Researching Youth:
New Methods in Changing Times
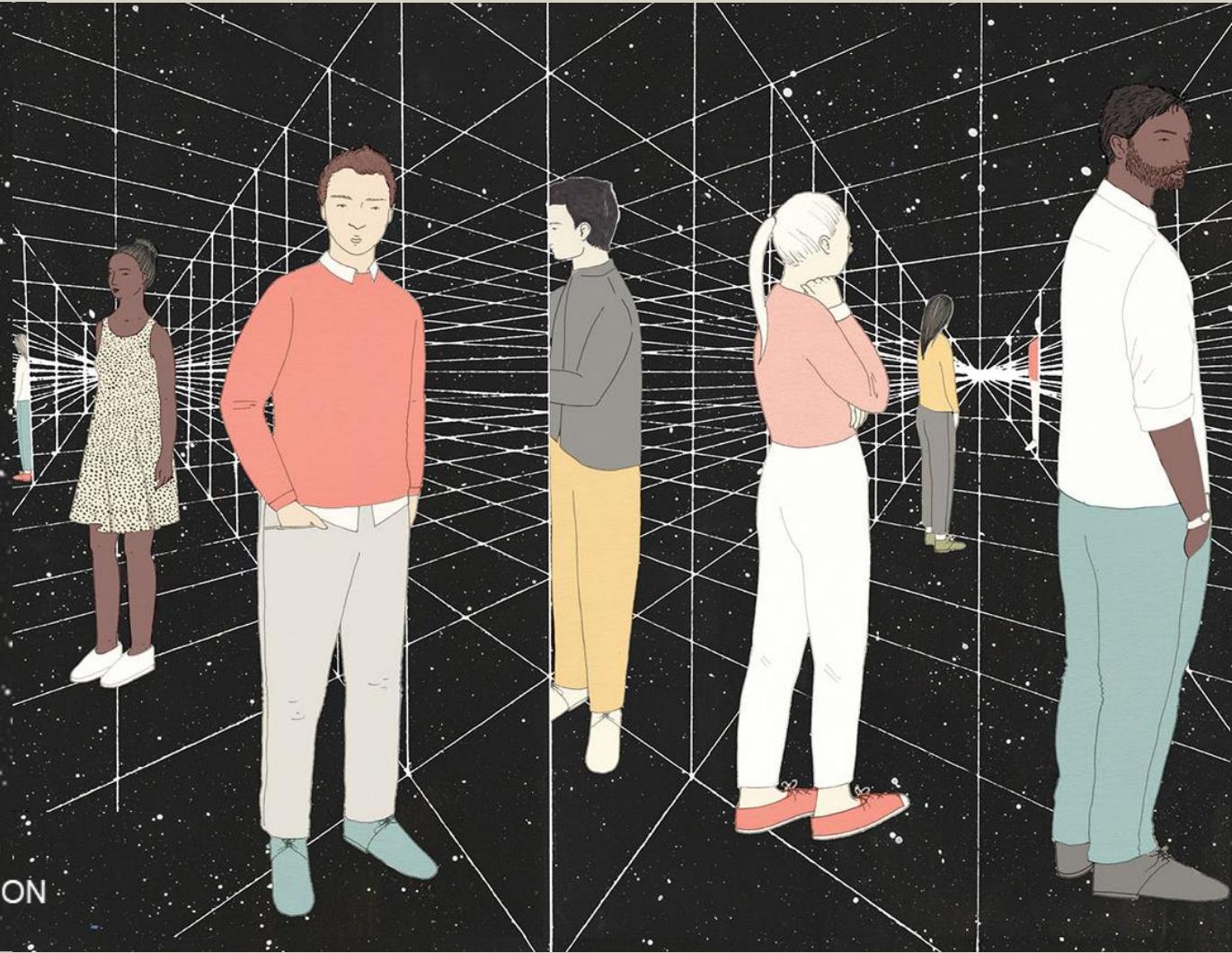
UCL

Image by HARRIET LEE MERRION

Dr Humera Iqbal, UCL Social Research Institute
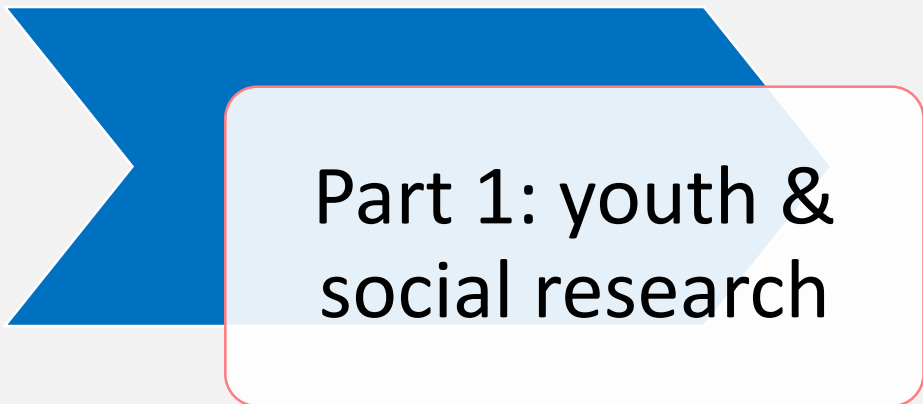
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Youth Knowledge Forum

