

Current research on children's play

This list contains details of current research related to children's play and informal recreation, held by the Children's Play Information Service (CPIS). It includes both ongoing and projects completed within the last 12 months.

For information on the projects please contact the individual researchers.

For information on the play research database from which this list is compiled, please contact CPIS, tel: 0207 843 6303, email: cpis@ncb.org.uk

Project: The contribution of active play to the physical activity of primary school children

Researchers: Rowan Brockman (Researcher); Dr Russ Jago (Advisor); Professor Ken Fox (Advisor)

Organisations: Centre for Exercise, Nutrition and Health Sciences, University of Bristol

Other Organisations: British Heart Foundation

Funder: British Heart Foundation

Category: Funded PhD

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Status of project: Ongoing until 2012

Summary

Preventing the well-established decline in physical activity that occurs among children as they enter the adolescent years would reduce future cardiovascular and other health risks such as obesity. Physical activity in children takes many different forms, depending on factors such as age, gender and social background. Most data regarding children's physical activity behaviour are limited to organised sport, but, given that time spent outdoors has been shown to be one of the most consistent predictors of children's physical activity (Sallis, et al., 2000), it could be argued that unstructured physical activity that takes place outdoors in the child's free time, known as 'active play' (Veitch, et al., 2008), may potentially be a major contributor to total physical activity levels

(Burdette, et al., 2004, Sallis, et al., 2002). Rowan's study will explore the contribution of active play to the overall physical activity of Year 6 (10-11 year old) children).

Publications

Brockman, R, and others (2009) ` "Get off the sofa and go and play": family influences on the physical activity of 10-11 year old children' *BMC Public Health*, 9: 253, pp1-7.

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/9/253>

Brockman, R, Jago, RP and Fox, KR 'The contribution of active play to the physical activity of primary school children', *Preventive Medicine*, 51, (pp. 144-147), 2010.

Brockman, R, Fox, KR and Jago, RP 'What is the meaning and nature of active play for today's children in the UK?' *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 8 (15), (pp 1-7)

<http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/8/1/15>

Brockman, R, Jago, RP and Fox, KR (2011) 'Children's active play: self-reported motivators, facilitators and barriers.' *BMC Public Health*, 11(461), 1-7.

Project: Children and nature: a quasi-systematic review of the empirical evidence

Researchers: Tim Gill

Organisations: London Sustainable Development Commission

Other Organisations: Mayor of London

Funder: Mayor of London/Greater London Authority

Category: Commissioned organisational

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Website: <http://www.londonsdc.org/lcdc/research.aspx>

Status of project: Ongoing

Summary

Some strong claims have been made about the importance of children spending time in nature. Natural environments are said to have restorative qualities that help in relaxing and coping with everyday stress. They are claimed to promote adaptive processes in child development (for instance motor fitness, physical competence and self-confidence). They are said to support learning and education. Finally, it is claimed that spending time in green outdoor environments as a child nurtures lifelong positive attitudes about nature and the wider environment.

These claims are examined in detail in a transparent, authoritative assessment of the evidence base. The literature review was also designed to shape recommendations for action. The review was part of a wider project exploring children's relationship with nature, with a focus on children up to the age of 12. The final report for the project is to be published separately in Nov 2011 as "*Sowing the Seeds: Reconnecting London's children with nature*".

Publications

Gill, T (2011) *Sowing the seeds: reconnecting London's children with nature: executive summary*. London: London Sustainable Development Commission.
http://www.londonsdc.org/documents/sowing_the_%20seeds_summary.pdf

Project: The Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Programme - Getting Serious About Play: An evaluation research project

Researchers: Alexandra Long

Organisations: Leeds Metropolitan University

Other Organisations: Due to issues of confidentiality, the Local Authority cannot be disclosed.

Funder: Unfunded

Category: Masters by research

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Status of project: Ongoing until October 2011

Summary

The evaluation research project focuses on one Local Authority and their Big Lottery Fund, Children's Play Programme portfolio. The project aims to identify the extent to which the original intentions of *Getting Serious About Play - A review of children's Play* (DCMS 2004) have been met on completion of the programme within the identified area.

