

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA)

PROJECT TITLE				
Non-radicalising “resilience creators”: youth masculinities				
LEAD INSTITUTION				
Name of HEI institution	University of Birmingham			
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION				
Name of organisation	ConnectFutures			
Website	https://connectfutures.org/			
<p>Challenging negative stereotypes about teenage boys, you will research youth agency and cultural participation in their non-radicalisation to violent and/or hateful extremism. Working with ConnectFutures and their youth beneficiaries across the Midlands, you will explore teen masculinities and cultures to co-produce cultural tools and resources to support youth resiliency.</p> <p>Focusing on non-radicalising youth cultures this project challenges securitized and pathologized assumptions about teenage boys. Policy makers warn of ‘new generations’ of ‘Islamist child terrorists’, with Incels targeting teenage boys through MMA and online engagement, each threatening an ‘end of childhood’ innocence. Too often teenage boys are assumed a priori to be ‘risky’ or ‘toxic’, and specifically the framing of youth radicalisation often implies that masculinity and adolescence <i>per se</i> are factors in radicalisation to violent and/or hateful extremism. (Brown 2020). Instead, this project focuses on youth resiliency to violent and/or hateful extremism by centring youth creativity, humour, civicity, criticality, and their co-ownership of cultural spaces. The project contributes to emergent understanding of how the arts and cultural sector contribute to resiliency and looks to produce a range of outputs, including an exhibition, showcasing the resiliency of youth masculinities.</p> <p>Through a milieu approach (which focuses on place, cultural identity and belonging), the project advances understanding of youth resiliency and masculinities in marginalised and minoritized communities normatively considered particularly vulnerable to radicalising factors. This approach prioritises the agency of teenage boys in developing their own life-worlds and sense of self, and the socio-cultural contexts in which they circulate (Pearson, Winterbotham and Brown 2021). You will work closely with ConnectFutures in action and practice-based research, engaging youth in reflecting on and building knowledge on resilient teen masculinities within youth culture, and developing critical insights into radicalisation and violent and/or hateful extremism. Therefore, you will need to develop communication and facilitation skills to engage young people and to have the ability to connect with places where teenage boys participate in cultural production. Therefore, some experience of youth work, especially culturally embedded youth engagement, would be beneficial, as well as prior experience of producing youth-relevant cultural resources. The ability to engage, connect and work <i>with</i> young people is vital.</p> <p>The project involves working with ConnectFutures, the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University. It will involve travel to ConnectFutures project sites across the Midlands to engage with youth and teenage boys on their non-radicalisation. ConnectFutures is a women and minoritized-led social enterprise, that tackles the most sensitive and challenging social issues – with an emphasis on</p>				

hate, violence, extremism and exploitation - through a community-led, human rights framed approach. A key aspect of their research and practice is working with intersectional lived experiences, with a view to empowering youth and community voices. Dr Laura Zahra McDonald, a director and founder, will support and guide you in your work with ConnectFutures. Dr Brown at the University of Birmingham, has a background supporting practitioners in prevention and countering violent extremism from a gender-transformative and human rights centric approach, her research prioritises the agency and resiliency of marginalised communities. Professor Mercer, at Birmingham City University, focuses his work on the cultural and media artefacts that circulate to constructed diverse masculinities among youth and LGBTQ+ communities. You are expected to work closely with all three supervisors in order to operate in an interdisciplinary manner. You will need to engage proactively across disciplines of religious studies, gender and sexuality studies, youth and childhood studies and media studies. A flexible and adaptable mindset is required to work at these intersections.

The main outcomes of this project are an 80,000-word PhD thesis, short youth videos for public exhibition, and updated and new open-access digital cultural resources with ConnectFutures.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE. Please email the lead university supervisor if you want to find out more about this CDA project.

Lead HEI Supervisor:	Dr Katherine E Brown
Lead HEI Supervisor Email:	<i>k.e.brown@bham.ac.uk</i>