About me

- I'm Dr Humera Iqbal

- I work as an Associate Professor at University College London, UK
- I am a Social and Cultural Psychologist
- I study children, young people and families

  ➢ Identity & migration experiences
  ➢ Citizenship rights and activism in minority groups

  ➢ Parenting & friendship

  ➢ The arts, creative practices and wellbeing

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Researching Youth: New Methods in Changing Times

Part 1: youth & social research

- Key social challenges faced by youth (pre & post Covid-19)

- How we research these challenges

Part 2: Research in Practice

- The **FACT** Project (Families & Community in the time of Covid-19)
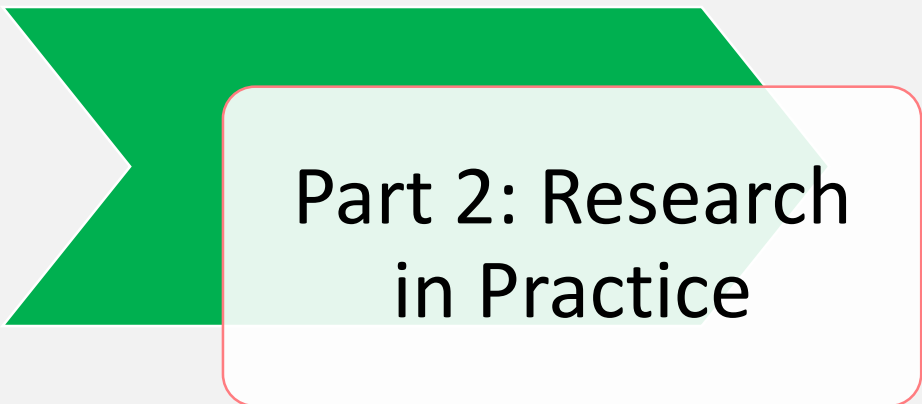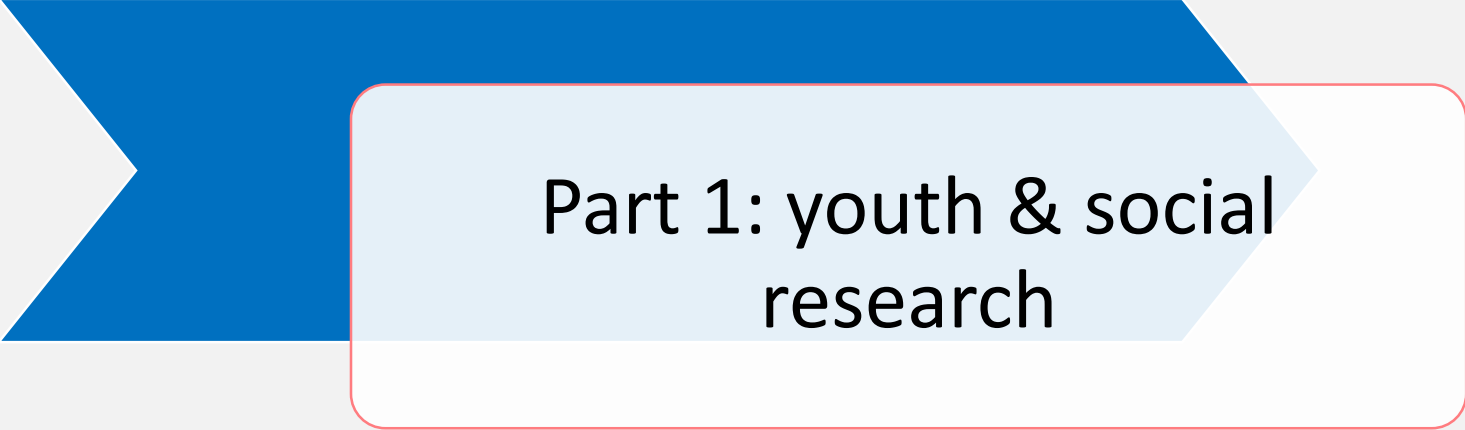
Researching Youth: New Methods in Changing Times

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- How we research these challenges

Challenges faced by Youth – Pre Covid

1. Lack of employment opportunities

2. Failure to succeed in education system

3. Issues related to body image

4. Family problems

5. Substance abuse

6. Pressures of materialism

7. Lack of affordable housing

8. Negative stereotyping

9. Pressures of 24-hour social networking

10. Crime

Mental and Physical health

Climate Change and the Environment

Disparities & Inequalities

Covid & Challenges faced by Youth

COVID-19 has impacted on mental well-being, employment, income loss, disruptions to education, familial relations and friendships, as well as a limitation to individual freedoms

People wearing diy masks - Credit to https://homegets.com

- Disruption in access to education (The closure of schools and universities has affected more than 1.5 billion children and youth worldwide and has significantly changed how youth and children live and learn during the pandemic (UN, 2020)

Covid & Challenges faced by Youth

- Significant psychological impacts of social distancing and quarantine measures on young people causing stress, anxiety and loneliness (OECD, 2020)

  - Generation Z (16-24 year olds), will be and have already been impacted economically. Prospects of new graduates of finding jobs have been eroded

  - Youth feel left out of the conversation and that politicians are not talking to them!