The research project has two distinct stages, the first of which focuses on clarificative evaluation. The methodology for stage two includes research interviews with those involved in a sample of projects which is coupled with the review of all self evaluations undertaken by individual projects. Using the data gathered, programme logic models for each project have been built. The programme logic models will be used to explore the extent to which individual projects, and therefore the portfolio as a whole, have met the original intentions of *Getting Serious About Play - A Review of Children's Play* (DCMS 2004).

Project: SEFACTO - System Evaluation Play and Creative Arts Therapies Outcomes

Researchers: Jeff Thomas, Head of Project

Organisations: Play Therapy UK

Other Organisations: Play Therapy International

Funder: Play Therapy UK

Category: Collaborative organisational research

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Website: <http://www.playtherapy.org.uk>

Status of project: Ongoing

Summary

This continuous research programme monitors the effectiveness of play therapy for children referred with emotional, behaviour, learning or mental health problems. Its scope includes all members of Play Therapy UK and students carrying out therapeutic work with children aged 5 to 11. The programme evaluation method used is based on the Goodman SDQ psychometric instrument.

Over 11,000 pre- and post-therapy measures have been analysed. These show that between 72% and 83% of the children show a positive change after receiving play therapy delivered to PTUK standards. The more severe the presenting problem the higher the percentage showing a positive change.

Project: Understanding the influence of loose objects on children's playful behaviour in public space

Researchers: Hattie Coppard

Category: Unfunded Masters degree

Contact details:

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Website: <http://www.snugandoutdoor.co.uk>

Status of project: Ongoing

Summary

The study aims to investigate the effect of loose parts/objects on children's playful behaviour in public space. Research methods include a literature review that highlights areas of research that shed light on the role that objects have in the physical, psychological and emotional life of children and their play.

Publications

Coppard, H. *Understanding the influence of loose objects on children's playful behaviour in public space*. 2011. Unpublished literature review.

Project: Playing with toys: the animated geographies of children's material culture

Researchers: Dr Tara Woodyer

Organisation: University of Exeter

Other Organisations: Royal Holloway, University of London

Funder: ESRC

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Status of project: Ongoing – to be completed by April 2012

Summary

This 12 month project builds on and extends the author's doctoral research into children's domestic playful practices with toys. The doctoral research was qualitative in nature, based on an ethnography of ten children, aged 8-12, in SE England. As part of this ethnography an innovative multi-strand methodology was developed that included creative tasks and child-based creation of video footage. The aim of the research was to examine the object-based agencies of toys - how they provoke, influence and/or constrain playful practices and the creation of imaginative and virtual spaces of play. The research findings were based around seven case studies centred on cuddly toys, model aeroplanes, trading cards, Bratz fashion dolls, Harry Potter phenomena, dollhouses and games consoles. The research provided a critical response to less grounded cultural commentaries on the contemporary character of children's play.

Overall, it was found that children are adept at negotiating today's panorama of commercial goods, weaving their own systems of value and meaning around toys that work with, extend and challenge those meanings provided by toy producers. More substantively, the research contributed to, and further developed theories around play (with specific reference to its relation to geography and embodiment), children's consumption and branding. The current project is extending this research through dissemination of its findings to international, interdisciplinary and non-academic audiences. This includes organisation of practitioner workshops and the creation of an interactive website

Project: Physical activity and play behaviours in a preschool population

Researchers: Mareesa O'Dwyer, Professor Gareth Stratton, Stuart Fairclough, Dr Zoe Knowles, Dr Lawrence Fowweather, Dr Nicky Ridgers

Organisation: Liverpool John Moores University

Other Organisations: SportsLinx, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool Children's Services

Funder: SportsLinx

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Web: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/sps/RISES/100465.htm>

Status of project: Ongoing - to be completed 2012

Summary

Aim of the investigation:

To develop an understanding of preschool children's physical activity patterns and what behaviours contribute to these patterns. This will be achieved using the following objectives:

- To investigate the levels and patterns of physical activity in children attending preschool* in the UK
- To determine the correlates of physical activity in preschool children
- To investigate the effectiveness of a 6 week Active Play intervention on the physical activity levels and play behaviours of preschool children
- To investigate the effectiveness of an Active Play parent intervention on the physical activity levels and play behaviours of preschool children

*In this case, preschool refers to school based provision for children before they enter formal education .

