

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Glasgow (UofG)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 23 Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> The Mediator Toolkit: supporting mediators working with children using picturebooks in contexts of displacement		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000–2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> (1) Evelyn Arizpe (2) Julie McAdam (3) Maureen Farrell (4) Lavinia Hirsu (5) Jennifer Farrar	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> (1) Professor of Children's Literature; (2) Lecturer in English Language; (3) Senior Lecturer; (4) Senior Lecturer; (5) Lecturer in Secondary English and Children's Literature	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> (1) 2006–present (2) 2004–present (3) 1993–present (4) 2015–present (5) 2013–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2017–2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Approximately 28 million children in the world are living in forced displacement, including 12 million refugees who are five times more likely to be out of school than other children. Few systematic resources and approaches have been specifically developed for facilitating learning, inclusion and intercultural communication for those living in transient conditions. UofG-led research on picturebooks has resulted in the development of a new training model. From 2017 onwards, 'the Mediator Toolkit' has changed the practice of 'mediators' (third sector employees, volunteers and teachers) in Mexico, Egypt and Chile by training them to use the aesthetic and affective features of picturebooks to reduce the negative effects of displacement (e.g. by enabling children to talk about their future intentions within the host country).</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The Mediator Toolkit is underpinned by pioneering UofG research with picturebooks from 2000–present. The original research (2000–2003) led to the publication of Arizpe and Styles' <a href="#">Children Reading Pictures</a> (2003). A revised edition was published in 2016 as <a href="#">Children Reading Picturebooks</a>, and cited as a seminal text in the field (e.g. by Beauvais and Nikolajeva 2017). Translated into Spanish in 2004, and reprinted five times, it is available throughout Latin America. In 2017, it was distributed freely by the Mexican Government to approximately 1000 mediators of 'Salas de lectura' (Reading rooms).</p> <p><b>A key finding</b> from the research is that the specific aesthetic features of picturebooks (a genre of children's literature created by authors and illustrators through the unique interlocking interaction between words and images) offers children opportunities to access and engage with the narrative, while the use of visual and other creative modes of response, mediated by a more experienced reader (e.g. a teacher or mediator), allows for learning and emotional and aesthetic expression, regardless of the level of literacy or knowledge of the language.</p> <p>Further developments of this research include the 'Visual Journeys' research project (2009–2014) where Arizpe, Farrell and McAdam led a team of international collaborators from the University of Arizona, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Australian Catholic University and University of Bologna. Each team read picturebooks with groups of migrants and refugees in their respective countries to find out how their intercultural skills could be supported by visual narratives about migration. Furthermore, in 'Journeys from Images to Words' (2011–2014) Arizpe, Farrell and McAdam conducted research in primary schools in Glasgow with newly-arrived children (who responded through oral and visual activities to picturebooks on the topic of migration) in order to better understand how to support their literacy and inclusion.</p> <p><b>A key finding</b> from these projects was that when children have had their education interrupted because of migration, forced displacement, or have experienced violence or economic precarity, they are in particular need of an approach to learning which is mediated, inclusive and enjoyable. Further research, 'Inspiring Innovation Initiative' (2016–2017), led by McAdam and Hirsu, used multilingual picturebooks in various intercultural contexts with communities of</p>		

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teachers [3.5]. Critical analysis of the features of visual texts that engage readers [3.5, 3.6] confirmed that picturebooks, including those on the theme of migration, could provide such an approach.

In 2016, follow-on funding (from the ESRC and GCRF) allowed McAdam and Hirsu to work in a leadership role in key partner organisations (e.g. Fard Foundation, St. Andrew's Refugee Service, Catholic Relief Service, Educate Me and Firefly) in order to strengthen shared understanding of the ways in which picturebooks can be used to develop holistic approaches for educators to work with displaced children. Together with findings from a further Glasgow-based project: 'Children's Literature and International Safe Spaces: Toolkit development for third sector partners working with displaced children', it highlighted another key research finding: the need for training and resource-building among those working in contexts of multilinguality, constant mobility and emergent situations of risk, whether in formal (e.g. schools and libraries) or informal (e.g. local communities) spaces of learning.

These findings were consolidated through the AHRC-GCRF Research Network funded 'Children's Literature in Critical Contexts of Displacement', which led to the creation of '[the Mediator Toolkit](#)'. The Toolkit has inbuilt flexibility allowing for adaptation and delivery according to age group and context (e.g. post-conflict or post-disaster). It includes criteria for selecting picturebooks, mediation strategies and the creation of arts-based, ethical response activities suitable for the context.

