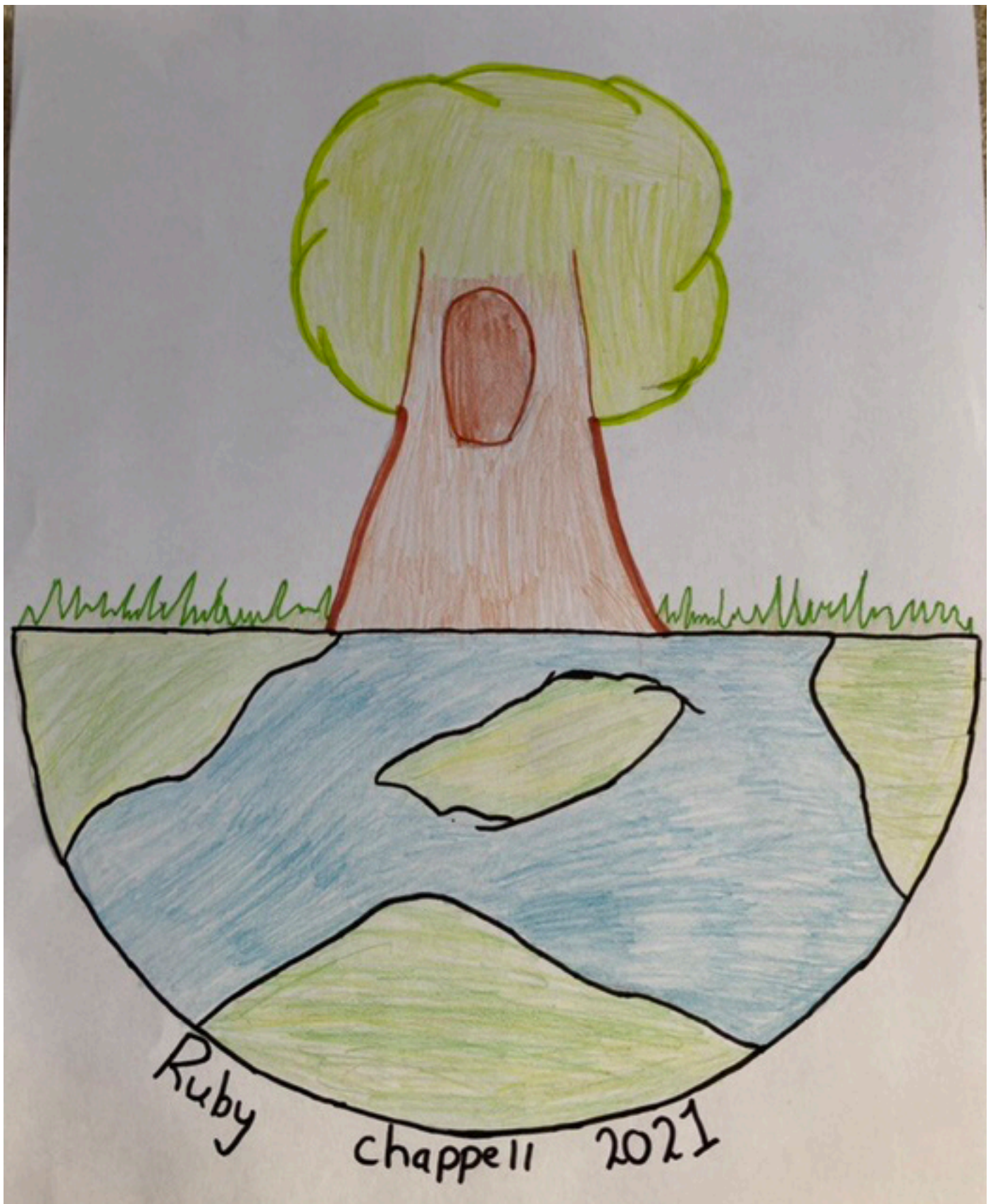
An IDCF-SSRP research grant has been awarded to **Rebecca Webb** (Education, CIRCY co-director) to work with Sussex colleagues, **Perpetua Kirby** (Education), **Mika Peck** (Life Sciences) and **Vinita Damodaran** (World History). They worked virtually with their collaborators, Dr Citlalli Morelos-Juarez (Ecuadorian rainforest coastal lowland) and Dr Anindita Saha (Indian Sundarbans) between January and July 2021 on their youth and climate change-focused research project: 'Hope in the present: Uncertain pedagogies for youth and community resilience in India and Ecuador'. The research explores the role of arts-based deliberative pedagogies for supporting young people, 12-18 years, to express relationships with sustainability uncertainties, in dialogue with stakeholders, with a view to fostering community resilience expressed through narratives of hope and sustainability action. The advisory team include CIRCY's own **Janet Boddy** (Education).