Publications

Poster:

5-8th May 2010: The 3rd International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health in Toronto, Canada.

O'Dwyer, M.V., Stratton, G. and Ridgers, N.D. *Assessing physical activity in preschool children using accelerometry*

Oral:

28-29th May 2010: The 1st European Congress on Physical Activity and Health among Young Children (0-6 years) in Epinal, France.

O'Dwyer, M.V., Fowweather, L. Stratton, G. and Ridgers, N.D. *Differences in habitual physical activity between non-overweight and overweight pre-school children.*

28-29th May 2010: The 1st European Congress on Physical Activity and Health among Young Children (0-6 years) in Epinal, France.

Ridgers, N. O'Dwyer, M.V. and Stratton, G. *The physical activity and play behaviours of pre-school children during lunch recess.*

Published abstracts:

O'Dwyer, M.V., Fowweather, L., Stratton, G. and Ridgers, N. (2010) Differences in physical activity between non-overweight and overweight preschool children, *Science and Sports*, 25, 15.

Ridgers, N. O'Dwyer, M.V. and Stratton, G. (2010) The physical activity and play behaviours of pre-school children during lunch recess, *Science and Sports*, 25, 12.

In press:

O'Dwyer, M.V., Foweather, L., Stratton, G. and Ridgers, N.D. (in press) *Physical activity in non-overweight and overweight UK preschool children: Preliminary findings and methods of the Active Play Project, Science and Sports.*

Project: Active Play Study

Researchers: Ingrid Wilkinson, Dave Marsh, Steven Chown

Organisation: Play England

Funder: Department of Health

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Web: <http://www.playengland.org.uk>

Status of project: Ongoing - to be completed December 2011

Summary

This project aims to increase levels of physical activity amongst children aged 5-9 through play. The project works closely with 3-5 disadvantaged communities to overcome the barriers that prevent children from playing actively in their communities. The project started as a social marketing campaign.

Publications

To be confirmed.

Project: The School Age Childcare Worker - Pedagogue or Ludogogue?

Researchers: Eva Kane

Organisation: Stockholm University, Department of Education in Arts and Professions

Funder: Stockholm University

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Web: <http://www.utep.su.se>

Status of project: Ongoing from 2009 – 2017

Summary

This PhD study is still to be developed, but plans to focus on how school age childcare staff in Stockholm and London support play in a school environment.

The purpose of the research is to compare 'fridtidspedagogens' (the playworker's) role in the integrated school in relation to children's play, both in theory and practice, in Sweden and in the United Kingdom. The researcher wants to examine how the playworkers' knowledge about play in school is used when

the school and after school provision becomes integrated. To what extent is play a goal in the school's planning, and how is play talked about in the school? How much space is given to play?

The methodology used will be action research.

Publications

Kane, E. *Pedagogue or ludogogue? Play in school age: childcare workers practice in England and Sweden*. Conference paper, IPA Conference, Cardiff, July 2011).

Project: Playable Public Space

Researchers: Ben Spencer (researcher), Professor Kate Williams, Professor Lamine Mahdjoubi, and Dr Rachel Sara (supervisors)

Organisation: University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol

Funder: UWE Studentship

Contact details: University of the West of England, Planning and Architecture, Frenchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY. Tel: 07960 712609.

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Status of project: Ongoing – to be completed October 2012

Summary

Playable space is a relatively new concept that has not been studied in detail. It has been promoted by the Greater London Authority, Demos and Play England (National Conference 2010) and Government Ministers have supported this approach stating that we should aspire to 'playable towns and cities, where children and adults can enjoy places together as social space' (Lammy 2007).