### 3. References to the research

**3.1.** Arizpe, E., Colomer, T., Martínez-Roldán, C., Bagelman, C., Belloran, B., Farrell, M., Fittipaldi, M., Grilli, G., Manresa, A.M., McAdam, J., Real, N. and Terrusi, M. (2014) [Visual Journeys through Wordless Narratives: An international inquiry with immigrant children and 'The Arrival'](#). Bloomsbury Academic: London. (doi:[10.5040/9781472593283](#))

**3.2.** McAdam, J. E., Arizpe, E., Devlin, A.M., Farrell, M. and Farrar, J. (2014) [Journeys from Images to Words](#). Project Report. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Publisher's URL: [https://issuu.com/esmeefairbairn/docs/journeys\\_from\\_images\\_to\\_words](https://issuu.com/esmeefairbairn/docs/journeys_from_images_to_words)

**3.3.** Arizpe, E. (2012) [Entre imágenes y palabras: la investigación que promueve comunidades lectoras inclusivas y creativas](#). In: Colomer, T. and Fittipaldi, M. (eds.) *La Literatura Que Acoge: Inmigración y Lectura de Álbumes*. Caracas-GRETEL: Barcelona, Spain, pp. 44-68. ISBN 9789806417397 [available on request from HEI]

**3.4.** Arizpe, E., Bagelman, C., Devlin, A. M., Farrell, M. and McAdam, J. E. (2014) [Visualizing intercultural literacy: Engaging critically with diversity and migration in the classroom through an image-based approach](#). *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(3), pp. 304-321. (doi: [10.1080/14708477.2014.903056](#))

**3.5.** McAdam, J. E. (2019) [Narratives of change: the role of storytelling, artefacts and children's literature in building communities of inquiry that care](#). *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 49(3), pp. 293-307. (doi: [10.1080/0305764X.2018.1524001](#))

**3.6.** Arizpe, E. (2019) [Migrant shoes and forced walking in children's literature about refugees: material testimony and embodied simulation](#). *Migration Studies*, (doi: [10.1093/migration/mnz047](#)) (Early Online Publication)

**Evidence of research quality:** The underpinning research meets the 2\* quality threshold because output [3.1] was published by a leading publishing house. Outputs [3.4, 3.5] and [3.6] were published in high-ranking, peer-reviewed journals.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### 4.1. Pathways to impact

The UofG team's research has made a significant contribution to changing mediators' practice through government programmes and the work of NGOs. A project [website](#), which contains resources including a searchable database of books, serves as a knowledge exchange portal. This ensures sustainability and provides a platform for the training of new partners who cannot benefit from in-situ training. The research ultimately benefits displaced children and young

adults by reducing the negative effects of transience and offering a pathway into literacy for those without access to formal education. Precisely because of the transitory nature of their lives, obtaining evidence at this final stage of impact is extremely challenging. This case study, therefore, focuses on the mediators as the primary beneficiaries of the research.



Image 1: Mediators working with picturebooks during a Toolkit workshop.

#### 4.2. Changing the practice of mediators in Mexico

In 2017, a research-based consultancy for the Mexican Ministry of Culture resulted in the creation of a new government programme. The Director for Reading Promotion at the Ministry was aware of the underpinning research due to her attendance at Arizpe's invited lectures at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and the Universidad de Zaragoza in 2011. The resultant Programme 'Reading with Migrants', in which the government invested approximately USD50,000, extended the existing training for 'Salas de lectura' (reading room) mediators (confirmed by collated evidence [5A]). This initiative was implemented in response to the presence of an estimated 140,000 immigrants in Mexico and 3 million people displaced due to poverty or violence.

Through the Programme 'Leer con migrantes' (Reading with migrants), mediators working in areas of high concentration of migration or forced displacement were trained to use picturebooks and the Mediator Toolkit in order to work more effectively. Training was initially completed by 264 mediators working in 10 states, who have subsequently worked with approximately 4,000 readers in refuges for migrants or community spaces (confirmed by the Programme Coordinator's estimate [5B]). In 2018, the Mexican Ministry of Culture produced an associated publication [5C] derived from Arizpe's interventions which was made widely available online to mediators and the general public, thus extending the reach of the Programme.

