Institute of Education

UCL

THE BELONGING GAME
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The Art of Possibilities

Stories that Change Lives in a World on the Move
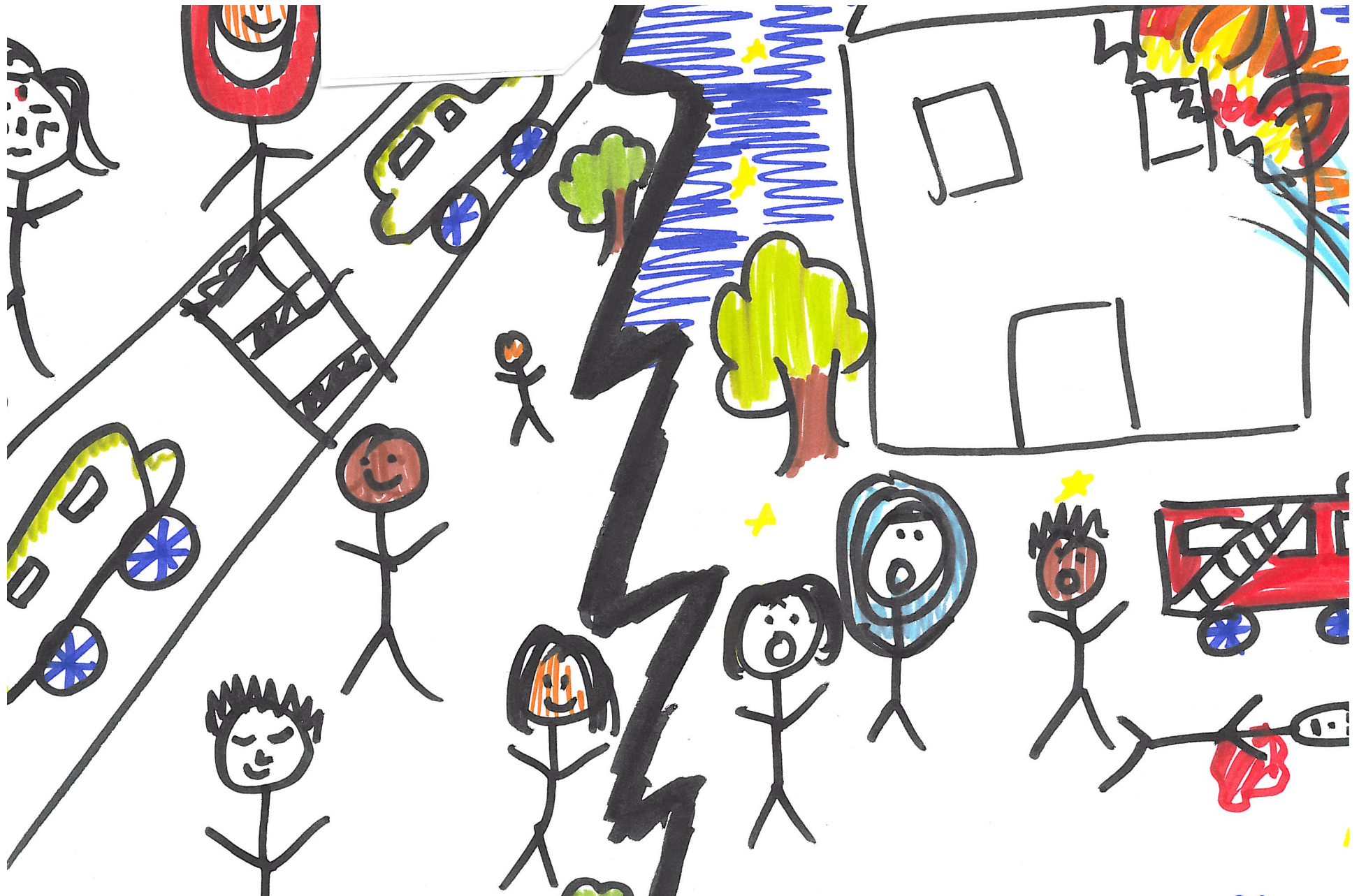
- 'Deportees' (Plane Crash at Los Gatos)

The Questions

- ❖ Why are place & belonging important today?
- ❖ What's the impact of 'not' belonging on individuals & groups?
- ❖ What needs to change for schools to become places of belonging?