From raw pixel – creative commons

How do we learn more about challenges faced by youth? What is social research:

- Social Research tells us about the world beyond our immediate experiences

- Research has one fundamental characteristic: it uses scientific methods/ a set of rules to produce evidence and results.

- Importance of research questions **?**

Social Research

- e.g. surveys, census data, opinion polls, questionnaires, social attitude surveys , administrative records

Quantitative

- e.g. semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, photos observation, logs and diaries, ethnography

Qualitative

- researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches

Mixed

Ethnography

• Ethnography is a qualitative research method in which an ethnographer (researcher) studies a particular social/cultural group with the aim to better understand it.

An ethnographer typically collects more than one type of data to create an account of the group. Common types of data include field notes from participant observation, transcripts from formal interviews, photos, documents and artifacts.

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Part 1: youth & social research
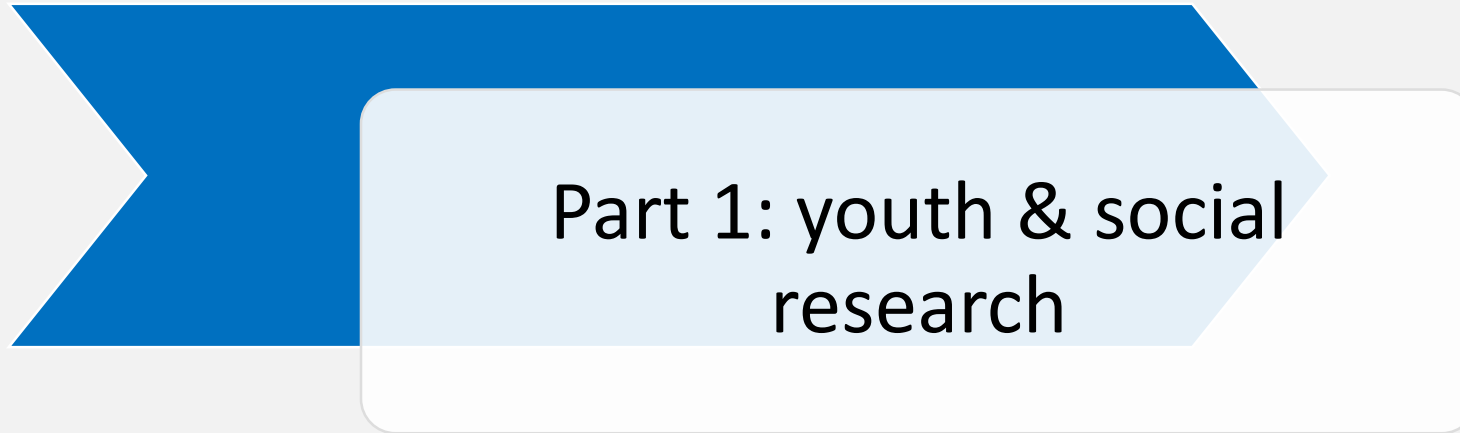
Quantitative & Qualitative Research during the Pandemic

Quantitative Research Studies during the pandemic

➢National Youth Agency (in UK) has compiled a big list of survey studies https://nya.org.uk/available-surveys-during-the-covid-19-pandemic

➢OECD Youth and Covid 19 Study: http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/youth-and-covid-19-response-recovery-and-resilience-c40e61c6/

➢UCL Covid 19 Study: www.covid19study.org

➢YouGov & Institute of Global Health Innovation (IGHI) at Imperial College London are studying people's behaviour in response to Covid -19 globally: http://www.coviddatahub.com/

Qualitative Research Methods During the Pandemic
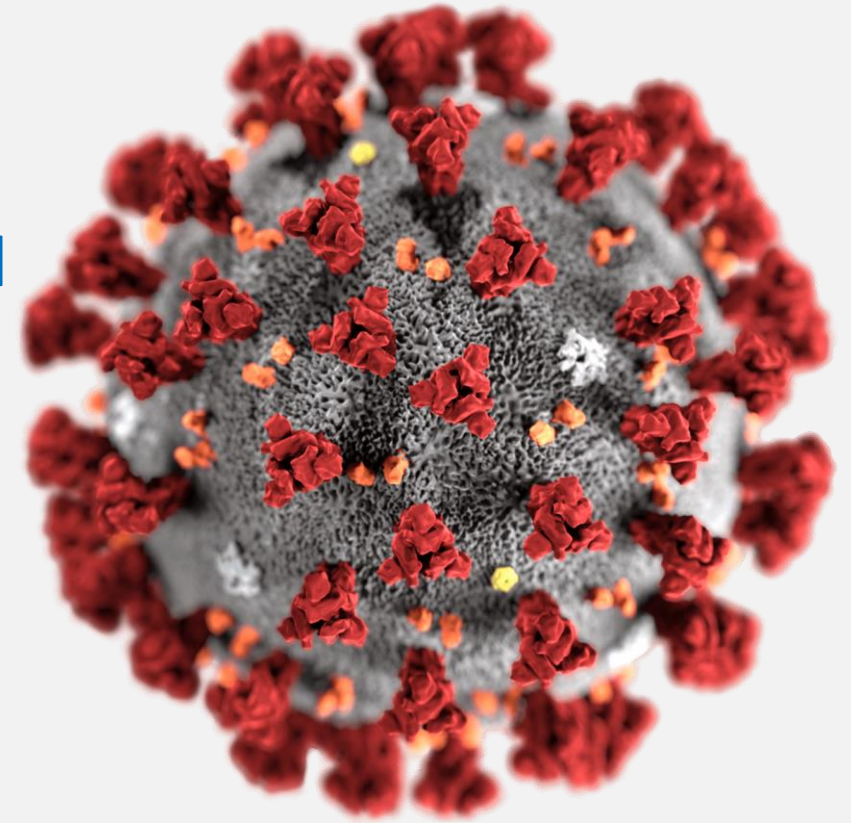
How have social worlds changed for Youth?