The earthquake in Central Mexico in September 2017 set back the roll-out of the initial Programme. However, a new Programme, 'Metaforas para la reconstrucción' (Metaphors for reconstruction) was rolled-out in Mexico City and three states: Puebla, Oaxaca and Morelos (confirmed by associated publication [5C]). This response shows how the model can be quickly adapted to different situations. The Director for Reading Promotion at the Mexican Ministry of Culture wrote: "we should highlight that the programme and methods designed by Dr Arizpe were not only of great relevance in the work with migrant populations, but also [...] in the design of cultural programmes of reading promotion for the work in different adverse and emergent contexts." [5A]. Arizpe, McAdam and Hirsu subsequently interviewed mediators involved in the recovery Programme, who confirmed that they had used elements of the Mediator Toolkit in their practice (confirmed by output [5D]).

In 2018, a new government administration in Mexico changed the priority of such programmes, however, a new relationship has since developed between UofG researchers and the current administration. Despite this change in administration, the use of the Mediator Toolkit has become self-sustaining due to its utility to mediators. Evidence of the change in their thinking, as well as on their practice, was gathered through interviews. For example, Mediator A said: 'Then I took the training... I did not know... what the reality of that migrant context was... or how to work with them... and it was not about teaching them to read or [creating] an emotive reaction... I now have a structure for the activity for each session, I have an objective... before I did not know how to use picturebooks, now I rely on the images and the children or adults themselves to create the stories' (confirmed by selected quotes from mediator interviews [5E]).

From 2018 onwards, the NGO IBBY Mexico (International Board on Books for Children and Young People) has taken up the training and adopted parts of the Mediator Toolkit into their own new 'libraries for migrants' project. 'Y de paso nos leemos' is supported by a major US-based

charitable organization, United Way, with funding of USD12,500, thus further extending the reach of the underpinning research (confirmed in letters from IBBY Mexico [5F]). While the funding amounts are relatively low, this project continues to demonstrate significant and cost-effective impact at international level, as outlined below.



Image 2: Just some of the picturebooks available to mediators through the project website.

#### 4.3. Changing the practice of mediators in Egypt

UofG research also led to changes in professional practice among NGOs and third sector workers in Egypt in 2018. While the training in Mexico was being rolled out, an AHRC-GCRF Research Network Award enabled Arizpe, McAdam and Hirsu to collaborate with third-sector organisations working with groups of displaced children in Cairo. Egypt's geographical position in the Middle East and North Africa region means it has often been a space for migration flows to Europe from the Global South. In recent years, Egypt has become a major host for Syrian, Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, while over the past 50 years it has hosted Palestinian and Sudanese refugees. Estimates for the Sudanese community range from 750,000 to 4 million; and for the Syrian community up to 300,000.

The project team, with partners from the American University in Cairo and IBBY-Egypt, delivered workshops for educators on using the Mediator Toolkit, working across five NGOs: Fard Foundation, St. Andrew's Refugee Service, Catholic Relief Service, Educate Me and Firefly. Each of these NGOs has since reported that the Mediator Toolkit is now part of their core practice resources—either in working directly with children or in the training of more mediators (confirmed by collated emails and reports [5G]).

For instance, Catholic Relief Service works alongside donor organisations such as UNICEF to support refugees and Egyptian children. Their work has extended the reach of the Toolkit, as they shared the training with 12 colleagues in March 2018, so that they could cascade it on to a further 120 kindergarten teachers and 1,250 village librarians [5G]. They reported that teachers had changed their classroom practices to include the use of picturebooks, so that: *“children who were often silent could express their ideas through the pictures and make up new stories in their own words to express themselves”*. Teacher B said: *“There was a big difference in my approach before and after the training. Before the training, I didn't teach using stories, but after it I started using stories to help explain things to them and to help them to understand important themes”* (e.g. such as racism). Teachers reported that using picturebooks enabled children to talk about their future intentions within the host country: *“students started to speak about themselves and [would] imagine themselves in a specific profession and start to develop plans for their own futures”* (selected quotes from mediator interviews [5G]).