From an Urban Design perspective the researcher is interested in the idea of shared, playful space, particularly its potential for adults as well as children and young people.

The literature on playable space for adults is very limited. Key works include the philosophical analysis of the importance of play for adults (Huzinga 2000, Caillois 2001), a survey of interdisciplinary understandings of play (Sutton-Smith 1998) and the observations and reflections of Borden (2001) and Stevens (2007). There appears to be little detailed understanding of adults' wider use and appreciation of public space in terms of play.

Some limited suggestions for the design of playable space (albeit with an emphasis on use by children) have been described in design guidance (Shackell et al 2008).

The author's MA research (Spencer 2009) found that there was an appetite for play by adults in the urban public realm but that its manifestation was dependent on the physical form, context and personal interpretation of spaces.

Research questions: The primary research question is 'How can public space become more playable for adults?'. In order to answer this, a number of sub-questions need to be addressed:

1. What is play for adults in the urban public realm?
2. What elements contribute towards playability in public spaces: eg, physical

form, social context, personal feelings and cognitions?

3. How can these elements be incorporated in the design and development of successful public spaces?

Publications: To be confirmed

Project: Evaluating and Measuring Outcomes to Demonstrate the Impact of Montessori Play Therapy

Researcher: Wendy Fidler

Organisation: Montessori Education for Autism (MEfA)

Funder: Montessori Education for Autism (MEfA)

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Web: <http://www.montessorieducationforautism.com>

Status of project: Ongoing

Summary

The research project will work towards MEfA's aim to promote, conduct and engage in research into autism, and to publish the useful results of such research. The project will do this by evaluating and measuring the impact of Montessori play therapy on young children with autism and conditions related to autism. The focus will be on developing a sustainable programme that can be replicated elsewhere.

Information about the programme will be distributed widely to ensure equity of access, and children and families will be accepted on to the programme on a first-come, first-served basis. Therefore, the sample of children and families will be self-selecting.

The methods used will include literature reviews, interviews with medical and educational professionals, and research into MRI findings about brain development and damage in young children with autism. Methods will be both qualitative and quantitative. The former will involve parents and others involved in the children's day-to-day lives contributing to questionnaires at the beginning and end of the programme. The latter will involve measuring children's performance against identified indicators at the beginning and end of the programme. Key indicators include difficulty with the triad of impairment known to accompany autism: social and emotional; language and communication; and flexibility of thought.

Project: Children and their Activities, Perceptions and Behaviour in the Local Environment

Researchers: Professor Roger Mackett, Professor D Banister, Professor M Batty, Dr D Einon, Belinda Brown, Yi Gong, Kei Kitazawa, Stephen Marshall, James Paskins

Organisation: University College London

Funder: EPSRC

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Status of project: Completed August 2006 but analysis of data continuing

Summary

The purpose of this research was to explore how children use the local environment, and to see how it can be improved to meet their needs better and make it safer. Particular attention was paid to school journeys, their use of various forms of transport and how this related to levels of physical activity. GPS monitors and accelerometers were used to capture this data. The role of social networks in encouraging play, physical activity and independence was looked at. A wide range of other methodologies were used including questionnaires, diaries and interviews. Research was conducted in Hertfordshire and Lewisham.

A major finding was the effect of independent mobility and children's walking and physical activity levels. Where and why children were walking and who with were analysed in great detail. Strong relationships were found between children's independent mobility and their social networks. Gender differences were identified. Differences were found between the children in Lewisham and Hertfordshire. Even though the children in Lewisham use the car less than those in Hertfordshire, and so have more need to walk, as well as more opportunity fewer are allowed to go out without an adult. This is probably explained by the nature of the environment with greater perceived risk in terms of traffic and street crime, in Lewisham.

It was found that children who spend more time in walking than they do in cars, use more calories in every other type of activity. Significant factors influencing this were identified.