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory
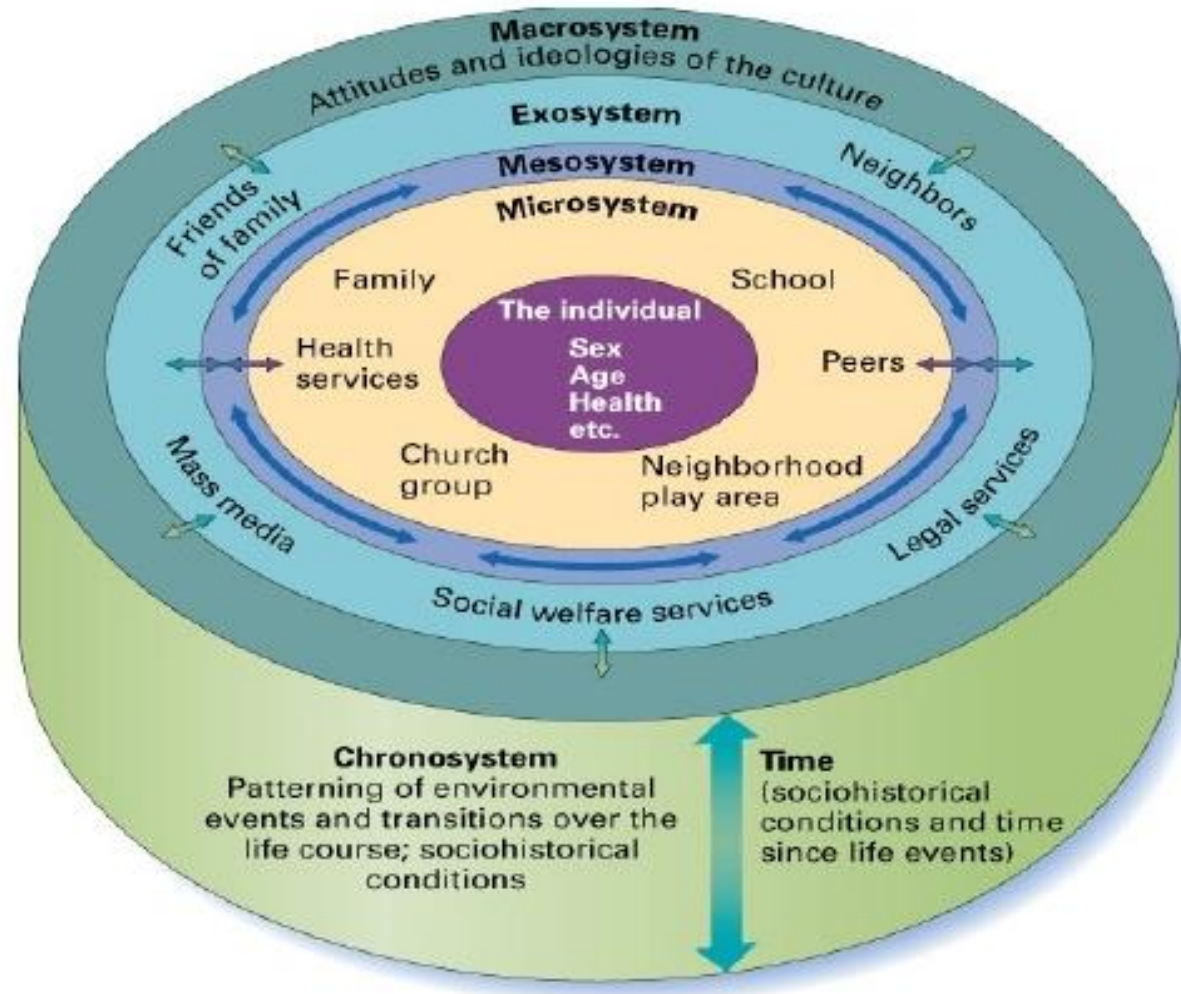
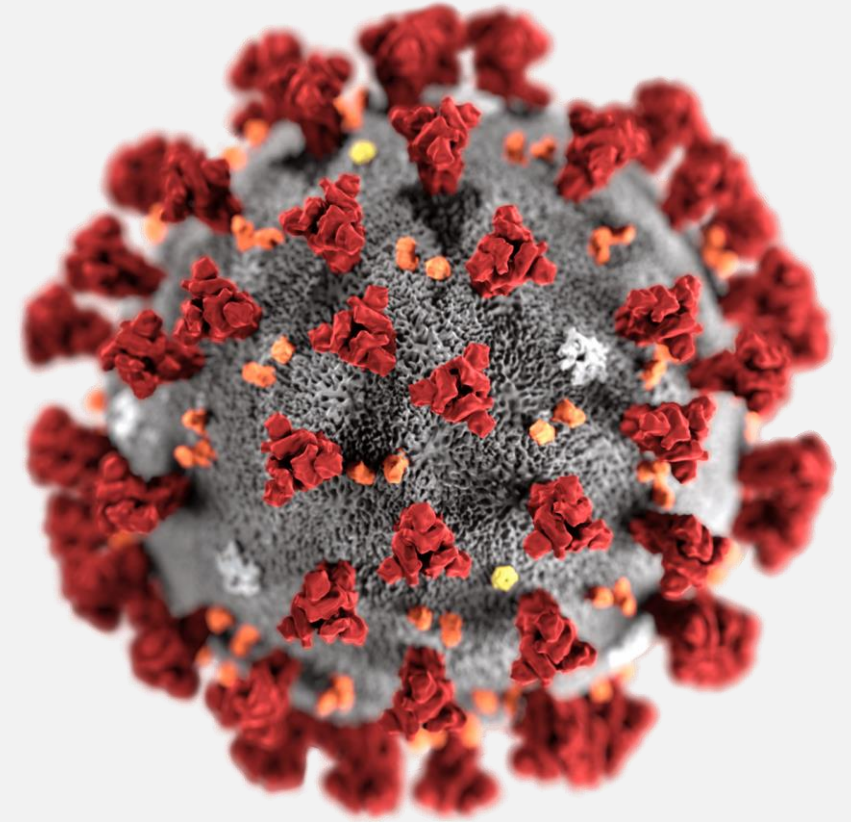# Researching Qualitatively during a pandemic – how we have had to adapt?