'Imagine if our world was less unequal',
by Antonia de los Ángeles Jordán
Troncoso, aged 17, from Santiago, Chile.

Antonia told us:

"I would like our world to be fairer, not only in the economic sphere, but also to be fairer with the weak so that together we bring change, cleaning the world of exploitation to our land."





'Imagine if our world was...' by Ruby Chappell, aged 11, from Lincoln.



Spotlight

Voice and Participation 1: **'Taking Learning from Practice during Covid-19 Times: Researching and working online with young children'** **Loreto Rodríguez, Doctoral Researcher in Childhood and Youth**

The move to online/remote engagements with children and young people through the Covid-19 pandemic has offered a complex invitation to researchers and professionals to rethink our methods and practices. As a doctoral researcher in childhood and youth and as a child psychotherapist, this has challenged me to adapt, transform, and (re)shape my research methodologies and psychotherapy practice with preschool children in Chile. My research was originally designed to include face-to-face participatory sessions with young children who were attending psychotherapy following the experience of child sexual abuse. My aim was to explore what these children understood about the aims and process of the therapy, and how they had experienced it. I also intended to learn what the therapists and caregivers thought the children's perceptions of therapy were.

In Chile, most of children who have experienced sexual abuse are frequently referred psychological interventions through publicly-funded specialist clinical Centres. These are usually delivered in-person. However, public health guidelines to address the risks of coronavirus infection have led to many services needing to adapt their accustomed face-to-face psychosocial supports to online/remote interventions. This has presented a number of complexities, not least because young children commonly express their feelings and views through non-verbal means, not just spoken ways of communicating. As face-to-face contacts and interactions, which include play, drawing and other activities, are usually most effective in involving and making sense of children's world's, substantial rethinking of approaches has been necessary.

I can attest first-hand to the challenges of working online for the first time as, over this period, I have continued to offer some psychological assessments and psychotherapeutic work with children who have lived through maltreatment and sexual abuse experiences. I have been able to share and discuss my doubts and reflections with other colleagues and have learned that these challenges are common to online engagements with young children. That brought me to think about how we might adapt some of the "traditional" therapeutic techniques used for therapy and assessment with children and innovate and learn reflexively in order to develop more meaningful and supportive ways of engaging children remotely.

Online/remote therapeutic work with young children has its particularities. We must be careful about the child's privacy and confidentiality in the therapy process – who might be in earshot, listening but unseen? We must consider what the distance and lack of embodied co-presence might mean for the child – how does it affect the child's sense of safety, particularly given their abusive experiences? What is it like for the very young child to interact with technological devices – do they understand what is happening when someone is on a screen? These peculiarities mean we must also work closely with parents and caregivers, aiming to generate a respectful but also protective context for therapeutic work. Just as with face-to-face work, the support of my puppets and toys, which I see as co-therapists, have been crucial to engaging and communicating with children. The playful nature of my 'co-therapists' helps create a comfortable context for interaction, which eases the stiffness and remoteness of the video call somewhat.

This shift online has similarly affected my doctoral research, where I had to gradually abandon the possibility of conducting research interviews in person with children and their caregivers, to consider undertaking research interviews in the online world. When I first started to accept the need to adapt my methods last year, this was challenging because, at that point, I hadn't experienced working remotely with young children either in therapy or research. However, more recently, my online psychotherapeutic practice with young children was able to illuminate for me how my underlying skills and practical experimentation could be built upon for more remote research methods. Reflecting with my doctoral supervisors led me to think that if therapeutic work through video calls with young children was possible, then research was feasible ethically and practically, too.

I'm currently developing the second phase of my fieldwork. Young children will participate in two research activities: first, an observation of an online therapeutic session between the child and their therapist, and secondly, an online interview with each young child with the support of their caregivers. The online interview with my young participants will be based on playful and art-based resources, and I will also have the support of my co-researchers! These finger puppets representing diverse emotions will help me to engage and talk with children.

The complexities that the pandemic brought to my initial research plans were difficult to face in the beginning. However, I also think of them as an opportunity to develop flexible thinking. Changing my study and research methods was a call for innovation and nourishing my field of research in the light of my practice as a child therapist within the pandemic context. I'm hoping that, for next year's CIRCY annual report, I will be able to reflect more deeply around researching remotely/online with young children and shed light on methods and ideas that enable exploration of young children's views on matters that directly concern them.





