



## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK DOCTORAL IMPACT NEWSLETTER

### Issue 1 Spring 2021

Welcome to our first doctoral Impact newsletter! In this first issue, we want to highlight the steps we have been taking to foster a healthy research impact culture in ESW- beyond REF2021 and beyond metrics- by cultivating research relationships with doctoral students, research fellows and early-career researchers. These efforts align with our research strategy, as we aim to become ever more inclusive, open, participatory and responsive in engaging both students and staff in developing ideas for knowledge exchange and measurable impact from their research.

Some key questions we have been grappling with, in conversations about impact with doctoral students, include: *What's the point of doing this [PhD] research? How would it benefit individuals, society, environment? Does it address any real-world challenges? Could my research enrich, influence, inform or change policies?* In this issue, you will find information about the outcome of our early impact discussions and some of our planned activities for 2021 and beyond.

### Spotlight

**Sushri Sangita Puhan:** My doctoral work on adoptive family practice and display in India is exploratory, ground-breaking research. The study aims to understand how and why people think, talk, and practice adoption in their everyday lives under conditions of contested and changing social and cultural norms, where adoption is largely unspoken. The research approach gives voice to, and enables sense to be made of, the lived personal experience of adoptive parents, adopted children/ young people and social actors who narrate their daily experiences of 'practising' adoptive family lives.

My study involved significant public engagement, through a distinctive methodological approach that has enabled me to build firm relationships with cohorts of adoptive family members, prospective parents, and adoption policymakers and practitioners alike. I have established a means, through writing and sharing blog posts and developing a social media presence via Facebook, of consolidating and developing a direct means of engaging with the emerging 'adoptive family practice' community across India. I have also collaborated with the academic platform Childhood and Youth Studies Collectives, <https://www.theccysc.com/members>, the first



initiative in South Asia for critical research in Childhood and Youth studies. I intend to make a difference in build public awareness and creating space to challenge the traditional silence around adoption in India.



**May Nasrawy** Since the start of my research journey as a doctoral researcher, the impact of my research, both on myself and on the community and children/young people I was working with, has shaped much of my thinking around why I was doing this research. It's taken me back to the very start, to the first questions I had about what it meant for young people in Jerusalem to be well. Those questions I posed when I knew something was not entirely right, that things needed to change but most importantly, that new understandings needed to emerge for a change to be possible. Hence, I became aware that in pursuing research, we are aiming for an impact, yet conducting our research is not enough for that impact to be achieved. We need to ensure that

the knowledge we have arrived at is not only available for the communities that we work with, but also available in ways which they can access, understand and influence. Figure 1 demonstrates key beneficiaries in my research and reflects some of my thinking subsequent to the Impact discussions the School had arranged for doctoral researchers in the recent past.

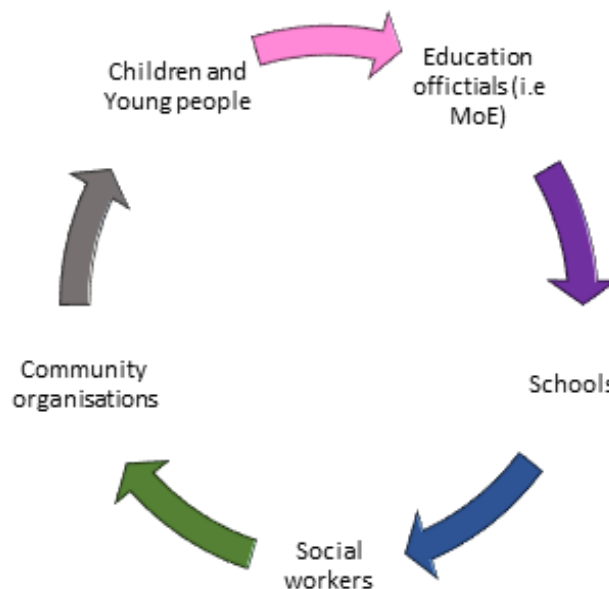


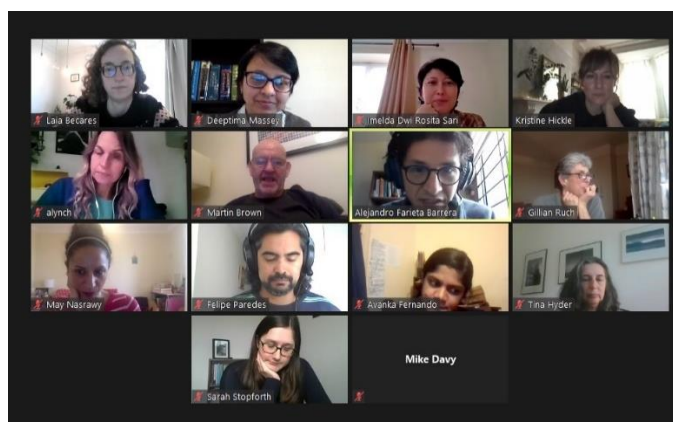
Figure 1 demonstrates key beneficiaries in my research