1.Global Realities

- **World on the Move**
- **Changing Zeitgeist**

VERSITY / MULTI-
CULTURAL   INCIDENTS & SAD
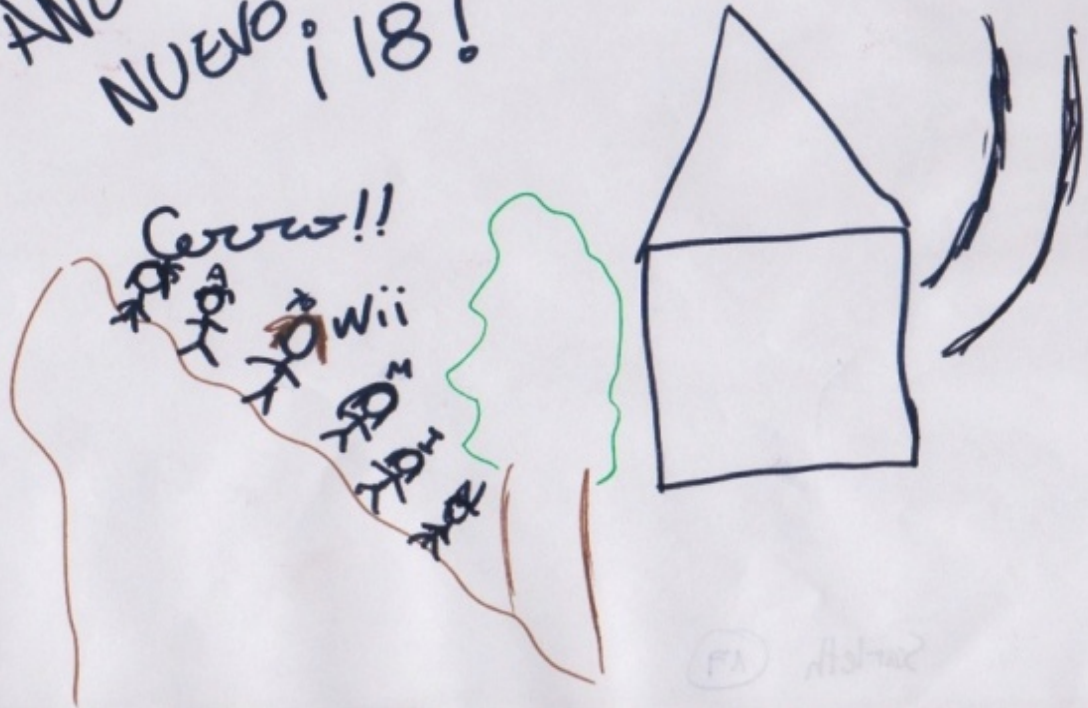   DEATH

ABURRI...

MALO!

FOREVER ALONE! ¡SOLO!

¿Vivir cerca de mi familia AÑO NUEVO ¡18!

NAVIDAD

Cerro!! Wii

Indicators of 'Not Belonging'

- Happiness of young people in the UK is at its lowest ebb since 2010, with 1 in 5 children having seven or more serious problems in their lives, some school related

- Pressure on schools to 'perform' has led to a rise in formal exclusions & increase in children being 'evicted'

- Loss of public & relational spaces – dismantlement of communities

- Growing tensions of 'belonging' for children in foster/ social care

- Young people who experience a sense of exclusion from school or society seek 'belongingness' elsewhere (gangs, forms of extremism, self-harming)

Ballad of the Blade

I found belongingness & a family and affection. I was being lifted up. I was getting all these things I wasn't getting from society.

Society was bringing me down saying 'you're a black boy, you're a thug.' It was always looking down on me.
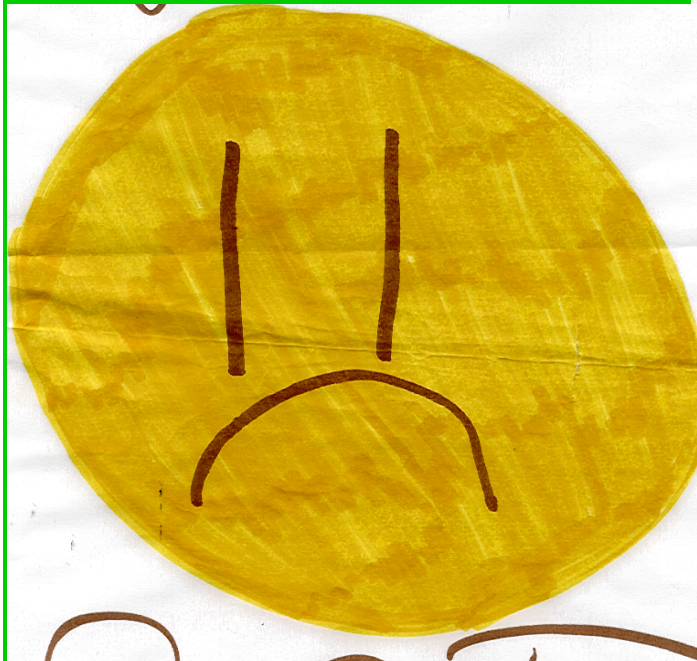
- Video Clip