Moving online:

- Online qualitative Research: (cross-sectional and longitudinal)

- Digital Ethnographies (participant observation based research)

- Online interviews

- Photographs and diary based research

However, there are methodological challenges….

➤ Uncertainty and Stress during a pandemic

➤ Recruitment

➤ Sourcing the technology

➤ Data storage and privacy

➤ Ethical issues

➤ The Digital divide

➤ How to reach hard to reach groups

➤ Attrition

➤ Quantities of Data

Part 2: Research in Practice

The **FACT** Project
Families & Community in the time of Covid-19

FACT-19: Families & Community in the time of COVID-19

Follow updates here: https://fact-covid.wixsite.com/study

Funded by the British Academy

Dr Humera Iqbal   Dr Charlotte Faircloth   Dr Katherine Twamley   Dr Nicola Carrol   Zhanyi Chen

FACT Team

https://fact-covid.wixsite.com/study/our-team
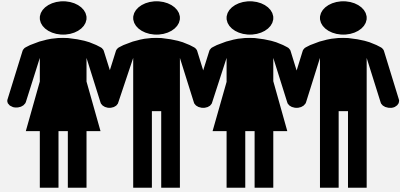
Objectives

1. **Understanding the impact of the pandemic on everyday life** – How does living through a pandemic shape everyday family life, education and work and intimate relationships?

2. **Understanding people's responses to rules and regulations related to the pandemic** – Why do different people react to measures put in place in different ways
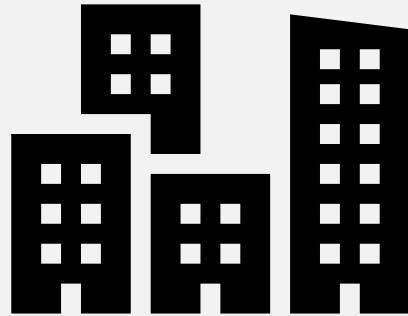
Inter and Intra-household comparisons

FACT International Consortium

- **Taiwan:** National Taipei University & Keele University

- **Singapore:** National University of Singapore

- **Pakistan:** Collective for Social Science Research, Institute for Business Administration, Karachi & Habib University

- **South Africa:** University of Johannesburg

- **USA:** UCLA

- **Argentina:** NYU & Universidad Nacional de Cuyo

- **Chile:** Universidad de Santiago

- **Russia:** National Research University Higher School of Economics

- **Sweden:** Boras University

- **UK:** University College London

Methods

Digital Ethnography Methods:

- Multimodal diaries and interviews

- Qualitative longitudinal study

- Data collection since mid-May 2020

- Focus on families with children

- Participants 12 years+ (youth are a part of our study but not the focus. We learn about youth from young people and others in their household)

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-ND

Our Sample: At a Glance

38 Families
72 Participants in total

13 young people
7 Grandparents
7 single mothers

84% university educated (n=32)

39% Black and Minority Ethnic (n=15)

