



Welcome to our latest newsletter sharing some of the research that the **Department for Children and Families at the University of Worcester** have been involved in over the last few months.

Black Pear Health & Wellbeing Project

@UWDCFs Carla Solvason, Michelle Malomo and Angela Hodgkins are currently involved in a project with the Black Pear Multi-Academy Trust, along with Tracey France, School Effectiveness lead and colleagues from the School of Allied Health and Community. The project is focussed on school employees and originated from a request from the CEO of Black Pear, who is passionate about the mental health and wellbeing of her staff. An online survey of school staff resulted in 274 responses and findings indicated significant stress and fatigue among teachers, TAs, admin staff and others working in school.

As a result of the findings, Michelle, Angela and Rebecca Weston (a colleague in the School of Health) have developed a training package to deliver to Black Pear staff. Angela and Michelle will take a lead on the first iteration of the course, which will take place between November and February. It is hoped that as well as making a difference to the wellbeing culture of the MAT, the training package will be available for other schools to purchase for CPD in the future.

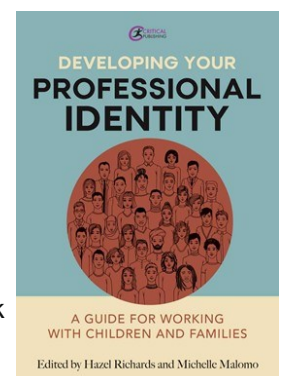


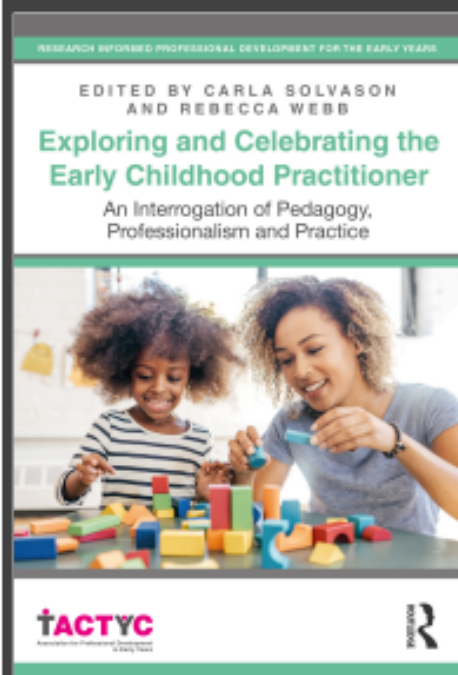
Team Publications

Recently published by colleagues, Dr Hazel Richards (University of Wolverhampton) and Michelle Malomo (University of Worcester: [Developing your professional identity](#), St Albans: Critical Publishing

This book was written during the pandemic, at a time where there were no constants in the field. Writing this book came from the desire to produce a book that could support practitioners to develop but, also recognised how complex working with children and families can be. The book draws on the knowledge and practice of a multi-disciplinary team with each chapter drawing on their expertise. Probably the best recommendation of a text is through the thoughts of others.

A review from *Dr Jackie Musgrave Associate Head of School, leading on learning and teaching Open University*: "It is always heartening to see how something positive can come out of a negative situation. Malaguzzi's motivation to develop the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and care was in response to the devastation of the Second World War and the impact adults' actions had on children. Therefore, Malaguzzi's philosophy emerged from a time of adversity. So what has this got to do with the newly published book: *Developing your professional identity*? The connection here is that the authors have written a book that acknowledges the disproportionate impact that the restrictions put in place to limit the spread of coronavirus have had on practitioners who work with children and their families. And they have seized the opportunity that has come out of adversity to produce an exceptionally useful book."





November 2022: 6.14 x 9.21: 148pp
8 illustrations

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Pb: 978-1-032-07274-6 | £28.99 £23.19
eBook: 978-1-003-20626-2

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Exploring and Celebrating the Early Childhood Practitioner

An Interrogation of Pedagogy, Professionalism and Practice

Edited by **Carla Solvason** and **Rebecca Webb**

Series: TACTYC

This exciting new book celebrates, interrogates and re-imagines the complex and demanding role of the Early Childhood Practitioner. Exploring the many different facets of the ECP role, it challenges normative constructions of practitioners and how they have been shaped by assumptions of history, culture and policy. This latest addition to the TACTYC series will be valuable reading for Early Years students - particularly on Masters level courses - as well as those working and researching in the Early Years sector.

About the Editors

Dr Carla Solvason is Senior Lecturer in the Department for Children and Families at the University of Worcester. She has a keen interest in ethical practice and respectful and sensitive approaches to research, areas in which she has published and presented widely.

Dr Rebecca Webb is Senior Lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education and a member of the Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth, at the University of Sussex. Her research interests focus on pedagogies and practices of 'not knowing' and 'uncertainty'.

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Creativity in the Early Years

Nicola Watson reflects on the benefits of creativity to Children's Wellbeing and Development. She is contributing to a forthcoming book on creativity by Simon Taylor to be published by SAGE.

The tenet of the book is that everyone is creative and that creativity should be at the heart of early years practice. Creativity in young children can be seen in processes rather than outcomes. It is the application of imagination, exploration and expression of that which is meaningful and original to children themselves.



