CIRCY’S FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

It’s been another busy term for CIRCY members, as the research centre entered its fifth anniversary year. As mentioned in our Annual Report (downloadable from the CIRCY homepage), we decided on the anniversary theme of ‘Children, Young People and the Future’, reflecting our desire to challenge some of the problems that arise from policy and media discourses of childhood and futurity, not least in glossing over the complexity and diversity of children and young people’s lives.

We have planned our seminar series for the year with this theme in mind, thinking about children’s lives over time, and from a range of perspectives, highlighting our aim for CIRCY to provide an interdisciplinary space to think with.

In October, we were delighted to welcome Professor Ann Nilsen from the University of Bergen in Sweden, who opened our seminar series with a methodology workshop on case studies, and gave a seminar on ‘Young People’s Thoughts about the Future: Methods and Data from three different studies’. Recognised internationally for her work on cross-national and qualitative longitudinal methodology, Ann’s workshop and presentation linked to CIRCY’s Methodological Innovation research theme and reflected on methodological issues relating to various aspects of time and temporality as research topics, as well as to ways of approaching these. CIRCY Steering Group member, Sevasti-Melissa Nolas (Social Work) was discussant for the seminar.

ROCK-A-NORE

In October, CIRCY lent support to the Indie Rock-a-Nore Festival, which raises money for Brighton suicide prevention charity, GrassRoots (Charity No: 1149873) having been inspired by reflecting on what our anniversary theme means for young people’s emotional lives - their mental health and wellbeing in particular.

CIRCY’s Lucy Robinson (History) helped organise the one-day festival which brought together “current indie bands and those of yesteryear” and wrote about it in a special extended blog post for CIRCY, highlighting the creative power of linking the personal and political in inspiring research, and above all, in understanding, and supporting, young people’s lives in challenging times.

MEMBERS’ NEWS

We are delighted to announce that Nuno Ferreira (Law) has agreed to join the CIRCY Steering Group. Nuno joined Sussex – and CIRCY – in 2016, and brings particular expertise in relation to children’s rights, in projects that span CIRCY themes of Childhood Publics and (Extra)Ordinary Childhoods. His ongoing research about children’s welfare and development in the context of professional football was a highlight in our most recent Annual Report. We are delighted to have his expertise strengthening the interdisciplinarity and cross-University membership of our steering group. Thank you Nuno!

It is with sadness, but also warmest wishes for the future, that we bid farewell this winter to Sevasti-Melissa Nolas (Social Work) and the Connectors study team – Vinnarasan Aruldoss, Christos Varvantakis, Robyn Long and Claire Prater. The team is moving to Goldsmith’s (University of London) where Melissa has been appointed Senior Lecturer in Sociology. We will miss them – particularly Melissa’s valuable contribution to CIRCY’s steering group.

Elsie Whittington (Social Work/Sociology) has played a pivotal role in the development of CIRCY over her three years as the Centre’s Graduate Teaching and Research Assistant (GTRA) whilst undertaking her PhD (co-funded by Brook, a charity providing free and confidential sexual health advice to young people). In September 2017, the three-year GTRA post came to an end. While Elsie continues to be an active and supportive member of CIRCY, this is is an opportune moment to thank her formally for the fantastic contribution she has made.

Congratulations to Cynthia Okpokiri (Social Work) who recently successfully completed her PhD on the research theme ‘First generation Nigerian immigrant parents and child welfare issues in Britain’. In fact, double congratulations are due as Cynthia has now been appointed Senior Lecturer in Social Work at Anglia Ruskin University!
ANNIVERSARY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Tuesday 12 December 2017, 3-4.30pm
Gardener Tower, Attenborough Centre
Research Theme: Emotional Lives
Presenters: Robin Banerjee & Hester Barron
Title: Emotional Lives at School over 100 years, 1918-2018
This seminar will be followed by a festive get-together to which all are welcome!