ART OF POSSIBILITIES: SERIES I
- Place, Belonging & Schools in Our Global World

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2. School Realities

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1 IN 4 CHILDREN
FEEL THEY DON'T BELONG

If children don't belong in school - they don't belong anywhere.

Perspectives on Belonging

- Concerns about belonging not new (Maslow, 1943)

- Sense of belonging has been linked to academic outcomes, student motivation & absenteeism (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Louis, Smylie, & Murphy, 2016)

- It has a strong association with other positive social outcomes, such as health & well-being.

- Schools' practices & expectations influence young people's sense of belonging (Ma, 2003), & 'not belonging' (Riley & Rustique-Forrester, 2002)

3. Leaders
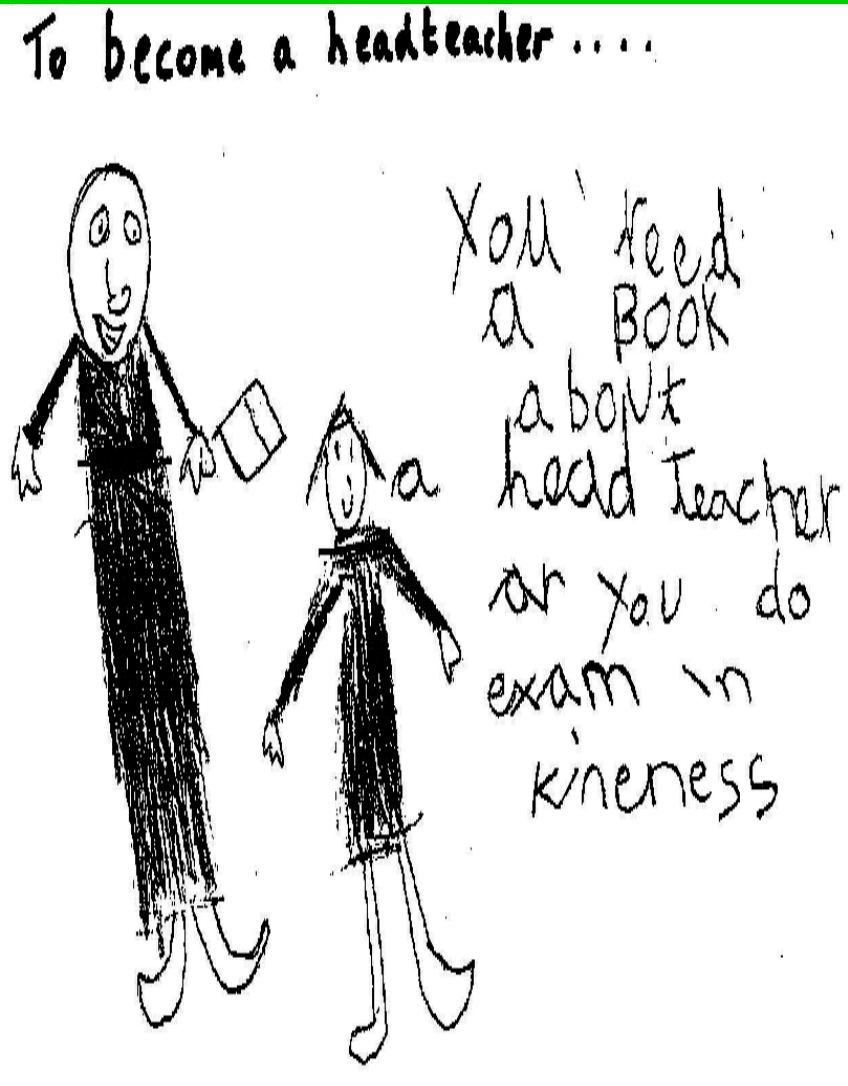
Leadership Matters

- How leaders think, decide, act & reflect, & draw on their knowledge to create a road-map of possibilities is critical to the well-being of children & adults, & to their sense of well-being, belonging & agency (Riley, 2017)

- Leaders are mediating force which holds all of this together…… They have power, the influence, the opportunity to shape the culture of the school (Schein, 2006)