34 = England;
1 = Scotland,
1 = Wales;
3 = Northern Ireland

UK

Income
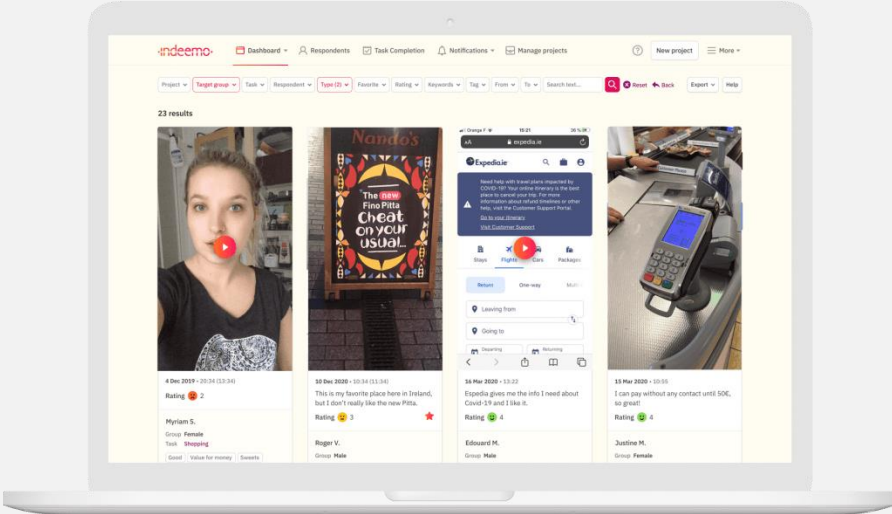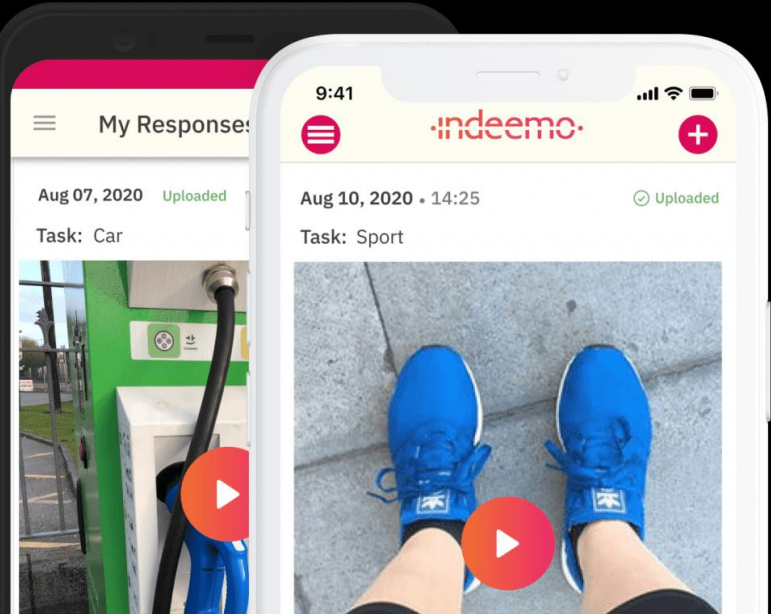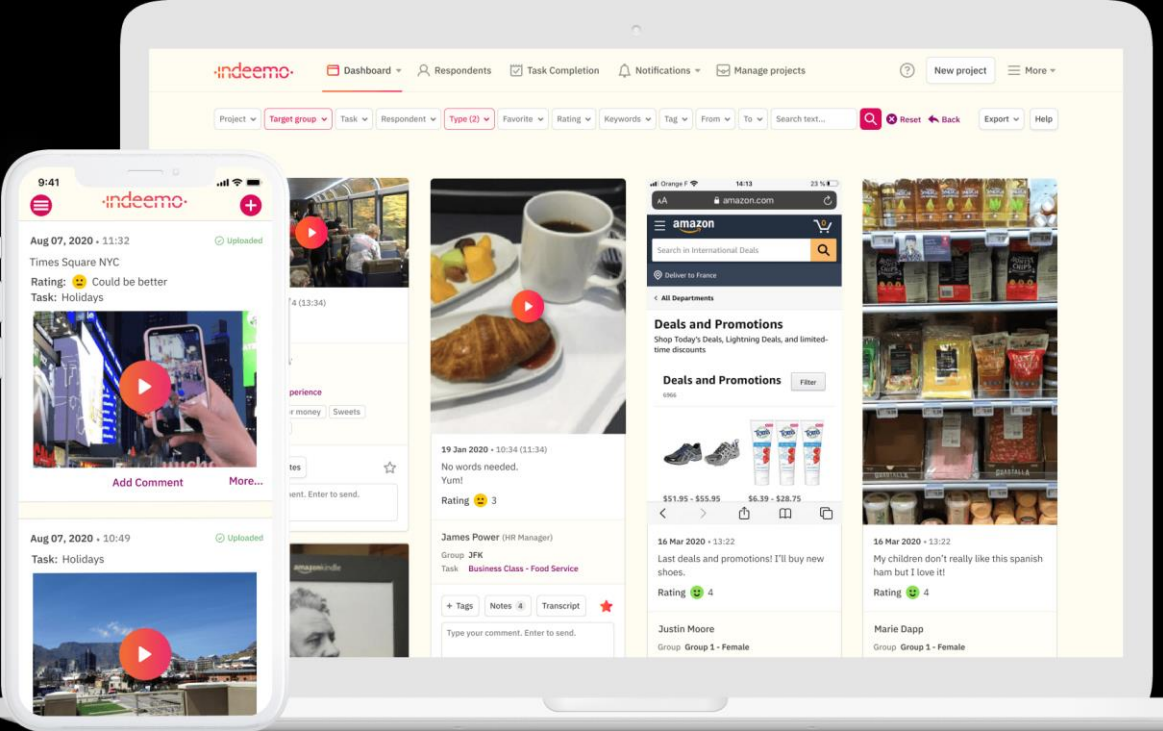13 families: < £30,000 p.a.
14 families b/w £30,000 & £90,000 p.a.
11 families > £90,000 p.a.

