

Welcome

to RSEC18 Conference

**Complexity in Research:
Researcher–Participant Dynamic Interactions**

3 July 2025

9:00 - 16:30

University House,
LS2 9JR



Afternoon Session Presenters

- **Power, voice, and presence: Navigating research challenges with Indonesian parent-child dyads in the UK.**

Asa Ismia Bunga Aisyahrani, MA Childhood Studies, School of Education, University of Leeds

- **Working with a Research Support Group: Collaboration and care in research methods.**

Charlotte White, PGR, School of Education, The University of Sheffield

- **Navigating cultural sensitivity and researcher positionality without participants.**

Megan Stock, School of Education, University of Leeds

- **Career pathways of PGRs at the School of Education: Insights from current PGRs and alumni.**

Closing presentation: Dr Yen Dang & Dr Peter Hart, School of Education, University of Leeds

Megan Stock

PGR, School of Education,
University of Leeds

**Navigating cultural
sensitivity and
researcher positionality
without participants**



Navigating cultural sensitivity and researcher positionality without participants

Megan stock

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My research



What is my research about?

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) - “explore[s] how language can be used to impose and maintain power and social inequalities in society” (Clark et al, 2021, p.492).

"The value of taking a CDA-based orientation to policy analysis is that it offers an approach to the social analysis of discourse, particularly relevant to processes of social transformation and change" (Hyatt, 2013, p.837).

- Representation of needs, inequality and culture in music education policy and political debates to ascertain the government's and parliament's contribution to inequality of access to music education.

Justification for my research

Music has been subject to two national plans published by the Department for Education:

- The importance of music: a national plan for music education (2011)
- The power of music to change lives: a national plan for music education (2022)

Development of music hubs

Participation and attainment gap at GCSE – disadvantaged students are 39% less likely to take music at GCSE, and when they do take music at GCSE, they are 20 months behind their more affluent peers (Cardim-Dias and Sibieta, 2022)

The arts are not in the English Baccalaureate (Department for Education, 2019)

Representation matters (Kelly, 2020). Attitudes towards people living in poverty and socioeconomic disadvantaged households from the public (Hall et al. 2014) and politicians (Main and Mahony, 2018)

Shirley's (2017) thesis – conducted a CDA on three documents relating to the 2011 national music plan. He did not conduct a CDA on the entire plan or the debates. I am also analysing the 2022 national plan so looking at differences.

There is more that defines inequality than money (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015).

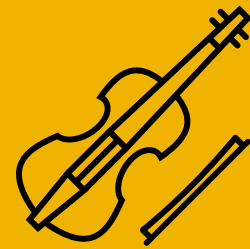
- Music should be more accessible to children and young people who want to participate.
- Music should not be elitist.
- I have had many opportunities because of music tuition (external to the curriculum), and my experiences have led me to researching music education.

Why I view my work as being complex regarding 'participant' dynamics

- I have no participants.
- I am privileged considering I have had access to music education.
- I am analysing the language of government and parliament.
- I am analysing policy which by design impacts people.

Leading to feeling uncomfortable

My background, my identity, my positionality



My background and identity

- Violin lessons from age 7 to 18
- Music qualifications with external organisations (ABRSM and Trinity College London) in violin and singing.
- I did not take music as a GCSE or A-level and my reason was that I was participating in music as an extra-curricular activity – it was a hobby with added benefits, and I did not wish to enter the music industry as a career.
- Opportunities to perform – solos, duets, trios, orchestras – home and abroad in concerts and university musicals.
- Performed with some known people
- A member of Sinfonia at the University of Leeds where I have led a violin section.
- I own my own violin

Where am I?

- I am an outsider looking in to both politics and inequality in accessing music education

So, who am I speaking for?

My approach



My approach

What am I doing practically?

- Be informed of needs and inequalities through existing literature including that which has collected data from children and young people.
- Analysing the two national plans. Has discourse changed? Do the plans carry the discourse of the debates?
- Cross party analysis of the debates.
- Eliciting every possible meaning of relevant or could be relevant sections.
- Not getting hung up on formal parliament procedures.
- In a way, whether consciously or not, I have been treating my documents and transcripts as participants. They have a story to tell, they were written and spoken by someone/group of people, and policy has been informed by the wider context.
- Offering different perspectives which can be taken forward for future research.

What am I doing regarding my positionality?

- Be aware of my position.
- Do not speak for children and young people.
- Have a document where I can put subjective opinions.
- Trying to remain as neutral as possible but embracing that my research may not be (and is unlikely to be completely) value free (Clark et al, 2021).

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We hope you found the sessions
insightful and the discussions enriching.
To help us improve future events, we'd
really appreciate your feedback.

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for Your
Participation
in This
Year's
Conference

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*The Organising Committee,
RSEC18 Conference...*