- Schools are communities, 'political entities' in which young people learn how to become part of society (Alexander 2013)

Belonging

connection   accepted   comfortable

true to my culture   have an identity   content

have a role   centred   security   empathy

included   expand my horizons

safe

celebrating heritage and roots

being at home with my family   belonging   unity

express my hopes and dreams

home being yourself

Walking the Talk

- For leadership to have a positive impact on young people's lives, it needs to be *of* place, *about* belonging, & based on *an appreciation of* positive agency (Riley, 2017)

- Links to notion of 'caring' leadership

- Emerging evidence to suggest that caring leadership makes a difference to school performance & to young people's socio-emotional learning

- Improved educational outcomes help young people take control over their lives (Louis., Smylie & Murphy, 2016) .

- Caring leadership about setting clear boundaries & expectations & generating a sense of well-being - and belonging.

Michelle Obama's Favourite School..

4.Researching to make the difference

- Is 'our' school a place where everyone feels they belong?

- If not, what are 'we' going to do about it?

Formal Membership

Am I allowed in this school?

A Sense of Belonging

Do I feel that I belong here?

Perceptions:

Do others accept that I have a right to be here?

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This girl, she's in the playground, & this other girl comes up to her and shouts at her......."

.

I was thinking that if this little one came in from play time ...   .She might feel upset, and then, she might feel angry at them as well saying, "Why did you do this to me?"

And she wouldn't be focusing on her learning, she'll focus on how about if they come & do it to me again, & I don't want to go to school anymore.

1

Ask the question about belonging:
Is 'our' school a place where all children, young people and adults feel they belong? If not, what are 'we' going to do about it?

2

Get others on board:
Staff, students, community members

4

Experiment, have fun:
Try out different research approaches e.g. wordcloud.

3

Equip them with the tools to ask the questions:
Research tools for collaborative inquiry

5

Take the school's pulse:
Enjoy the buzz, develop your collaborative inquirers.

6

Take a break:
Have a picnic.
Think about what you have learned.
What does it mean for the culture of the school?

?

Who knows where this might take you
...

7

Read the 'runes'
What's the way forward for your school?
How do you keep everyone on board?

- Video Clip

ART OF POSSIBILITIES: SERIES I
A Place to Be: Student Researchers Show the Way

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Student-researchers

Research engagement
- Developed their reflective & analytical skills
- Built their confidence & sense of belonging & agency

Realising that they were being listened to & could influence what was happening there - that they could be change agents - connected them to the world beyond the school gates.

…**NQT & teacher-researcher**

- .Research ….allows you to ask children some questions that ……you certainly haven't thought about. That throws so much light onto their feelings.

- That's the great thing about research and about making it very objective. You really just want to find something out about the class..

5. The Possibilities

I was thinking about all the people that are actually involved in a school….
If they all thought about their school in a different way….

- A place where I go
- A place where I feel like I belong
- Where I feel like I can contribute
- Where I feel like what I say is heard

…What a dynamic, wonderful place that would be.

