

Bristol



The **LIFE** **WORLDS** of Birth Cohorts



This book is part of the Wellcome Trust funded project 'The Biosocial Lives of Birth Cohorts' and the exhibition 'The Life Worlds of Birth Cohorts' which examines the everyday lived processes and practices that shape participants' lives across four cohorts in the global north and south. In 2024–2025 and using a method called 'photovoice' we invited a total of 21 intergenerational parent and adult child pairs of participants from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children in Bristol, UK; the Generation R study in Rotterdam, the Netherlands; the Pelotas Cohort Study in Pelotas, Brazil; and the Generation 21 study in Porto, Portugal to take pictures of their lives, and then to discuss these in small focus groups.

This book focuses on the images and narratives of participants from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) or also known as 'Children of the 90's' in Bristol. This birth cohort was established in 1991 recruiting over 14,000 pregnant women. It is a multi-generational cohort and continues the long legacy of cohort studies in the UK. Across eight themes identified by participants in our workshop this book provides a visual and narrative immersion into their life worlds. It explores how their lives are both shaped by their involvement in the cohort study but also often exceed it, revealing what is important to them and the details that inform their lives.

We invite you to explore more of the photographs, and the cohort studies on our website:

birthcohortlifeworlds.com



Images from the Photovoice workshops in Bristol.



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I always wear a smartwatch now. I'm quite happy to share if it's for the benefit of other people. And I think that's what this is all about – sharing that data with the wider research community to improve things.

– Participant



Cohort Participation



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It was on the TV about Children of the 90s placenta thing. They have got mine. So I thought I'd take a picture of that.

– Mother participant



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And also the welcome [at the clinic], there is always such a welcome. It's great.

– Mother participant

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I took a picture of me and my partners' mugs, because we have a mummy and daddy mug that we always have tea together. And if the other one isn't here, we just don't use those mugs because it feels wrong to not have them together. The girls don't have tea yet. We will teach them.

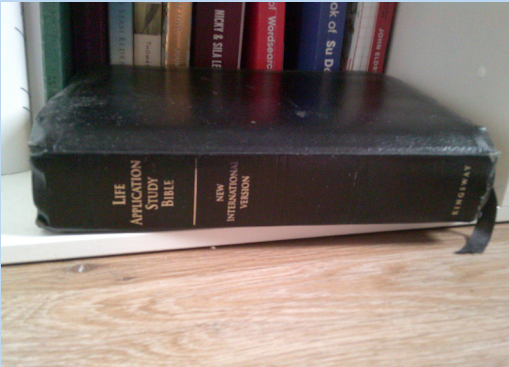
– Participant



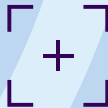
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I'm a Christian and I have a faith. I wouldn't say I'm religious, I think there's a real difference between a religion and a faith. So, I have a faith and that's really important in our lives. With the questionnaires, there was just so many topics covered and such random questions it felt like. And I'm sure there was a purpose behind them, but there would often be one about faith. And I was always, I think when I was younger, maybe struggled to answer those a bit more, but now it's something that I'm proud of in life. And I love that.

– Participant



Identity



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Myself and my partner [who is from Spain] kissing in full huertanos outfits in the Plaza de las Flores in Murcia. Lots from Murcia as I forgot to take my camera last time and it's such a big part of our lives. I was lucky enough to go during the local festival.

– Participant



Navigating Life Transitions



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That is my baby. Obviously, she's a big part of my life now. With grandma's mobile in her hands. Don't know how or why she's got your mobile [addressing his mum next to him].

– Participant

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Living in a 1 bed flat dealing with clutter and mess is a daily experience. The hallway is a good proxy for the rest of the flat. Theoretically, all the shoes fit under the bench but inevitably they spread out over the full length of the hall. By the time the shoes reach both ends the flat is in dire need of a clean up, but obviously taking a picture of it is a great way of procrastinating and not doing the tidying up.

– Participant



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The view from my front window again in Bristol. I just managed to catch the sun there, and you can actually see it there, you can see the suspension bridge. You used to be able to see a lot more, but now everything's grown so much. Another view of life, of my life because I do spend a lot of time at home now, looking after the grandchildren.

– Mother participant





Lived Environments



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And this summer, we have runner beans. They're really slow this year but they're absolutely bountiful now. And if I'd been at home, I would have brought some, but I'm currently living with my dad who's on end of life care, so I didn't get a chance to do that, but, yeah. I just love the harvest. Just love being able to go out and pick and giveaway and share.