Spotlight

Voice and Participation 2: **'Beyond Lockdown: A rapid response study asking care leavers what support they want'** Helen Drew (Psychology)

In 2020, there were 42,960 care leavers aged 17-21 in England. Of this number, 10,200 were care leavers who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Many young people leave the care system feeling unprepared, financially insecure, in poor mental health and without the support networks most of us take for granted. Reports published early in the pandemic by charities such as Become, Coram Voice and the National Youth Advocacy Service, identified that care leavers are especially vulnerable to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, including those who are in higher education.

'Beyond Lockdown' was commissioned as a five-month rapid research project by the newly established NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex, and was a collaboration between the University of Sussex and the Creative Research Collective. The study investigated the impact of the pandemic on care leavers' mental health and wellbeing, connectedness and every-day lives. Working with care leavers, we aimed to co-produce messages for services to facilitate provision of timely, informed support, and messages for care leavers to guide them through the post-lockdown transition. There were two phases to the research: in phase one, a national online survey ran for four weeks in July 2020; in phase two, summary survey data was discussed, and key messages drafted, in two rounds of online Care Leaver Expert Working Groups (CLEWGs) in the Kent, Surrey and Sussex region.

Mental health was identified as the primary support need as lockdown ends. Other priorities included housing, finances, employment/education/training, reconnecting with others and support for independence. Over 60% of respondents endorsed multiple support needs. Care leavers said services should be proactive, offer personalised, genuine support, rather than tick-box care, ideally face-to-face, and made several practical training suggestions for Personal Advisors, who are the key professionals that support care leavers. Care leavers suggested peer supporters could act as a bridge with services, help build confidence and help take the first steps to change. CLEWG participants cited loneliness as a barrier to reconnecting as lockdown ends and emphasised the importance of professionals instigating the difficult conversations about mental health and wellbeing. The strongest message to other care leavers was 'ask for help if you need it'. Peers were encouraged to develop or re-establish a routine, exercise, do things they enjoyed, stay connected to trusted people and stay optimistic. They advised taking small steps.

Carrying out 'rapid research' in the middle of a pandemic brought many challenges! Our aim was to include care leavers who may be 'harder to reach' from a UASC background or those who were homeless or insecurely housed. We focused on building connections with local third sector organisations and there was genuine interest in the research. However, smaller charitable organisations and housing providers were under intense pressure due to the pandemic and sometimes operating with reduced staffing due to furlough. Our inability to make face-to-face, informal contact sometimes felt like a barrier. The pandemic made us more reliant on online methods, which also potentially exclude young people who have limited digital access, a recognised difficulty for many care leavers. An offline briefer version of the survey helped four UASC care leavers in Kent to participate, but we did not reach as many under-represented groups as we would have liked. What has come from these efforts, however, are important connections which we aim to take forwards into future research.

A key benefit of working with the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex was their focus on translating research into practice. They co-ordinated two online Communities of Practice, which brought together care leavers, practitioners, university widening participation teams, and academics, along with Mark Riddell, the National Advisor for Care Leavers. These events gave care leavers the opportunity to share the co-produced messages, including their own videos, and attendees made pledges about how they would take the research forwards into their own practice and priorities. These were revisited in the second Community of Practice a few months later to assess progress and impact.

One of the most positive aspects of this research has been its reach. Mark Riddell facilitated connections with the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum run by Catch-22, a national forum for care leavers and practitioners. Care leavers who co-produced the messages went on to present at both the young people and practitioner forums, again adapted to online formats. They led interactive sessions, using the Menti platform, to gather more feedback for key messages and stimulated ongoing conversations about mental health and support needed beyond lockdown.

This research was led by Valerie Dunn (Creative Research Collective)
and Helen Drew (School of Psychology, University of Sussex).

[See a detailed summary of findings, co-produced messages to services and care leavers, and pledges from the communities of practice.](#)



CIRCY's doctoral community

CIRCY's postgraduate research community continues to go from strength to strength. We remain strongly committed to building a thriving doctoral community, and continue to offer methodological workshops and work-in-progress seminars. We see our doctoral researchers as integral to CIRCY's research and spotlights by current doctoral researchers, **Kathleen Bailey** and **Loreto Rodriguez**, and by recent graduates **Paul Shuttleworth** and **May Nasrawy**, are integrated under CIRCY's broad research themes above.