Today in the UK over 40% of children live in poverty and the added impact of the pandemic means that many lives have been impoverished by limited experiences. In seeking to 'catch up' with learning, there is a danger that pedagogy becomes narrowly focused on literacy and numeracy at the expense of play and creative approaches. Pascal et.al. (2017) recognised this danger before the pandemic, since when, it has worsened. We need instead to recognise and illuminate the potential of creativity for improving the quality of children's lives.

Through creativity children can become aware of their own potential to effect change and develop feelings of capability and control. They are empowered to represent their own, unique representations of their worlds. [The power of imagination extends to every area of life. Hedges, \(2020, p.5\) eloquently points out that using imagination "draws on life experience but creates new combinations of ideas, emotions, thoughts and meanings."](#)

Creativity is intrinsically pleasurable but it can also support children in making sense [difficult or traumatic experiences.](#) Where children can choose *how* to communicate their feelings, they are more able to tell a story which might otherwise remain untold. Creative approaches can support those who are pre-verbal, have a social, emotional or learning disability to explore and express their own, unique feelings and experiences.

Creative expressions can be collaborative; form shared narratives and thereby, build empathy and strengthen social bonds. By recognising, valuing and responding sensitively to children's creative expressions adults can be given privileged insights into children's inner lives

Creativity is an essential element of what it is to be human; imaginative, exploratory, social and expressive. Children need us to provide environments which value and foster creativity now, perhaps more than ever before.

References

[Hedges, H. \(2020\) 'The place of interests, agency and imagination in funds of identity theory', *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, DOI: 10.1080/10749039.2020.1833931 \(Accessed 10 June 2021\).](#)


Pascal, C., Bertram, T. and Cole- Albäck, A. (2017) *The Hundred Review: What research tells us about effective pedagogic practice and children's outcomes in the reception year*. Birmingham: Centre for Research in Early Childhood.






Staff Research Update:

Tom Weaver (Head of Department for Children and Families)

Tom's PhD research focuses on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) lecturers' understanding of online teaching, both during the pandemic and now that we have returned to 'normal' teaching. He is using a phenomenographic methodology which reveals differences in the experience of online teaching (rather than, for example, a phenomenological approach which looks for how experiences are the same). In July he was granted ethical approval to collect data and will be inviting Primary and Secondary ITE lecturers to semi-structured interviews at the end of October / beginning of November. If anyone is interested, this would be about 30 to 40 minutes in length and very informal – we would probably meet in the university canteen. Tom is just completing a draft of the literature review and hopes to share findings from this soon.



Continuing Professional Development Department for Children and Families Early Years Leader Network Meetings 2022/23



Dates:

Weds 12 October 2022 (4pm—6pm)

Weds 11 January 2023 (4pm—6pm)

Weds 22 March 2023 (4pm—6pm)

Weds 14 June 2023 (4pm—6pm)

Fee: £40 per delegate/session
£136 for all four sessions

Venue: University of Worcester

Book This Course

If you wish to enrol please email cpdeducation@worc.ac.uk

We will then send you a confirmation email.

The University of Worcester leads termly network meetings for Early Years Leaders.

Meetings will include:

- The valuable opportunity to network with others, share your experiences and establish ways forward.
- Opportunity to explore in more depth aspect of teaching and learning related to national and local need.
- Aspects of school improvement and subject leadership .
- The opportunity to consider new research and next practice.

The sessions will be run by Dr Carla Solvason and Niki Stobbs.

Take this opportunity to share knowledge and build supportive collaborations with a variety of colleagues in a range of contexts.

"If you are on your own and you have an idea, that idea remains an idea ... Together one and one does not make two, it makes many..." (Kempen & Steyn, 2017, p. 167).

www.worcester.ac.uk/cpdeducation

Research into practice

Alison Prowle, who recently conducted doctoral research into the experiences of refugees coming to the UK, approached the level five students (2021-2022) on the Early Childhood in Society degree to prepare school packs for two Ukrainian boys aged 8 and 14 years who are arriving in the UK during the Easter break. The [BA \(Hons\) Early Childhood in Society](#) is underpinned by social pedagogy, which is about education in its broadest sense, not only teaching children but attempting to make their lives better. The level five students had discussed their desire to support children and families in need and were pleased to rise to the challenge of preparing the school packs.

The students formed a committee called "Children Central" and accepted assignments to gather various items for the packs, for example stationery, lunch boxes and water bottles, as well as treats such as small games, hair gel and confectionary.

The students found the experience very rewarding and are looking forward to further projects.



What study opportunities do we have for you this year?

The Department For Children and Families offers a range of courses from undergraduate to postgraduate. Click on the links for further information.

Undergraduate

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[EARLY YEARS \(0-8\) FOUNDATION DEGREE](#)

[EARLY CHILDHOOD IN SOCIETY \(GRADUATE PRACTITIONER\) BA \(HONS\)](#)

[INTEGRATED WORKING WITH CHILDREN & FAMILIES BA \(HONS\) TOP-UP DEGREE](#)

Postgraduate

[MA EARLY CHILDHOOD PATHWAY](#)

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