– Mother participant



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New flats on my street. This construction work has been happening 200 metres from our front door for the last 4 years. It has caused major changes to the levels of traffic and noise in our area and once complete will significantly increase the population density in our area. Within 500 meters of our apartment there are about 10 major developments like this one happening at any given point in time. The city is big and growing fast and nothing ever stays the same for long.

– Participant



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We've just put our house on sale where we've been for nearly 40 years, so that's really sad, but we need to. We didn't pay the mortgage off, so we're going to try and sell and get cheaper house. My oldest son lives in Trowbridge so we're going to try and move over there.

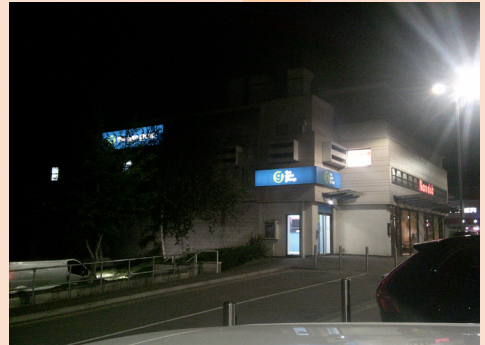
– Mother participant

Physical and Mental Well-being



“ I really enjoy keeping fit and meeting friends at various gym and walking classes. I enjoy indoor and outdoor rock climbing but don't have a partner to climb with at the moment. I am also a member of a gym and practice Nordic Walking in various open spaces around Bristol. We are very fortunate in having easily accessible open spaces.

– Mother participant



“ I, um, Sara, [her daughter] probably remembers the Pollyanna game. I, I like to try and look for the silver lining behind the clouds. Um, my grandmother gave me a book when I was a young girl about Pollyanna, a little girl. Always look for the positive in things, and I've sort of tried to take that on board. And that was, I just thought, a lovely picture of the dark cloud, but, you know, the silver lining behind.

– Mother participant

“ Photo of my gym. Whatever time I can get out after the baby is sleeping and I still have energy early evening or when it's already dark I try and work out, I've done it on and off for years but the last 2 years I've been more consistent and find lifting weights is very therapeutic in good times and tougher ones like we've faced recently.

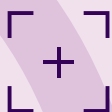
– Participant



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Farming is a massive thing in our community. So this is the very farm that we get the milk from. I have a really rich heritage in farming in that my dad was a farmer. My granddad was a farmer. I'm sure it goes back generations, and locally that's a huge thing. There's a lot of farmers around and livelihoods were built upon that. And I guess I have to thank that for where we live at the moment. And so I just really appreciate what farmers do. I think it's really undervalued.

– Participant



Intergenerational Connections



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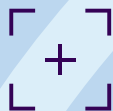
A view of the school where she [her daughter] first went to school. That's all changed now because they put all this matter, whatever we want to call it along the front to stop people [looking], which I think is a very good idea because, yeah, before anybody could just—yeah, like a bamboo screen across all the things. It's just a really nice school. Anyway, I've always liked that. And again, the next one is another view of that same school. This is the junior side of it. And I've always loved the little caterpillar that they've got on the front. It's just you can't see it very well [Daughter: There was a game where you'd always run along and try and hit the different heights] and that is actually the same school I went to when I was a child.

– Mother participant

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Here he [her husband] is sitting up, eating a normal meal. The lady on the end is my best friend. She's been there to come into intensive care with me [when her husband was in hospital]. She's been everywhere with me.

– Mother participant



Food

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Obviously, fish and chips, which I like a lot. And it was my partner's birthday, so we went to a really nice pub and it was a sunny day.

– Mother participant



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When I took that picture, um, so that's a sadness, um, in my life. And, um, it's quite a difficult situation to know how to support him and encourage him, so, I'm sorry I knew I would cry... Sorry! Um, because we're a very close family, and I lost my mum last year, and, um. So it's difficult.

– Mother participant

(Re)Imagining Family



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You can't see the people in the picture, but, uh, my mum's in there on the right hand side, and the rest is my nieces, my brother, um, my wife's dad and, uh, partner's somewhere, I think, in there, um, and we had a barbecue as well. We did have nice-ish weather, a bit cloudy but we managed to get some decent weather, out, um, but yeah, just the sort of family one.

– Participant



We are very grateful to our funders the Wellcome Trust, and for the support of our host institution UCL. We also extend our thanks to all the participating cohorts, including the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) in Bristol, Generation 21 in Porto, Generation R in Rotterdam, and the Pelotas Cohort Study in Pelotas. Our appreciation also extends to all the participants who took part in our interviews and photovoice activities and generously shared their lives and experiences with us.

Further information about the project, visit birthcohortlifeworlds.com