Digital Ethnography

https://indeemo.com/

Diary probes

Week 10, Task 1: Financial worries

We would like to understand whether and how the pandemic has affected your finances. Please write a note, telling us:

1. Are you worried about money in your household?
2. Are you aware of any changes in household salaries?
3. Have you thought about or discussed what a recession mean for you and your family? Please explain

Required responses: 1 Note

Week 4, Task 1: Family and friends

Thank you for responding to our set of tasks. We have posted three new tasks today.

In the news, there has been a lot of talk on how the new social distancing rules mean changes about **seeing friends and family.**

Please record a landscape selfie video explaining

·   what you understand about the new rules around seeing other people
·   whether you have seen your grandparents and other family members (aunty, uncle, cousins) since the rules changed (or before)
·   whether you have seen your friends (now or before)

Please remember that the video has a maximum length of 3 minutes – but you can upload a second video or add a note

Required responses: 1-2 videos

Tasks & Diary Probes for young people

relationships with adults in your family, siblings, cousins, grandparents

how you get your information about Covid

Introducing yourself,

government rules

family routines

what is a good parent?

breaking social distancing rules

Is the government doing a good job?

disagreement on new rules

My day during lockdown

changes to daily life

social distancing, work and home

how have I been coping

Facemasks

thinking about the future

School university and work,

Covid tests

shopping in departmental stores

space for study, work leisure

illness during the pandemic

returning to work, school, university

Flash tasks – black lives matter protests

I was already aware of the new rules, but only by a day or so - I think it's good but it seems alot like the government backpedalling after they encouraged so many people to go out and eat in restaurants; I don't see how they can be surprised and (too) reprimanding of people and the younger generations for mingling too much when that's exactly what they were encouraging. Obviously I realise that there is a difference between those who have gone out and social distances and those in bars and crowded pubs, but still.

It doesn't change any plans, but if it had been earlier it would have - we have a surprise party for a friend on Saturday, which is following the current guidelines but wouldn't be with the new ones. My brother has a friend's birthday party to go to as well, in the same situation.

(Daffodil Daughter17)

Target Group: **Young People - Phase 1**
Task: **FLASH TASK: Gatherings of more than six banned across UK**

+ Tag   + Notes   ☆

Type your comment here. Select Enter to send

Humera I   28 Sep 2020 · 14:21

Thanks [   ] like your point about backpedalling! I wonder if you have seen the news about all the university students being stuck in their uni accommodation. Any thoughts on this? I am sure you are feeling relieved that you are not starting uni this year.

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12 Jun 2020 · 16:03 (17:03)

A positive has been how I've been able to work on myself alot in lockdown - I've helped my fitness, my skin is alot better as I don't wear as much makeup, and I'm drinking alot more water which helps with my hair and skin too.

(Daffodil Daughter17)

Target Group: **Young People - Phase 1**
Task: **Week 4, Task 2: Responding to restrictions**

+ Tag   + Notes   ☆

Type your comment here. Select Enter to send

Humera I   13 Jun 2020 · 10:24

Go you! That's great

Responsive & reflexive approach

Space for work and leisure

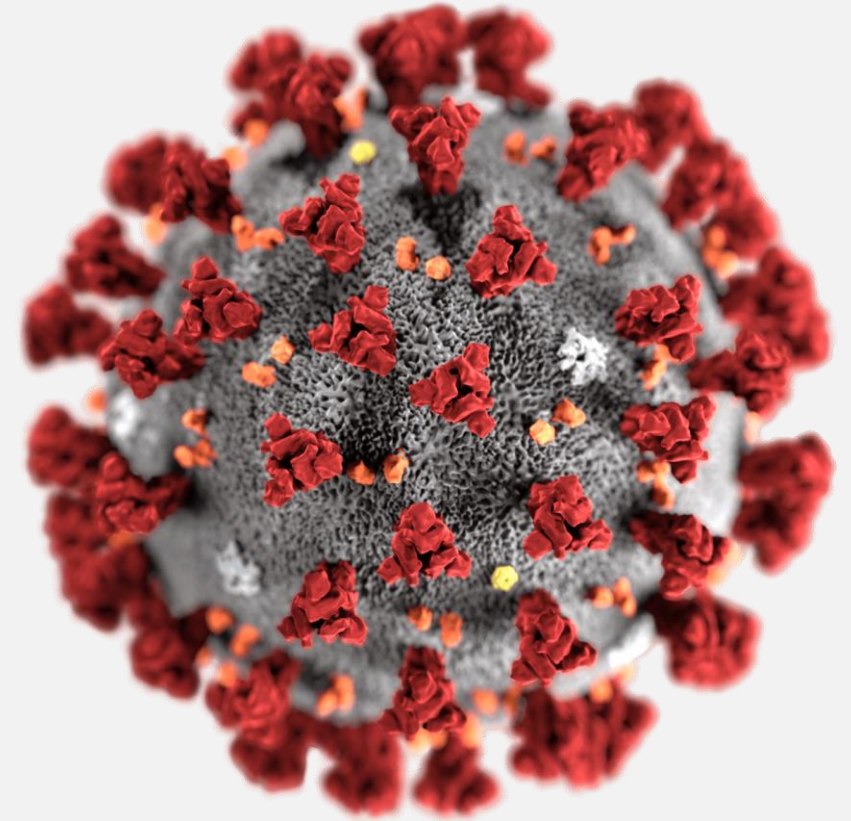>90k p.a. – garden quiet corner for reading or working (Foxglove mum)