#### 4.4. Changing the practice of teachers in Chile

A third example of impact relates to changes in professional practice among teachers in Chile who were trained using elements of the Mediator Toolkit in 2019. The Coordinator of the National Reading Plan in the Ministry of Education in Chile was familiar with research conducted by Arizpe and had read about the Mexican Programme in the Ministry of Culture's publication [5C]. As a direct result, she invited Arizpe to act as an advisor and used the research as a framework for developing the *'Biblioteca Migrante'* (Migrant Library), a selection of children's books on the themes of inclusion and migration, as well as workshops on reading strategies for teachers, to help them support increasing numbers of migrants arriving in Chilean schools. This training changed the perspective of the teachers who had previously ignored many aspects of the migrant experience. As one teacher said: *“We are often prejudiced without knowing... it made me reflect... this type of work made me understand the reality of the kids... we learned from this project.”* (confirmed by invitation and evaluation report [5H]).

Not all of these children (e.g. migrants from Haiti, Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela) speak Spanish or have the required knowledge for their age level according to the Chilean curriculum. Rather than immediately attempting to incorporate them in regular classes, the training has resulted in changes to practice in the use of picturebooks in order to integrate them gradually. This pilot programme was rolled-out at the beginning of 2018 to 50 schools with a high percentage of foreign students in the regions of Arica y Parinacota, Tarapacá, Antofagasta and the Metropolitan region. Three teachers from each of the 50 schools attended the programme. The pilot programme was evaluated through the Ministry of Education in December 2018 and 55 online surveys were completed. The conclusion was that the programme was *'positively valued'* by mediators because it: *'responded to the need to address the theme of migration and diversity through a format that allowed students to connect with the theme and their own experience, as well as renewing their enjoyment of books'* (confirmed by evaluation report [5H]). The programme was expanded to 100 additional schools in 2019.

#### 4.5. Next steps

The reach of the Mediator Toolkit will be extended further through a commission to Arizpe and the UofG team from CERLALC (UNESCO Regional Centre for the Promotion of the Book in Latin America and the Caribbean). CERLALC's plan, launched in May 2020, is to create an action framework for cultural intervention in crisis situations in Latin America. 10,000 copies of research-informed guidelines aimed primarily at educators, mediators and regional officials are now due to be published (confirmed by a letter from CERLALC [5I]). A collaboration between UofG researchers and the new Mexican Ministry of Culture administration also began in 2020, with an invitation to a webinar and an agreement to collaborate on a new research project (confirmed by collated evidence [5J]).

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5A] Collated evidence: (i) Testimonial from the Director for Reading Promotion at the Mexican Ministry of Culture (2018); (ii) Official Press Release (21 December 2017) *[both in Spanish]* **[PDFs Available]**.

[5B] Testimonial letter from Mexican Programme Coordinator (17 August 2020) (confirms the training of 264 mediators and an estimated 4,000 readers reached) *[In Spanish]* **[PDF Available]**.

[5C] *Para leer en contextos adversos y otros espacios emergentes* (2018) (Arizpe's contribution is acknowledged on p.23 and the underpinning research cited extensively throughout; rollout of the project confirmed on p.11) *[In Spanish]* **[PDF Available]**.

[5D] Hirsu, L., Arizpe, E. & McAdam, J. E. (2020). [Cultural interventions through children's literature and arts-based practices in times of disaster: A case study of reading mediators' response to the Mexican earthquakes \(September 2017\)](#). *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 51. ([doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2020.101797](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2020.101797)) **[PDF Available]**.

[5E] Excerpts from interviews with mediators in Mexico collected on site and digitally in 2019 *[Quotes in Spanish and English]* **[PDF Available]**.

[5F] Collated evidence: (i) Letter from Training Coordinator, IBBY Mexico (24 March 2018); (ii) Letter from Technical and Training Director, IBBY Mexico (17 June 2019) *[both in Spanish]* **[PDFs Available]**.

[5G] Collated evidence: (i) emails and reports from NGOs in Cairo and two mediator groups in Mexico about incorporating Toolkit elements into their practice (quotes and figures from CRS letter); (ii) Extracts from interviews with mediators from five NGOs working in Egypt collected by the UofG Team in 2019 **[PDFs available]**.

[5H] Collated evidence: (i) Invitation from the Ministry of Education in Chile; (ii) Project Evaluation: *Resultados Evaluación Programa Biblioteca Migrante* (quote from p.46) *[both in Spanish]* **[PDFs Available]**.

[5I] Letter from CERLALC (8 August 2019) **[PDF Available]**.

[5J] Collated evidence: Letters of invitation for new collaborations from new administration in Secretaria de Cultura programme "Semilleros Creativos": (i) invitation to Dr Arizpe for webinar (2020); (ii) response to invitation to Dr McAdam for research collaboration (2020) *[In Spanish]* **[PDFs Available]**.