Use of the Mosaic UK area classification system for Cheshunt has shown that the areas where children spent much time playing, walking around, being without adults, are the neighbourhoods with comfortable suburban settings, good access to local shops, or strong social support networks. Children tend to be driven through more deprived areas.

Publications

Brown B and Mackett R L (2010) *The Social Context of Independent Mobility*. Southern Universities Press (forthcoming).

Mackett R L (2010) Understanding children's play and its role in physical activity, Presentation at the meeting on Diet, Physical Activity and Health – A European

Platform for Action, organized by the Health and Consumers Directorate-General of the European Commission, Centre de Conférences Albert Borschette, Brussels, 11 February 2010.

Brown B and Mackett R L (2010) 'The Importance of Children's Social Networks and What Shapes Them' Presentation at the Play Research Network meeting, London 27 January.

Brown B and Mackett R L (2009) 'Gender differences in social network formation and how these affect boys' and girls' pathways to independent mobility', Presentation to the Second International Conference on Geographies of Children, Youth and Families, Barcelona, 16-18 July.

Brown B and Mackett R L (2009) 'Gender differences in children's play behaviour', Presentation at the Play Research Network meeting, ExCel Centre, London, 30 January.

Mackett R L (2008) Active play in the local environment, Presentation at the Play Research Network meeting, ExCel Centre, London, 1 February 2008.

Brown B, Mackett R, Gong Y, Kitazawa K, Paskins J (2008) 'Gender differences in children's pathways to independent mobility', *Children's Geographies*. vol.6, no. 4 (Nov), pp385-401.

Mackett R L and Brown B (2008) 'Gender differences in children's mobility behaviour in urban areas', Paper and poster presented at the Ninth International Conference on Walking, Barcelona, Spain, 8-10 October.

Mackett R L (2008) The benefits of play – what's the evidence? Presentation at the Play Scotland Annual Conference, Ayr Racecourse, 19-20 November 2008.

Mackett R L, and Paskins J (2008) 'Children's physical activity: the contribution of playing and walking', *Children & Society*, vol. 22, no.5, pp345 – 357.

Mackett R L, Brown B, Gong Y, Kitazawa K, Paskins J (2007) 'Children's independent movement in the local environment', (Special Issue on Critical approaches to designing environments/environments designed for children), *Built Environment*, vol. 33, pp454-468.

Mackett R L (2007) Being active through play, Presentation at the Seminar on Play and Children's Health organised by Skills Active on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Play, held in the Palace of Westminster, London, on 18 July 2007.

Mackett R L, Brown B, Gong Y, Kitazawa K, and Paskins J (2007) 'The influence of independent mobility on children's walking patterns and behaviour', Paper presented at the Walk21 Conference, Toronto, Canada, 1-4 October available from http://www.walk21.com/paper_search/results_detail.asp?Paper=377

Mackett R L, Brown B, Gong Y, Kitazawa K, and Paskins J (2006) 'Measuring the outcomes from transport interventions for children', Paper presented at the

Creating Lively Neighbourhoods: Children and Active Transport Symposium, Melbourne, Australia, 28 October.

Mackett R L, Brown B and Paskins J (2006) 'Set the children free: exploring children's independent movement', Presentation at the conference on New Directions in Children's Geographies, University of Northampton, 7-8 September.

Mackett R L, Brown B and Paskins J (2005) 'Overcoming the barriers to walking for children', Paper presented at the Walk21 Conference, held in Zurich Switzerland, 22-23 September 2005, available from http://www.walk21.com/paper_search/results_detail.asp?Paper=179

Mackett R L, Brown B and Paskins J (2005) 'Set the children free: exploring children's independent movement', Presentation at the Conference on New Directions in Children's Geographies, University of Northampton, 7-8 September.

Brown B and Paskins J (2005) 'A child's eye view of the local environment', Presentation at the Conference on Emerging Issues in the Geographies of Children and Youth, held at Brunel University, 23-24 June).