Monday 29 January 2018, 4-5.30pm
Sussex Humanities Lab
Research Theme: Digital Childhoods
Presenters: Rachel Thomson & Liam Berriman
Title: Researching Everyday Childhoods

Wednesday 14 March 2018
Time & venue TBC
Research Theme: Childhood Publics
Presenters: Pam Thurschwell & Sevasti Melissa Nolas
Title: Exploring the idioms of childhood publics: When the humanities meet the social sciences

Monday 14 May 2018, 4.30-6pm
Venue TBC
Research Theme: Good Childhoods and (Extra)Ordinary Children
Presenters: Robbie Gilligan (Trinity College Dublin) with Janet Boddy as discussant
Title: Promoting access to work for young people in care and care leavers - International perspectives on the critical issues

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Lucie Crowter, 1st year PhD researcher working with Robin Banerjee (Psychology)

A significant number of young people experience complex psychological difficulties that impact on their ability to lead the life they would like to. Many of these young people have experienced a number of social difficulties since childhood and early adolescence. For her PhD, Lucie plans to utilise National Pupil Database information to look at the relationship between earlier school functioning and later mental health and social outcomes for young people, aiming to develop ways to identify and support young people most at risk of experiencing long-term psychological and social problems.

TERM HIGHLIGHTS

CIRCY researchers have had a busy term, with teaching and research as well as sharing information about our work with policy and professional audiences and other academic colleagues. Highlights include the following:

• Building on his previous engagement activities – for example, as a panel member at the Early Intervention Foundation 2017 Annual Conference, and at the Best Practice Forum for Looked-After Children at the House of Lords in May – Robin Banerjee (Psychology) was keynote speaker at two conferences in September: The Bookseller annual children’s literature conference, and a symposium on Mental Health in Schools at Queens University, Belfast.

• Jacqui Shepherd (Education) was interviewed with Jennifer Parry (consultant paediatric dentist) about their research on the experience of going to the dentist for young people with autistic spectrum conditions. The resulting article featured in the September issue of the British Dental Association’s Journal BDI: In Practice, circulated to over 18,000 dentists! The research was funded by the University of Sussex Research Opportunities Fund.

• September also saw Nuno Ferreira’s (Law) blog post “‘No children allowed’ – Truly second-rate citizens?” on the Socio-Legal Studies Association’s SLSA Blog. The post argued for the need for the law to revisit age-based discrimination against children.

• Janet Boddy (Education) gave the opening keynote address at the International Foster Care Research Network conference in Paris in September, where she drew on research projects conducted for the Nuffield Foundation, EU (MSCF), and the Norwegian Research Council, discussing meanings of family for young people who have been in care.

• In October, The Guardian newspaper highlighted ESRC-funded research from Gillian Ruch (Social Work); her Talking and Listening to Children research project was featured in an article entitled: ‘Talking to vulnerable children on their terms helps to build trust’.

• We were delighted to host a Research-in-Progress lunchtime seminar in November for CIRCY doctoral researchers, Elsie Whittington and Roma Thomas (both Social Work). Elsie presented her research on ‘Participatory processes with young people: Exploring sexual consent’ (the subject of a Spotlight feature in our 2017 annual report), and Roma spoke about her study, ‘Doing Boy Work? Young masculine subjectivities and professional practice’. In a packed seminar, Roma and Elsie used participatory approaches, engaging the audience with samples of their data and prompting rich and lively discussions.

• A testament to the value – and appeal – of research-led teaching was the launch of two new elective modules on childhood and youth. In September, Pam Thurschwell (English) launched new elective module The Age of Adolescence. Hester Barron (History) has also developed a new module on Childhood in 19th and 20th Century Britain which will start in Term 2.
• Janet Boddy (Education) met with Martin Narey at the Department for Education in November to discuss implications from her research for the ongoing DfE Fostering Stocktake - led by Martin Narey and Mark Owers. In her capacity as CIRCY Director, Janet also took part in a roundtable discussion hosted by the Fabian Society on ‘Community, Identity and Citizenship: Young people and the world around them’, at which she highlighted the range of work CIRCY has done in relation to the themes of Childhood Publics and Ordinary/(Extra)Ordinary Childhood and Youth.