- Video Clip

ART OF POSSIBILITIES: SERIES II
Belonging

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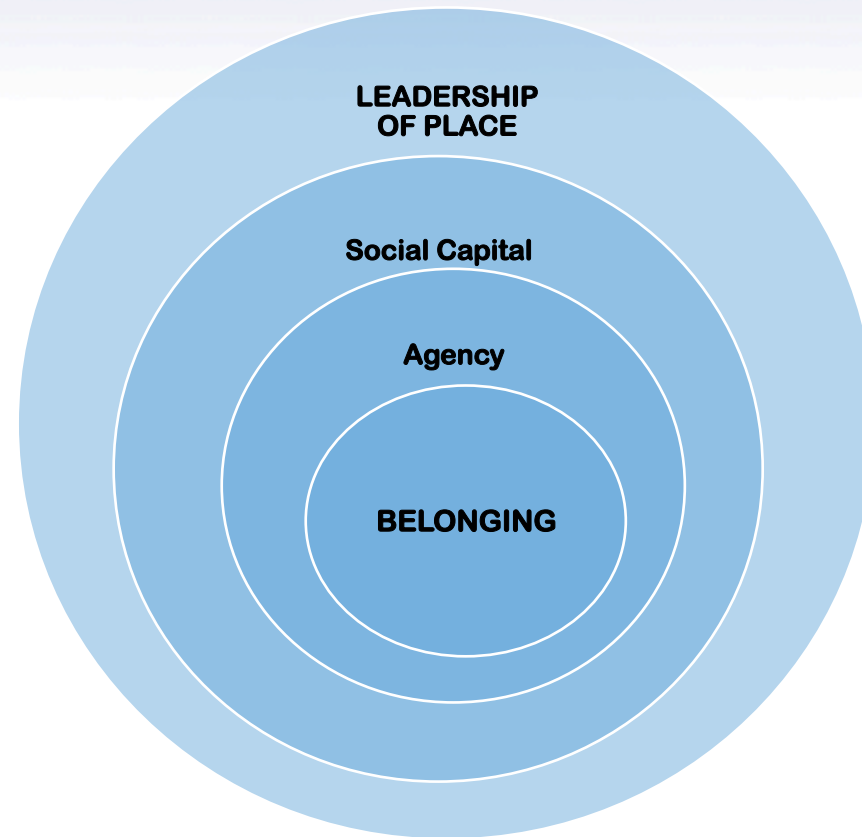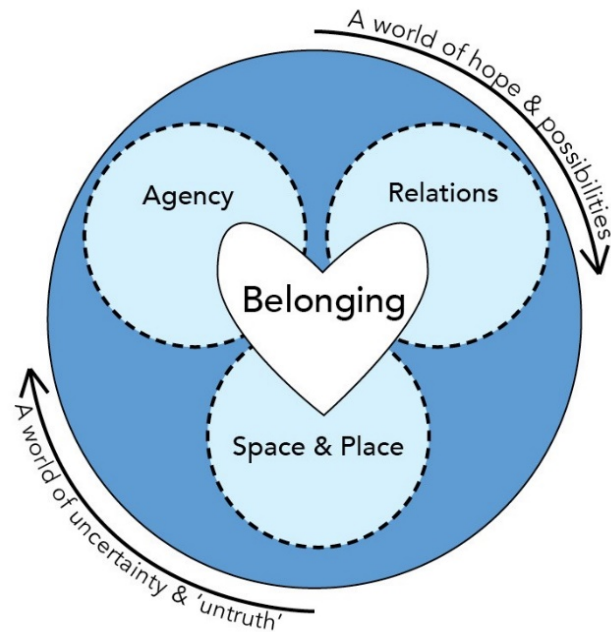# LOOKING THROUGH THE PRISM OF PLACE & BELONGING

When you look through a Prism, the light changes, you see things afresh.

When you look at schools through the *Prism of Place and Belonging* you begin to understand how school life is experienced:
– who feels included/ an outsider

AND what can be done to increase engagement & reduce disaffection.

Ways of Seeing:

'Belonging'..... is that sense of being somewhere where you can be confident that you will fit in & safe in your identity

Kathryn Riley - Related publications include:

❖ (2019:Forthcoming). *Leadership of Place: Transforming Schools into Places of Belonging.* ICSEI Monograph Series.

❖ (2017/2018). *Place, Belonging & School Leadership: Researching to make the difference.* London: Bloomsbury.

❖ (2018). The Belonging Imperative. *School leadership Today*,(93) 30-36 (www.teaching times.com).

❖ (2018). (With M. Coates & S. Martinez Perez). *Place and Belonging: Unlocking Possibilities.* London: IOE, UCL. (Download at www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe-place-and-belonging-in-schools).

❖ (2017). Re-creating Schools as Places of Belonging: The Art of Possibilities, *Professional Development Today* 19 (2) pp 8-16.

❖ (2017). Community collaboration and partnership in volatile times. In P. Earley & T. Greany (Eds.), *School Leadership & Education System Reform* (pp. 139-147). London: Bloomsbury.

❖ (2016). (With C. Montecinos & L. Ahumada). Effective Principals serving in high poverty schools in Chile: Managing competing realities (pp 1-8), *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2017.02.181

❖ (2013). Cohesiveness & Social Capital in Schools in Highly Disadvantaged Urban Communities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39, (2), April: 266–286.

❖ (2013). *Leadership of Place: Stories from the US, UK & South Africa.* London, Bloomsbury.

❖ (2006). (With J. Ellis., W. Weinstock. J. Tarrant, & S. Hallman). Re-engaging disaffected pupils in learning: insights for policy & practice. *Improving Schools*, 9 (1) :17-31.

❖ (2004). (With J. Docking). Voices of disaffected pupils: implications for policy & practice. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 52 (2), 166-179. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2004.00261.x

❖ (2002). (With E. Rustique-Forrester). *Why children lose interest in school & what we can do about it.* London: Chapman Sage.