Project: Children's play, learning and 'empowerment' in two after school clubs in a west London borough

Researcher: Hannah H Smith

Organisation: Middlesex University

Funder: Economic and Social Research Council

Contact details: Middlesex University, School of Health and Social Sciences, Archway Campus, 2-10 Highgate Hill, London N19 5LW.

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Status of project: Completed.

Summary

This PhD research investigated ideas and practices relating to children's play, learning and 'empowerment' in two after school provisions run by a west London local authority. The primary research involved a yearlong ethnographic study conducted between 2007 and 2008 in two quite different social environments. In addition to conducting participant observation, managers, playworkers, parents and children at both sites were interviewed.

The thesis, currently in its writing up stage (March 2010), explores ideas and practices around provisions for children in these contexts, and examines the different perceptions of play, learning and 'empowerment' identified by policies, professionals, and adult and child service users. As the research progressed, similarities and differences between the sites emerged, both in terms of expectations around play, learning and 'empowerment', and complex and multi-layered ideas about children and childhood. Influenced by perceptions of the social contexts surrounding the provisions, playworkers presented contrasting constructions of the children as products of their social circumstances (with predictable futures), or as rights bearers and social agents (with a say in their

current and future possibilities). The thesis also therefore explores the relationships between playworkers' perceptions of the local environments and their social constructions of the children; and how these different notions of the children and their childhoods influenced playworkers' expectations of the after school provisions and their playwork practices.

Publications

Smith, H (2010) *Children's empowerment, play and informal learning in two after school provisions*: thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Unpublished

Project: Siblings and Friends: The changing nature of children's lateral relationships

Researchers: Professor Rosalind Edwards, Dr Susie Weller

Organisation: London South Bank University

Other organisations: The project forms part of the 'ESRC Timescapes: Changing identities and relationships through the life course' programme of work which also encompasses studies from the University of Leeds, Edinburgh University, the Open University and Cardiff University. The advisory group for the 'Siblings and friends' project includes representatives from NCB, National Centre for Social Research and London Play.

Funder: Economic and Social Research Council

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Web: <http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families/yourspace/>

Status of project: Ongoing until January 2011

Summary

Who counts as a sister or brother? What is the significance of siblings and friends in the lives of children and young people? Do such relationships change over time? This project has been tracking the lives of around 50 children from mid-childhood to young adulthood to help answer these and other questions. It provides a valuable qualitative longitudinal dataset that documents the meanings, experiences and flows of children's prescribed (sibling) and chosen (friendship) relationships as they grow older. The project explores how such relationships relate to young people's sense of self as their individual and family biographies unfold.

Research Design and Methodology

The researchers have collected waves of data from around 50 children and young people who were born between 1989 and 1996, from a range of family, ethnic and class backgrounds and geographical locations across Britain. They have been interviewed in 2003/5, 2007 and 2009.

The project addresses a number of research questions:

1. What makes children and young people feel connected to, or separated from, siblings and friends? Do age, gender, race and class have any bearing on these relationships?
2. Do young people view themselves as a unique entity or do they get their sense of self through membership of a group? How does this differ between different social backgrounds?
3. What particular ethical considerations arise in the design and conduct of long-term research with young people living in different circumstances?
4. What are the specific issues surrounding communication with the participants, informed consent, appropriate methods of data collection, and researcher involvement over a long period of time?

Materials being archived include:

- Digital transcripts of interviews, as well as audio data about the young people's family, friends, home, neighbourhood and school.
- Visual material such as network maps of relationships, timelines of significant events, and photographs of important places in the home.
- 'Cultural commentaries' explaining popular interests, and brief essays on 'when I'm 25'.
- Notes on interviewees' social characteristics and circumstances, and field notes about the interview process.

Material from the project are of interest to a wide range of professionals and policymakers, such as children and youth-centred, and family support services; education, career development and mentoring; and health and social care. We have also undertaken public engagement activities in collaboration with BBC Memoryshare and the V&A Museum of Childhood.