• Also in November, Louise Gazeley (Education) welcomed two visitors from University West - Anette Bolin and Karin Forslund-Frykedal - to develop a book proposal that will focus on inclusion and exclusion, drawing on research conducted in Sweden and England. Contributors will include Jacqui Shepherd, Julia Sutherland (both Education), Tish Marrable (Social Work) and Simon Quigley who recently completed his Doctor of Education (EdD) professional doctorate at the University of Sussex. Louise will be co-editor.

• Sevasti-Melissa Nolas (Social Work) and her Connectors team held the exhibition ‘in common: children’s photo-stories of public life’ at Candid Arts Trust in London in November. The international exhibition - which will be showing in Hyderabad, India in December and Athens, Greece in January - is the outcome of three years of intensive research. The study’s findings were showcased through children’s words and photographs of their everyday lives, visual illustrations of workshops captured by artist, Babis Alexiadis, photo-stories of what matters to children, and a selection of quotations about meanings of public and private life to children. The exhibition also featured illustrated and anonymous crowd-sourced stories of ‘earliest political memories’. The team also ran a successful doctoral, early career and freelance researcher workshop on ‘Analytical Practices in Multimodal Ethnography’. A multimodal archive of the week will be available in due course on the study website: https://connectorsstudy.com/events/in-common


CIRCY researchers Louise Gazeley and Janet Boddy (Education with colleagues from University West, Sweden)

• On 1 December, Michelle Lefevre (Social Work) presented the keynote ‘Looking, Hearing and Learning: What can we learn from analysing communication and engagement between social workers and children?’ at a conference in Perth, Scotland, organised by BASPCAN, a charity and membership association providing education and professional development opportunities for child protection professionals.

• Nicola Yuill’s (Psychology) ongoing research with The Language Alignment in Autism ESRC-funded project (Chatlab at Sussex and lab in Edinburgh) has started with the launch of wechat.org.uk, and a twitterfeed @WechatProject. The team has also launched a competition for children to produce a logo for the project.

• A particular highlight of the term has been three professorial lectures by CIRCY researchers. Janet Boddy (Education), CIRCY Director, spoke in October on ‘Thinking Through Family, Thinking Across Contexts’. CIRCY Steering Group member, Jo Moran-Ellis (Sociology), spoke about her work on children’s agency and the sociology of childhood, in a lecture in November entitled ‘The Famous Five Acting Otherwise’. And in December, Claire Langhamer (History) spoke about her research on ‘Feelings at Work in Modern Britain’.

FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

A CIRCY-led consortium bid to evaluate projects funded within Wave 2 of the DfE Innovation Programme has been successful. Led by Janet Boddy (Education) and Gillian Ruch (Social Work), in partnership with the NGO Research in Practice, the research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology. The team have been allocated three project evaluations and a critical thematic overview project. The research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology. The team have been allocated three project evaluations and a critical thematic overview project. The research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology. The team have been allocated three project evaluations and a critical thematic overview project. The research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology. The team have been allocated three project evaluations and a critical thematic overview project. The research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology. The team have been allocated three project evaluations and a critical thematic overview project. The research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology. The team have been allocated three project evaluations and a critical thematic overview project. The research involves colleagues from Education, Social Work and Psychology.

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Helen Drew (Psychology) is currently working on a six month pilot project funded by the Research Development Fund entitled ‘Reading Feelings: Does reading fiction improve empathy and social skills in children?’. The project is supervised by Robin Banerjee, Alan Garnham and Jane Oakham (Psychology). The focus of the research is to develop methods to assess how children’s emotional engagement with a text and wider reading experiences are associated with empathic and prosocial skills.

Helen is also working on another project, funded for one year and entitled ‘Improving the Emotional, Social and Psychological Wellbeing of Looked-After Children: Testing the Shared Training and Assessment for Wellbeing package (S’TA’WB)’. The research is being carried out by Helen and Robin at the University of Sussex and colleagues in the Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education at the University of Oxford. The package involves integrated training on mental health for foster carers and teachers, and home and school-based assessments reviewed by a clinician, to identify any indicators of potential mental health difficulties. It is a small project focused on 25 looked-after children aged between 8 and 10 years of age, which is hoped will feed into larger scale research. The project is funded by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust and an anonymous donation.

**PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS**

‘Environment in the Lives of Children and Families: Perspectives from India and the UK’, written by Ann Phoenix (CIRCY Advisory Committee), Janet Boddy (Education), Catherine Walker (University of Leicester) and Uma Vennam (CIRCY Advisory Committee), was published in September by Policy Press Shorts. Based on multi-method qualitative research with families living in rural and urban India (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana) and England, the book is available from Policy Press and has gold open access status on OAPEN.

Emerald Publishing made all seven papers from Nicola Yull’s (Psychology) ESRC-funded Digital Bubbles seminar series (‘Autism and Technology’) freely available for the month of November.

Pam Thruschwell’s (English) edited collection, ‘Quadrophenia and Modernist Culture’, has been published by Palgrave as part of their History of Subculture and Popular Music series. The collection explores the centrality of The Who’s classic album along with Franc Roddam’s cult film, Quadrophenia, to the recent cultural history of Britain and a continuing fascination with Mod style and culture.

Rachel Thomson, Liam Berriman (both Social Work) and Sara Bragg (University of Brighton) have co-authored the new book ‘Researching Everyday Childhoods: Time, Technology and Documentation in a Digital Age’ to be published by Bloomsbury in January 2018. As well as being available in hard copy, the book will have gold open access status and be downloadable as a free ebook from OAPEN and Bloomsbury Collections. The book will be launched at CIRCY’s 5th anniversary seminar on 29 January.

Nuno Ferreira (Law) has been working with Sussex colleagues Jo Bridgeman, Maria Moscati and Lara Walker (Law) on a project which aimed to re-write a range of international, European and domestic judgments from a children’s rights perspective. ‘Rewriting Children’s Rights judgments: From academic vision to new practice’ is published by Hart and available in hard copy from the University’s Library and online.

**UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

Following discussion at the last CIRCY members’ meeting of the value of CIRCY as a ‘space to think with’, we are planning to trial two of the suggestions from that meeting:

**CIRCY-led Book Group**

Launching within the next couple of months, our book group will meet twice a term for the rest of the current academic year. We hope it will be a relaxed, curious and fun space within which to have open discussion shedding light on the different ways we think/feel about the reading matter. Readings will relate to childhood and/or youth, and be interesting and comprehensible across disciplinary perspectives. They might be academic book chapters or journal articles, but could also be a historical text, material from an archive, or fiction such as a short story or an extract from a novel. At least initially, our aim will not be to require the reading of an entire book in recognition of participants’ busy schedules and time limitations. The person suggesting the reading should be prepared to introduce it at the beginning of the group and say why they thought it might be of relevance and interest for CIRCY. Michelle Lefevre (CIRCY Co-Director, Social Work) will facilitate the group. If you are interested in being involved, and/or have suggestions for texts, please email ciry@sussex.ac.uk. Further information to follow.

‘Ghosts and Dreams’: Possibilities for unsuccessful and imagined bids

We often work on bids that don’t get funded, or carry with us ideas for bids we would like to write but aren’t quite sure how (or don’t have time) to develop. These possibilities can feel like ghosts and dreams that linger in our imaginations. This workshop offers a supportive space for interdisciplinary reflection on bid possibilities. Participants will consider how to bring their ideas to life, and potentially create new collaborations. Pascale Fanning-Tichborne from the Research Development Office will join the workshop to help us think practically about funding sources and strategies for turning ghosts and dreams into concrete opportunities. The workshop will take place on Friday 23 February 2018, 1-3pm in Room 202, Fulton. Reserve your place at ciry@sussex.ac.uk.

Would you like to highlight your work on the CIRCY blog: [https://circyatsussex.wordpress.com]?

Or on our twitter account: @SussexCIRCY?

Do you have any suggestions for seminars or events that you would like CIRCY to host or support? What activities would YOU find useful at our next members’ event? We welcome your ideas.

**Contact us:**

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