In 2020, we instituted a new doctoral researchers' network, and this year we hosted three meetings to share knowledge and support. These were co-facilitated by **Michelle Lefevre** (CIRCY Director), **Rebecca Webb** (CIRCY Do-director), and CIRCY Doctoral Researchers **Loreto Rodriguez**, **Hayley Preston-Smith**, **Kathleen Bailey** and **May Nasrawy**. Topics for discussion have included ethics during Covid times, principles of analysing data and participatory research with young children, and reflections about the writing up process.

We encourage all doctoral researchers with an interest in research that has children, childhood and youth at the centre to make contact and join our network!

Two of our students completed their doctorates in the last year – and we extend congratulations to **Paul Shuttleworth** (Thesis: 'What matters to children living in kinship care: Another way of being a normal family') and **May Nasrawy** (Thesis: 'Living on the margins: Understanding wellbeing through the everyday lived experiences of young Arabs/Palestinians in Jerusalem') Both doctoral researchers from Social Work & Social Care.

Hamide Elif Üzümcü, a doctoral researcher who visited CIRCY in spring 2019, has been awarded her PhD at the University of Padova, Italy. During her time at Sussex, Dr Üzümcü was co-supervised by **Liam Berriman** and **Rachel Thomson** (both Social Work & Social Care), and she participated in several workshops and events. Dr Üzümcü's thesis was titled: 'Lost in Intrafamilial Relations: Children's individual privacy at home and in digital environments'.



Paul Shuttleworth's doctoral viva, showing Paul with his supervisor, examiners, and viva chair.

Knowledge exchange, partnerships and public engagement

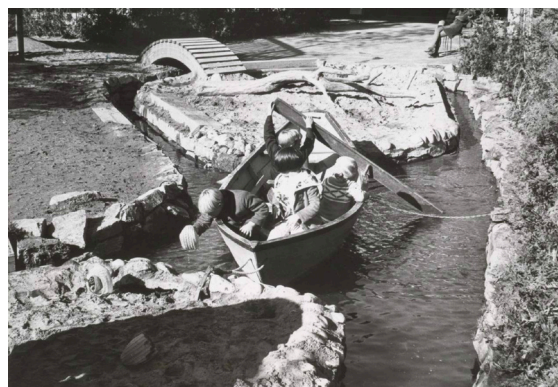
CIRCY's work is fundamentally concerned with making a difference to children and young people's lives, a principle that applies across diverse disciplines through our efforts to build 'real world' understandings of lives in time and place. We aim to think beyond the academy, making our research visible and accessible, and engaging with research users – including researched groups – throughout the research process and beyond the lifetime of specific projects. Alongside 'traditional' academic activities such as dissemination and expert advisory work, we are strongly committed to building opportunities for mutual learning between researchers and others who have a stake in research process and outcomes (whether practitioners, policy makers, other academics, or children, young people and families). CIRCY members present regularly to policy makers and the practice field in the UK and engage across the globe to share learning and build impact from their research. The following are selected highlights from CIRCY researchers' collaborations, presentations and workshops from the last year – national and international.

Engagement, partnerships and recognition

Liam Berriman (Social Work & Social Care) has become one of the new co-editors of the journal, *Children & Society*, along with colleagues Professor Deevia Bhana (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa), Professor Sarah Crafter and Dr Martin Robb (Open University) and Dr Yuwei Xu (UCL Institute of Education). The outgoing team of editors included **Janet Boddy** (Education / CIRCY Steering Group) and **Sara Bragg** (CIRCY Advisory Group). In January 2021, the new team published [a welcome editorial](#), outlining their plans for the journal, as well as producing a podcast featuring the new editors in a roundtable discussion about plans for the journal's future.

Hannah Field (English) has been awarded an AHRC Research Networking grant for the project 'Not Only Dressed but Dressing: Clothing, Childhood, Creativity' along with co-investigator Professor Kiera Vaclavik (Queen Mary, University of London). The network will bring together curators, artists, designers, stylists, and scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds to think about the relationship between children's clothing, design, agency, and creativity. The grant has three museum partners, all with significant collections of children's costume: the V&A Museum of Childhood, the Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, and the Musée du textile et de la mode in Cholet, France. CIRCY people involved in the network as participants or advisory board members include **Liam Berriman** (Social Work & Social Care), **Janet Boddy** (Education), **Nuno Ferreira** (Law), and **Maria Moscati** (Law). You can find out more about the project on the website: notonlydressed.com

We are delighted to announce that **Ben Highmore** ((Media and Film) has been awarded the accolade of Fellow of The British Academy. Fellowship of the national academies is voted on by peer members and is an exceptional recognition of academic distinction. Ben says, "The British Academy has played an important role in supporting the social sciences and the humanities in the UK, and at a time when these areas are under increasing threat through funding cuts and pernicious culture wars, its task is even more urgent. I'm delighted to have been invited to participate in its work as an elected fellow".