Publications

Edwards, R. and Weller, S. (forthcoming) Trajectories from youth to adulthood: Choice and structure for young people before and during recession, *21st Century Society*

Edwards, R. and Weller, S. (forthcoming) A sideways look at gender and sibling relationships, in J. Caspi (ed) *Sibling Relationships in Practice: Cultural and Environmental Influences*, USA: Springer Publishing.

Weller, S. (forthcoming) Young people's social capital: Complex identities, dynamic networks, *Ethnic & Racial Studies*.

Weller, S. (2010) Time(s) to be creative! Sustaining young people's engagement in qualitative longitudinal research, in F. Shirani, and S. Weller (eds) *Conducting Qualitative Longitudinal Research: Fieldwork Experiences*, Timescapes Working Paper Series No. 2, Leeds: University of Leeds.

Lucey, H. (2009) 'Families, siblings and identities', in M. Wetherell and C.T. Mohanty (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Identities*, London: Sage

Weller, S. (2009) Mapping emotions in different spaces of research and dissemination, in S. Weller and C. Caballero (eds) *Up Close and Personal: Relationships and Emotions Within and Through Research*, Families & Social Capital Research Group Working Paper No. 25, London: London South Bank University.

Weller, S. (2009) "You need to have a mixed school ..." exploring the complexity of diversity in young people's social networks', in J. Allan, J. Ozga and G. Smyth (eds) *Social Capital, Professionalism and Diversity: New Relations in Urban Schools*, Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense, pp. 175-192.

Weller, S. and Bruegel, I. (2009) Children's 'place' in the development of neighbourhood social capital, *Urban Studies*, vol. 46 (3): 629-643.

Adam, B., Hockey, J. and Thompson, P. (ed. R. Edwards) (2008) *Researching lives through time: Time, generation and life stories*, Leeds University: Timescapes Working Paper Series No. 1.

Bytheway, B., Bornat, J., Edwards, R. and Weller, S. (2008) *Sisters and Brothers: Results of a UK-wide postcard exercise*, ESRC Festival of Social Science 2008.

<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/families/brothersandsisters/>

Edwards, R. (2008) Sibling identity and relationships in local communities, in M. Klett-Davies (ed.) *Putting Sibling Relationships on the Map: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective*, London: Family and Parenting Institute.

Edwards, R. (2007) 'Siblings, social capital and local communities', in M. Rantalaiho (ed.) *Social Capital Among Young Citizens: Children's and Young People's Networks and Involvement in Contemporary Democracy*, Trondheim: Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU.

Holland, J., Reynolds, T., and Weller, S. (2007) 'Transitions, networks and communities: the significance of social capital in the lives of children and young people', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 10(1), pp. 97-116.

Weller, S. (2007) 'Managing the move to secondary school: the significance of children's social capital', in H. Helve and J. Bynner (eds) *Youth and Social Capital*, London: Tufnell Press.

Weller, S. (2007) 'Sticking with your mates?' Children's friendship trajectories during the transition from primary to secondary school', *Children & Society*, Vol. 21(5), pp. 339-51

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Project: Young Children's Time and Activities in Britain

Researchers: Katherine Mildon (PhD Student), Hilary Graham (Supervisor)

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Funder: Play England; University of York

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Status of project: Completed October 2010.

Summary

This research will set out to deepen our understanding of play-related activities and contexts experienced by children aged 0 to 5 living in Britain today. These include the things that children do and how they do them, the places that they go and the people they are with. There are diversities and inequalities in children's lives and experiences, thus it follows that their play-related activities and contexts are likely to vary.

The thesis will begin with a literature review of research on the importance of young children's play and activities (Chapter 1) to provide rationale for

researching this theme. This will follow with literature reviews focusing on inequalities between the lives of children living in contemporary Britain (Chapter 2) and inequalities in their play-related activities and contexts (Chapter 3), in order to improve our understanding of social patterning on this topic. These reviews may point to a general absence of good quality research on the topic yet an availability of potentially relevant data sources, thus justifying the main task of conducting further research through secondary analyses.