## Impact Events

On 22 February 2021 the School hosted their fourth Impact Workshop. It brought together doctoral researchers and early career researchers from ESW, and doctoral researchers from other schools currently co-supervised by ESW faculty, including Psychology, Migration Studies and Geography. The event was well attended; it was facilitated by Dr Kristi Hickle and Dr Deeptima Massey and delivered via Zoom.

The workshop also featured two presentations: ***Attempting to make impact with the Impact Acceleration Award: An example in progress*** (Dr Laia Becares), and ***The small***

**bag making a big difference to children's lives – Kitbags** (Professor Gillian Ruch). The event led to a stimulating discussion related to topics such as: putting research into practice, significance and reach, pathways and types of impact, and who might be the key research users to think about.



Attendees at the recent Impact Workshop

## Thoughts from an Impact workshop attendee:

### Martin Brown: Preamble to a blogpost



Having attended the recent Impact [workshop](#) hosted by ESW helped me to think about what comes after PhD and who might want to read 80,000 words doctoral thesis about teacher appraisal systems in networked schools.

If you are interested in reading a pre-print of my thesis or learn more about my research, you can follow me in [Research Gate](#) (I signed up to this after the impact workshop). My thesis is on *Teachers' experiences of participation in their performance appraisal in English Academy Schools: changes in patterns of governance and accountability*. It's not quite as dry as it looks because it has a cross service application in that it looks at self-appraisal and workload. I am an ex-Geography Teacher arguing that there is far too much emphasis on quality assurance and not enough on personal development or collaboration. This topic has become more important during the recent pandemic, where teachers have had to be more creative with their approaches to teaching and learning and find solutions to distance learning problems.

The 'impact' workshop encouraged me to think about how much impact they would like their research to have and how to maintain some evidence of impact. In other words, asking yourself, what are the possibilities for sharing and who can I ask for support? I followed Gillian Ruch's advice and started by thinking about what makes my research different and what aspects of it would people find familiar. Additionally, I found it helpful to think about my research as something that could provide a resource to Academy Schools. Not as a thesis, but as a policy recommendation or even much more practically as a suggestion for a new self-appraisal instrument.

I had of course started to describe what I thought my thesis added to our knowledge about teacher voice and self-appraisal, in my discussion chapter, but the impact workshop added to that by encouraging me to think more practically about who might benefit from it and even who might want to read an email about it. I'm now thinking about two things, the possibility of a bigger survey to include more teachers from different schools and something that is more likely, asking educators to participate in an online conversation about how to improve self-appraisal instruments and self-expression for a more uncertain and less predictable world.

## Doctoral Impact office hours

Are you thinking of translating your PhD knowledge into practice, sustain research relationships, generate impact from your findings or share good practices then do come to our doctoral impact office hours. These are hosted by Dr Kristi Hickle and Dr Deeptima Massey at least once a term. Conversations are informal but engaging and informative.

### Forthcoming Doctoral Impact Office hours:

**Monday 26 April from 2-3pm.**

<https://universityofsussex.zoom.us/j/97887843891?pwd=OStkNTIxRkFyQUVBaFMvckxvelpoUT09>

Meeting ID: 978 8784 3891. Passcode: 373771

## Impact Resources

Visit our [ESW PGR CANVAS](#) page – it includes a section on Impact for Doctoral Researchers which can be found in the [Units](#) link. This resource contains several useful tips and advice for those starting to think about, or who wish to know more about Impact. New resources are added regularly and we welcome any suggestions for additional content.

Also see our own internal [Impact](#) webpage for an overview of what's been happening in the school, past newsletters and the Research Impact Toolkit.

Impact guru Mark Reed's [Fast Track to Impact](#) website contains more useful resources, links to training events and his blog.

### [The Research Impact Handbook \(2<sup>nd</sup> Edition\)](#)

Contact Deeptima for access to the ebook if you wish to explore impact of your research a bit further. It will help equip yourself with evidence-based tools to use immediately to create a step change in your impact. The book is packed full of practical tips, techniques, templates, case studies and personal stories that will inspire and equip you with the skills and confidence you need to make a difference in the third sector outside academia.

## **Contact us**

Have a burning question? Want to learn more about research impact?

Do get in touch

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