This image relates to Ben Highmore's work. It is Cornelia Hahn Oberlander's "Creative Playground" designed for the Montreal Expo 1967.

The Autism Community Research Network Sussex (ACoRNS) led by **Nicola Yuill** (Psychology) had their official launch debating 'Rethinking Education in Autism' on 21 October 2020 in an online event with over 80 participants. There were speakers representing autistic youth, parents, researchers and advisory services. The event included the announcement of the three winners of the group's logo design competition from local schools. Visit them at acorns-sussex.org.uk and/or follow them on Twitter: @ACoRNSussex.

Michelle Lefevre (Social Work & Social Care) has continued on the steering group of the Sussex Family Justice Quality Circle, a group of social workers and lawyers in Sussex who seek to identify the most effective or promising practices regarding legal proceedings concerning children, and to facilitate beneficial change in every aspect of the family justice system in Sussex. Michelle also continues as a co-opted member of the British Association of Social Workers' Children and Families police and practice group, and the 80/20 Steering Group, which seeks to promote relationship-based practice with children and families.

Michelle additionally provided consultancy to the research organisation, OpCit, on two projects for the Home Office. The first aimed to improve understanding of and intervention work with young people in high-risk social contexts, such as 'gangs' and gang affected areas, who engage in abusive behaviour within their intimate relationships. The second explored the potential for involving perpetrators' own parents in interventions to address domestic abuse and coercive control.

Perpetua Kirby and **Rebecca Webb** (both Education) have used an ESRC IAA impact award to work with teachers locally for knowledge sharing in a city woodland to consider 'uncertain' practices that teachers might engage with in outdoor school spaces with their pupils. They have worked closely with the [Sussex Wildlife Trust](http://SussexWildlifeTrust.org.uk) and delivered online training to South Downs National Park outdoor educators in January and March 2021 on 'Decolonising the climate change curriculum' and 'We've got to go through it: inspiring children and young people to engage with climate change issues'.

Julia Winstone (Doctoral Researcher) participated in a series of roundtables held by the Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA), to build a diverse Criminal Justice Workforce. She attended in her role as a Volunteer Appropriate Adult & Community Referral Order Panel Member in a Youth Offending Service since 2012.

Presenting our work in the UK

Feylyn Lewis (Social Work & Social Care) gave an invited presentation for the online NHS England 'Commitment to Carers' Mind The Gap Project Launch on hidden groups of young carers in September at which there were over 200 attendees.

Nicola Yuill (Psychology) and local psychologist practitioner, Zubeida Dasgupta, presented the 'Zoom or Room' Project at the NIHR Kent, Surrey and Sussex Applied Research Consortium event on Starting Well: CYP Mental Health on 4 November.

Kristi Hickle (Social Work & Social Care) gave a virtual keynote for Reading County Council's Trauma Informed Practice Conference, for multi-disciplinary professionals across Reading. Kristi also agreed a consultancy contract with Sussex and Surrey Police that will involve – over the next year – training delivery to each entire police force on trauma informed policing practices. This includes: 1) A series of ten trainings to senior and strategic leads, follow-up focus groups with leadership; 2) the development of a train-the-trainer programme for in-house trauma-informed practice training delivery and 3) consultation with the communications department and in the development of training materials for new officers.

Michelle Lefevre and **Kristi Hickle** (both Social Work & Social Care) with Rachel Larkin (recent PhD graduate, now at the University of Kent) presented in July 2021 on 'Understanding and addressing the emergent challenge of child criminal exploitation' at the online Joint Social Work Education and Research Conference.

Maruša Levstek (Doctoral Researcher) presented a paper at the SEMPRES (Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research) autumn conference and at the International Conference of Students of Systematic Musicology (SysMus) in September 2020.

Vicky Lebeau (English) gave an invited talk at the British Psychoanalytic Council Webinar 'Poverty and deprivation among children during the pandemic' in March 2021. In her presentation, Vicky explored aspects of the post-war vision of the British social state and its impact on children, considering the relationship between childhood and deprivation and dependence in the contemporary welfare imagination. She discussed such areas as food bank use and, also, the recent crisis around feeding children during school vacations.