A potential data source is the contemporary British birth cohort study called the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), since my preliminary analyses have revealed that it contains data which is relevant to the topic for children aged 3 and 5. It contains a range of questions on play and activity contexts from traditional to contemporary, a selection of which could be chosen, and a range of questions relating to diversity in children's lives enabling this inequality research.

The study's many strengths include its large UK wide sample, representing children from many types of background. The types of diversity examined in this research may include children's socio-economic characteristics through that of their families, their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and the geographic locations of their homes.

Publications

Mildon, K.H.(2009) *An investigation into equalities in parent-child involvement in active play*: Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Health Sciences, University of York. Unpublished.

Project: The Difference that Difference Makes: Play, space and teenage wheelchair users

Researcher: Michelle Pyer

Organisation: Centre for Children and Youth, University of Northampton

Funder: Unfunded

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Status of project: Ongoing

Summary

This PhD study will contribute to the growing body of research and public debates on the issue of provision for disabled young people as part of their communities, drawn from the contributions of the teenagers themselves. The study will add to, develop and sustain new discourse on what it is like to be a teenage wheelchair user in Britain today. The geographical scope of the research has resulted in an opportunity to develop understanding of the physical and social barriers to space use, and the implications of these barriers for the aspects of these young people's lives. The research is UK based and focus on the spaces that teenage wheelchair users go to in their play or leisure time, and the

encounters that they have whilst they are there.

There are two primary research questions:

1. To consider how young wheelchair users experience public, private and cyber play and leisure spaces;
2. To consider how difference and diversity within a group of young wheelchair users affect their use of play and leisure space.

Several child-centred methods have been used in an attempt to research with, and gain the views of, the young people concerned, including questionnaire based interviews with 69 young people (aged 13-18years) based in Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Norfolk. Thirteen participants have communicated their ideas through a photography exercise and video tours of specific play and leisure spaces. Analysis of the data is ongoing.

High ethical standards have informed the research agenda. The substantial ethical implications of researching with a group of vulnerable young people are continuously assessed and re-evaluated. A number of pertinent ethical questions have been addressed, including the importance of informing and feeding back to participants, differing communication techniques, confidentiality and building trusting relations.

Publications:

Pyer, M *The Difference that Difference Makes: Play, space and teenage wheelchair users*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Royal Geographical Society, August 2007.

Pyer, M (2006) *If you aren't Playing Well the Game isn't as Much Fun: Considering the influence of play and space on the health and wellbeing of teenage wheelchair users*. Oral presentation at the 5th Occupational Science Symposium: Health Through Occupation, University of Northampton.

Pyer, M (2006) *Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Spaces: The ethics of not quite researching with children you know*. New Directions in Children's Geographies Conference, University of Northampton.

Pyer, M (2005) *Play, Space and Teenage Wheelchair Users: Introductions, methods and ethical considerations*. Poster Presentations. University of Northampton Knowledge Transfer Day.

Pyer, M (2005) *Positionality and Power Relations: The ethical considerations of researching with disabled children*. University College Northampton Inaugural Research Degree Student and Contract Researcher Conference.

Project: To What Extent does the Philosophy and Practice of Playwork Overlap with the Philosophy and Practice of the Montessori System of Education?

Researchers: Nerys Yates, Researcher; Fraser Brown, Director of Studies

Organisation: Leeds Metropolitan University

Funder: Unfunded Masters Degree

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Status of project: Ongoing

Summary

Research questions:

1. What are the assumptions, values and principles of playwork?
 2. What are the assumptions, values and principles of the Montessori approach?
 3. What is the degree of overlap between Montessori and playwork?
 4. What are the possible conflicts between the two approaches?
 5. To what extent can the Montessori methods parallel those of playwork?
 6. How realistic is it to think that those trained in playwork would make effective Montessori teachers?
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Compiled Anna Kassman-McKerrell. Updated September 2011.

The Children's Play Information Service (CPIS) is a specialist library and information service on children's play and informal recreation. Services include: reference library, enquiry service, literature searches and various information products, including an e-newsletter.

CPIS forms part of NCB's Information Centre, and is funded by the Association of Play Industries and Play England.

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