



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

EARLY YEARS RESEARCH GROUP

Cluster Dates and Seminar Series
2024/25



SEMESTER 2 DATES,

Titles and abstracts:

22 January 2025, 4 - 5pm (MST)

Presenter: Jessica Wythe, Birmingham City University

**Title: Balancing Motherhood, Academia, and Teaching:
A Doctoral Student's Journey**

Abstract:

Motherhood, an esteemed yet multifaceted role, often intersects with professional pursuits, including academia and teaching (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). This presentation examines the challenges and strategies encountered by a doctoral student and lecturer at Birmingham City University

(BCU) who recently transitioned into motherhood. Drawing upon personal experiences, relevant literature and theoretical paradigms, this narrative offers insights into the complexities of balancing family responsibilities with academic and professional endeavours.

Bio:

Jess Wythe (she/her) is a Visiting Lecturer at Birmingham City University (BCU) for the Department of Childhood, Youth and Community, and an alumna of BCU, where she graduated from the BA (Hons) Education Studies programme in 2020. She is also a first-time mother to a baby daughter and is currently working as a Lecturer in Education and Early Years at Lincoln College. Jess is a doctoral researcher in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and is currently in the third year of her Doctorate in

Education (EdD). After working in both mainstream and specialist educational settings during the pandemic, she developed strong research interests in SEND, inclusive education, heritage education, and creative pedagogy. Her research ethos is centred on making education more inclusive for learners with SEN and amplifying the voices of children and young people and she is researching the impacts of school trips to heritage sites for children with SEND.

26 February (MST)

Core members EYRG meeting

19 March 2025, 3 - 4pm MS TEAMS

Presenter: Bryndís Gunnarsdóttir, PhD Student, University of Iceland, bgunnars@hi.is

Title: Embodied participation in the toddler peer group

Abstract:

This study discusses the embodied strategies used by a toddler in an attempt to enter an ongoing participation framework with peers in an early childhood education and care setting (ECEC) in Iceland. This is an ethnomethodological (EM) case study using conversation analysis (CA) to examine interactions in the toddler peer group that were video recorded over a nine-month period in the ECEC setting. The findings are a part of a larger PhD study where

the aim is to examine the embodied strategies toddlers use to initiate interaction with their peers in competent and creative ways. In this article, we are exploring how one of the participating toddlers actively participated in ongoing play through competent use of embodied strategies. The findings showcase how skilled the participating toddler is at social interactions through embodied strategies that she uses to navigate social interactions with her peers.

Bio:

Bryndis Gunnarsdottir is currently a PhD candidate and adjunct in early childhood education and care at the School of Education, University of Iceland. She was formerly a WMIER doctoral scholarship recipient at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. Bryndis has worked as

an early childhood teacher in Iceland and Norway and her research interests include the toddler peer group and toddler social interactions, embodied interactions in the peer group, conversation analysis, and democracy and autonomy within ECEC.

30 April 2025

Core members EYRG meeting

7 May 2025, 3 - 4pm MS TEAMS

Presenter: Children's Participation in Schools project members
– Dr Sarah Chicken, UWE

Title: Exploring teacher understandings of participatory pedagogies via approaches to children's rights in Wales

Abstract:

This paper reports on phase-two of an ESRC-funded project, aiming to examine teachers understanding of participation and how it relates to their pedagogy in Wales. Previous research of the team argues that understandings of participatory pedagogies are varied (Chicken and Tyrie, 2023) reflecting 'boundaried' approaches to children's enactment of rights (Clement et al, in press). The study adopted a rights-based approach (Bessell, 2017) and an axiological position with young children constructed as capable, agentic meaning-makers (Malaguzzi, 1998). Rooted in socio-constructionist interpretivism, participatory action research was utilised (Townsend, 2013) for data-generation. During collaborative dialogical workshops, Reggio Emilian pedagogy was explored as an example of a participatory pedagogy and later participants experimented with 'projects' investigating what 'rights' meant to children. Semi-structured interviews

were carried out with 14 teachers before and after engagement. The research team were steered by a duty of care to participants with 'care to do no harm' as a guiding principle, EECERA (2015) ethical code was adhered to, and appropriate ongoing consent gained.

Initial findings suggest that teacher understandings of participative rights and associated pedagogy are underpin by a complex interrelationship between implicit constructions of (a) young children and (b) teachers (and their role) and further, with wider philosophical debates about the purpose of education. Consequently, opportunities for teachers to explicitly unpick constructions of children and teachers may be useful in actualising a children's right agenda, allowing an avenue through which discussions and agitations can be explored to support the increased enactment of participative rights within practice.

Bio:

Link to Website: childrens-participation.org

4 June 2025

Core members EYRG review and planning meeting