Rachel Thomson (Social Work & Social Care) gave a presentation at the launch of the book 'Narrating childhood with children and young people: diverse contexts, methods and stories of everyday life'. Her presentation was titled 'Narrating Childhood in the present tense: growing sideways with Emily' (Institute of Social Responsibility, Edge Hill University). In May, Rachel was a panellist for the 'Life stories in research' event organised by Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research (University of Sussex) and a discussant at the launch of Wendy Luttrell's book 'Children framing childhoods: working class kids visions of care' (2020 Policy Press), hosted by Association of Narrative Research. Alongside Ester McGeeney (also Social Work and Social Care), Rachel presented the work 'Young women speaking out about sex: making public problems of personal troubles 1989-2019' at the 'Let's talk about sex (and reproduction): counseling for reproductive health in post-war Britain' (University of Cambridge CRSSH – Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities).

Janet Boddy (Education) was a discussant at a seminar for Focus Ireland on experiences of housing insecurity for young adults who have been in care.

In October and November 2020, **Robin Banerjee** (Psychology) gave keynote presentations for the EmpathyLab training day for schools and a masterclass for children's authors, for the East Sussex School and College Mental Health Network meeting, Future Ready Fund webinar (Nesta), and at the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians Annual Conference. During May 2021, he presented at the International Conference on Mental Health and Wellbeing of Postgraduate Researchers and at the Whole Education Annual Conference. Robin was appointed as an Evidence Panel Member for the Early Intervention Foundation in June 2021 and provides consultancy and expert advice for Welsh Government on the development of the Curriculum for Wales since 2017.

The international arena

Dorte Thorsen (IDS) with Mélanie Jacquemin from the French Institute for Demographic Studies were speakers at the Research Day on the Anthropology of Childhood at the Université de Toulouse on 13 November. Their presentation was entitled: 'Assignations de genre v/s transformations des pratiques: trajectoires d'adolescentes migrantes au travail en Afrique de l'Ouest'.

Sushri Sangita Puhan (Doctoral Researcher in Social Work & Social Care) was invited to present her research in Ranajeet Guru Memorial International Webinar Series organised by the Indian Council of Historical Research. The title of her presentation was 'Illuminating adoptive family practices in contemporary India'.

Maria Moscati (Law) together with Dr Francesca Ammataro (University of Roehampton) delivered an online presentation at the University of Gothenburg titled 'Centering Children's Voices on Matters of Gender and Sexuality: Exploring New Frontiers of Children's Rights'.

Hannah Field (English) gave an invited talk at 'POP-APP: International Conference on Description, Conservation, and Use of Movable Books' (16-19 January 2021). The event was organized by the Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo, Turin.

Loreto Rodriguez (Doctoral Research in Childhood & Youth) presented, virtually, at The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) Milan European Congress 2021 on June. The title of her presentation was 'Psychotherapeutic change process in child sexual abuse: visual narratives from children and young people'.

Feylyn Lewis (Social Work & Social Care) presented, virtually, at the International Young Carers Conference in Brussels on 'Aiming High! Educational Aspirations of Young Carers' and 'Results from the ME-WE study: A cross-national profile of mental health well-being of European adolescent young carers'. She also presented a paper at the Share4Carers webinar on 'The ME-WE project: supporting the mental health well-being of European adolescents young carers'.

Rachel Thomson (Social Work & Social Care) presented in October (online) at the Finnish Youth Research Network and the Qualitative Longitudinal Research Group on Italian Youth (ITA.LI, a research group at the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milano-Bicocca) on 'Longitudinal Youth Studies in Europe. Prospects, questions, collaboration'. In November, Rachel gave a keynote address to the European Sociological Association 'Youth & Generation' mid-term virtual Conference hosted by the University of Eastern Finland, on 'From a noun to a verb: Rethinking generation for new times'.

Jeri Damman (Social Work & Social Care) and colleagues, presented at The European Conference for Social Work Research (ECSWR) (online) on 'Changing the story: engaging parents in child protection policy and service delivery' in May 2021 in Romania.

Michelle Lefevre (Social Work & Social Care) presented on 'Addressing extra-familial risks and harms with young people', within the co-convened Special Interest Group on Children and Families across Europe, held online as part of the European Social Work Research Association Conference in April 2021.

Highlights from CIRCY's activities this year

CIRCY Events

CIRCY hosts exciting and inclusive events throughout the year, including members' workshops, seminars, reading group, and conferences. Despite the difficulties faced as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we were delighted to host events online and in conjunction with other research centres across the University, in addition to solely CIRCY-hosted events.