30k-60k p.a. – All of us do work downstairs in the dining room and the adults do it in the study and kitchen–
Daffodil Daughter, 17

<16k p.a. – I do my school work on my bed in my room with the school computer because our front room is open to our kitchen we don't have garden and balcony. We live in a flat. (Elderberry son, 12)

FACT: Methodological Challenges

➢Time & Recruitment

➢Sourcing the technology – Indeemo

➢Data storage and privacy

➢Ethical issues

➢The Digital divide

➢How to reach hard to reach groups

➢Attrition

➢Quantities of Data

Researching Youth: New Methods in Changing Times

youth & social research

Research in Practice

- Covid-19 has heightened many existing challenges faced by youth globally

- During the pandemic social researchers have had to adapt existing research methods to capture the social challenges faced by families and young people

- Changes in the way we research have brought new ethical and methodological considerations which we need to think carefully through. They have also brought new opportunities.

Thank you & Questions
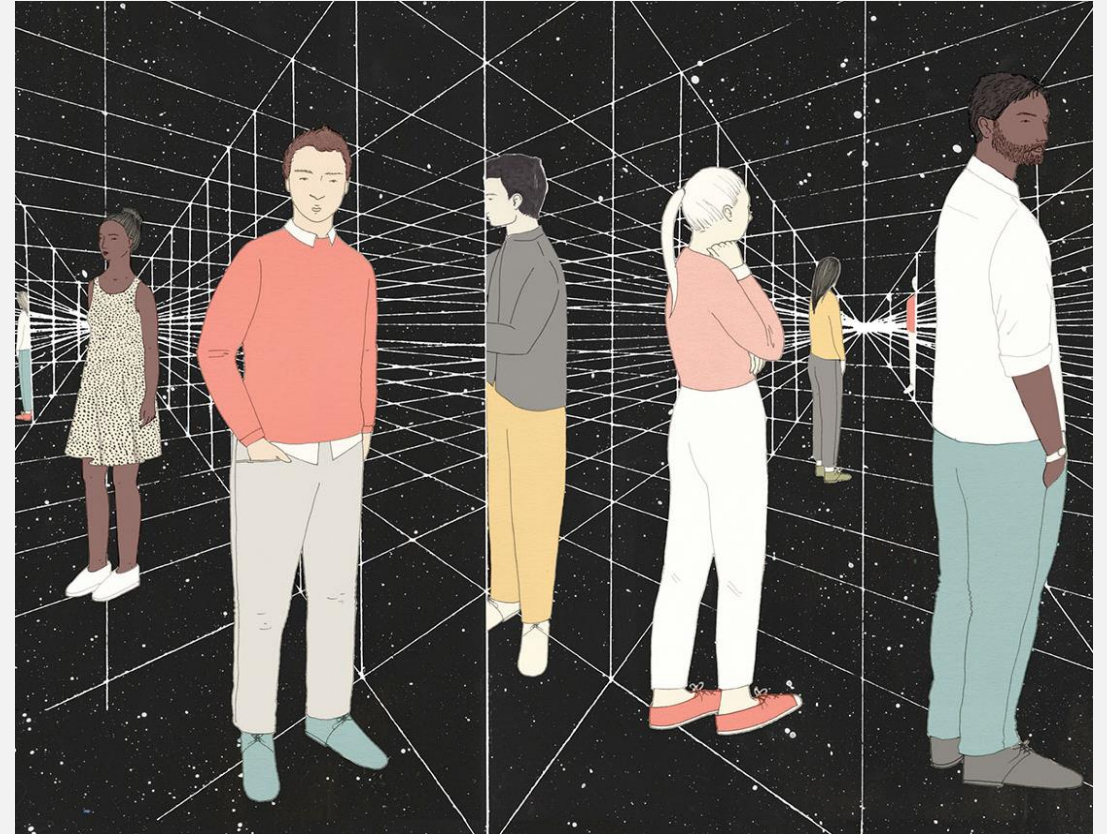
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Image by Harriet Lee Merrion

Questions for Reflection

- What do you think are the main ethical considerations and data collection challenges around youth research in these changing times? Why?

- How can we ensure that marginalised youth voices are represented and that we account for social and digital inequalities when conducting social research on youth during these changing times?

- What key challenges faced by youth as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic do you think would be best studied by qualitative research? Do you have any ideas for studies?