Our **Coffee and Collaboration** meetings continued to offer termly opportunities for networking, and short presentations by CIRCY members on innovative aspects of their research. Colleagues presenting this year included **Liam Berriman** (Social Work & Social Care), **Sushri Sangita Puhan** (Doctoral Researcher in Social Work & Social Care), **Lucy Robinson** (History), **Alka Townend** (Education), **Maria Moscati** (Law), **Dorte Thorsen** (IDS), **Nathalie Huegler** (Social Work & Social Care) and **Frances Smith** and **Martin Spinelli** (Film and Media). All CIRCY events ran via Zoom this year and attracted our biggest audience ever.

At the **Ideas in Action** workshops, CIRCY researchers were able to bring and share developing ideas on research proposals that were in formation so they could benefit from the interdisciplinary feedback by other CIRCY colleagues. In October, **Nicola Yuill** (Psychology) and **Jacqui Shepherd** (Education) discussed 'Building a Community Research Network: What's Needed?' as they planned the launch of @ACoRNSussex – a sister network to the Autism Community Research Network Southampton (@ACoRNSoton). ACoRNSoton was set up by Sarah Parsons a few years ago to stimulate a truly participatory research agenda with schools and agencies in the region. ACoRNSussex shares the same values but with a special emphasis on bringing together research and practice relating to autism in education, health and social care. Nicola and Jacqui were looking for feedback, ideas and experience from colleagues to help them do this in the most effective way.

In December, **Perpetua Kirby** and **Rebecca Webb** (both Education) shared the details of their small-scale research project utilising the Mass Observation archive. They have been analysing diaries from children and young people (aged 7-25) from May 2020 to explore the unique experiences of the first 'wave' of the Covid-19 'lockdown'. Perpetua and Rebecca discussed what their initial analysis might be revealing about everyday uncertainties and possible insights into the types of support young people feel enable them to navigate uncertainty.

Three **Reading Groups** were held this year, being a thematic series with a focus on literature representing the lives and perspectives of children and young people, with a particular focus on #BlackLivesMatter. The December group was led by **Janet Boddy** (Education) on *Crongton Knights* by Alex Wheatle. In February, we met to discuss *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, led by **Pam Thurschwell** (English / CIRCY Steering group). Finally in June, **Michelle Lefevre**, **Rebecca Webb** and **Loreto Rodriguez** led discussions on *Windrush Child* by Benjamin Zephaniah.

In November, CIRCY Co-director **Rebecca Webb** (Education), led a **Virtual Writing Retreat**, facilitating an online space for CIRCY colleagues to come together to write and talk about their writing.

Two **Online Research Seminars** were held. In November 2020, Valentina Terra and Daniela Díaz from the Chilean Observatory for Childhood and Youth presented on 'Children and young people's experiences of participation during the social protests in Chile'. This seminar discussed what children and young people had said about their participation in the social demonstrations, their feelings and opinions about what had been happening in their country, the state violence children and young had suffered during the protests, and their hopes and proposals for Chile's new constitution.

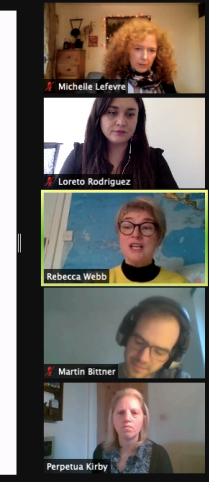
In February 2021, Dr Martin Bittner and Georg Rissler, from Europa-Universitaet Flensburg, presented their current research on 'The Governance of Children's Lives during Covid-19 through Regulatory Educational Policies'. The seminar discussed how children's institutionalized lives were being regulated in Germany during the COVID-19-pandemic by analysing political documents produced at both state and federal level to govern the responses to the infectious disease of the virus. The presenters focused on letters, policies and other edicts from supervisory authorities addressing cultural, social, educational and school issues affecting children. They presented the first findings on how children, teachers, headteachers and parents are addressed, governed and educated through these documents, and the regularities and rules that define them.

Educating for uncertainty

- Dominant technical education discourse: emphasising certainty through teaching (scientific) knowledge.
- Pandemics demand creative, critical and resilient civil societies - including capacity to engage with uncertainty.
- Education for uncertainty left to parents and children.

'The bubble of certainty begins to crack as we are on the edge of being poured into real life.'


Maryyam Ahmed Toor,
MA student, Sussex



Perpetua Kirby and Rebecca Webb share details of their small-scale research project utilising the Mass Observation archive.

Conclusions

- There is a need for justice and reparation for all children and adolescents who were victims of State violence.
- No criminalize children whose rights have been repeatedly violated.
- The State has to take responsibility for implementing institutional changes in terms of prevention and rights protection.
- The C&A have been playing a leading role in the social mobilizations, but the authorities have ignored their demands, needs and desires.
- Chile has an unique opportunity to realize children participation right, by including C&A in the constitutional process.
- C&A are anxious to participate and, when granted the spaces, they use them with passion, creativity, and responsibility.



Valentina Terra and Daniela Díaz from the Chilean Observatory for Childhood and Youth presented 'Children and young people's experiences of participation during the social protests in Chile'.

Current situation of Covid-19 in Germany




Dr Martin Bittner and Georg Rissler (Europa-Universitaet Flensburg) presented 'The Governance of Children's Lives during Covid-19 through Regulatory Educational Policies'.

CIRCY Online

This year, the [CIRCY blog](#) has been particularly active. Take a look!

- [‘Light over here please ...’](#)
Dr Louise Sims (Kinship Care and Fostering Consultant, CoramBAAF)
- [‘Listening to children in a care home setting in a time of Covid’](#)
Rebecca Webb (Education) in conversation with Steven Crowe (University of Sussex / Childhood and Youth Alumni / Manager of a residential home for children)
- [‘On hope and certainty in education’](#)
Fliss Bull (Doctoral Researcher in Education)
- [‘Governing children’s lives during Covid-19 through educational regulatory practices’](#)
Martin Bittner and **Rebecca Webb** in conversation
- [‘A type of forgetting: academy teachers’ experiences of self-appraisal and some rhetorical questions this raises in relation to children and young people’](#)
Martin Brown (Doctoral Researcher in Education)
- [‘Pulling it all together: One PhD CIRCY researcher reflects on writing the last stages of her PhD during the Covid pandemic’](#)
May Nasrawy (Doctoral Researcher in Social Work & Social Care)
- [‘Reflecting on participatory methods and methodologies for research with children and young people’](#)
Michelle Lefevre (Social Work & Social Care) and **Rebecca Webb** (Education)

Our Twitter feed [@SussexCIRCY](#) continues to be active, highlighting our research and activities.

Specific projects also have their own blogs and social media activity, including: [Everyday Childhoods](#); **Lucy Robinson’s History blog**; the [TRANSFORM-iN EDUCATION blog](#) and [The Innovate Project website](#) and blog.

CIRCY in the Press

In March, **Rebecca Webb** (Education) was interviewed by Adam Goacher (Greatest Hits Radio Bristol, Somerset and West Sussex) on the ‘Importance of uncertainty and wellbeing in schools’.

Feylyn Lewis (Social Work & Social Care) published an opinion article in *Schools Week* in March 2021 on [how to ease the transition back to school for young carers in the pandemic context](#).

CIRCY publications

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Bakketeig, E., **Boddy, J.**, Gundersen, T., Ostergaard, J., & Hanrahan, F. (2020): '[Deconstructing doing well: What can we learn from care experienced young people in England, Denmark and Norway?](#)' *Children and Youth Services Review*, Volume 118, November 2020, 105333

Banerjee, R., Heyman, G. D., & Lee, K. (2020): 'The development of moral self-presentation'. In L. A. Jensen (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of moral development: An interdisciplinary perspective*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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Boddy, J. and Wheeler, B. (2020): 'Recognition and Justice? Conceptualizing support for women whose children are in care or adopted'. *Societies*, 10 (4), 96.

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Elliott, H., Edwards, R., **Phoenix, A.** and **Boddy, J.** (2021): 'Paradata in Marginalia: A narrative secondary analysis'. In **A. Phoenix**, J. Brannen and C. Squire (eds) *Researching Family Narratives*. London: Sage.

Field, H. (2020): "'Only Brooks of Sheffield": Conversation, Crossover Writing, and Child and Adult Perspectives in David Copperfield and Its Juvenile Adaptations'. In "'Dear Child": Talking to Children in Victorian and Edwardian Publications for Children, edited by Virginie Iché. Special issue, Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens 92 (2020).

Hampson, M., Goldsmith, C. and **Lefevre, M.** (2021): '[Towards a framework for ethical innovation in children's social care](#)', *Journal of Children's Services*, ahead-of-print.

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Leaney, S. and **Webb, R.**, (2021): 'Representation as politics: asserting a feminist ethic in ethnographic research'. *Ethnography and Education*, 16(1), pp.44-59.

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LOCATION

The Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY) is located within the School of Education and Social Work which is based in Essex House on the University of Sussex campus. The University is situated on a modern campus on the edge of the South Downs National Park near the lively seaside city of Brighton. London is one hour away by train, and there is easy access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

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