



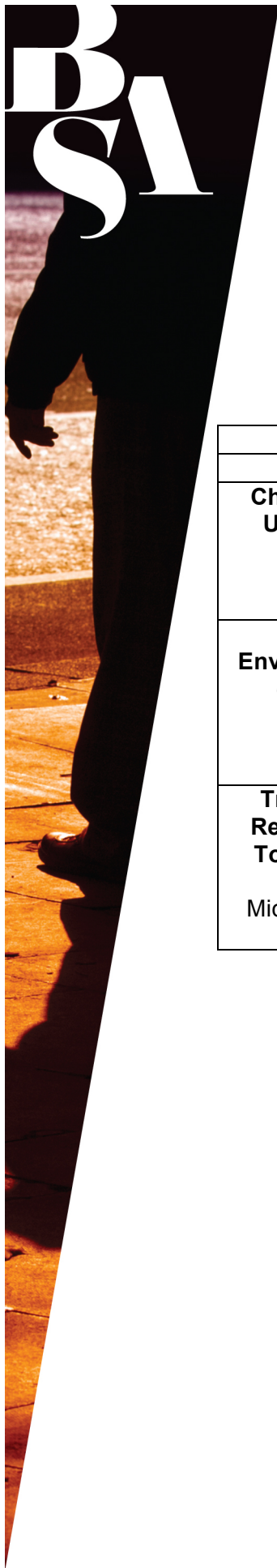
BSA Early Career Forum Regional Event: What Next For Childhood Studies? Pushing Boundaries

Friday, 15 April 2016
University of Edinburgh

Programme:

- 9.30 – 10.00 Coffee and registration
- 10.00 – 10.15 Welcome and introduction
Dr Kristina Konstantoni and Dr Marlies Kustatscher, University of Edinburgh
- 10.15 – 11.15 **Keynote 1:**
Between feminisms and childhoods: resources for critical childhood studies
Professor Erica Burman, University of Manchester
Chair: Professor John Davis, University of Edinburgh
- 11.15 – 11.30 Break
- 11.30 – 12.30 Paper streams – morning session

Stream 1	Stream 2
<i>Chair: Dr Louise Hill</i>	<i>Chair: Dr Emma Davidson</i>
Children’s participation as a ‘lived’ right: ethically important moments in an early childhood setting Cara Blaisdell, University of Edinburgh	Creating methodological choices that are meaningful for children and actively involve them in the data generation process Krystallia Kyritsi, University of Edinburgh
All views matter: Critically exploring the process and outcomes of child-led research in conflict-prone and other complex environments Patricio Cuevas Parra, University of Edinburgh	Retrospective Methods in Childhood Studies Kjersti Grinde, Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB)
Planning for Children: furthering the children’s rights agenda in the Scottish town planning system Jenny Wood, Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Environment and Real Estate Edinburgh	Thinking of preschool children’s play from a space between psychoanalysis and existentialism Zoi Simopoulou, University of Edinburgh



12.30 – 1.30

Lunch

1.30 – 2.30

Paper streams – afternoon session

Stream 3	Stream 4
<i>Chair: Dr Andressa Gadda</i>	<i>Chair: TBC</i>
Childhood as a Technology of Power: Unpacking the Negotiation of Black Childhood in the United States Jacob Breslow, London School of Economics Gender Institute	Pushing boundaries: Critical realism and childhood research Dr Lydia Marshall, University of Warwick
Environmental ethics and health equity: challenging ableism in children's literature Lara Bober, McGill University	Youth mobile trajectories: Thinking beyond 'stay behind' versus 'migrant' youth categories in the study of youths and migration Joan van Geel and Valentina Mazzucato, Maastricht University
Transnational Childhood and Social Reproduction in the Economic Crisis: Towards New Perspectives on Social Field Michael Boampong, University of London (Birkbeck)	Trapped in the dyad? Can we theorise childhood outside of Western Psychology's normative boundaries? Francesca Zanatta, University of East London

2.30 – 3.00

Activity session and coffee break

Chair: Professor Kay Tisdall, University of Edinburgh

3.00 – 4.30

Keynote 2:

Southern Childhoods: Foregrounding Inclusive and Holistic Perspectives

Dr Afua Twum-Danso Imoh, University of Sheffield

Chair: TBC

For more information please email Marlies Kustatscher (Marlies.Kustatscher@ed.ac.uk) and Kristina Konstantoni (Kristina.Konstantoni@ed.ac.uk) using 'BSA Early Career Forum: Pushing Boundaries' in the subject line.

Registration

Registration costs £10 for BSA members and £25 for non-members at:

<http://portal.britisoc.co.uk/public/event/events.aspx>

Keynote speakers – abstracts

Between feminisms and childhoods: resources for critical childhood studies

Erica Burman

University of Manchester
erica.burman@manchester.ac.uk
www.discourseunit.com
www.ericaburman.com

In this paper I explore how and why feminist and childhood studies have historically pushed each others' boundaries and also why and how bridges between them might be built through a range of models and frameworks including intersectionality theory, psychosocial studies, disability studies and posthumanism. These approaches have specific and specifically different interests and perspectives but, together, their convergences and frictions prompt a range of new strategies for engaging with and even using these historically vexed tensions.

Southern Childhoods: Foregrounding Inclusive and Holistic Perspectives

Afua Twum-Danso Imoh

University of Sheffield
a.twum-danso@sheffield.ac.uk
<http://www.cscy.group.shef.ac.uk/>
<http://www.southernchildhoods.org/>

Over the last 30 years or so the multi-disciplinary field of childhood studies, which has focused largely on the concept of childhood as a social construction, children's agency, the foregrounding of children's voices in research, and children's lives as worthy of study in their own right (James and Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1996; Corsaro, 1997; James et al, 1998), has grown exponentially. The resulting outcome has been a proliferation of, predominately, empirical studies which draw on different disciplinary perspectives and focus on various aspects of childhood and children's lives within diverse contexts in both the Global North and the Global South. However, in recent years questions have been raised about a number of the theoretical concepts that have come to underpin childhood studies and are today, often reflected in much of the empirical work produced on children's lives (Holt and Holloway, 2006; Bluebond-Langer and Korbin, 2007; James, 2010; Tisdall and Punch, 2012). While much of this critique has emerged in the context of studies focusing on childhoods in southern contexts, it is worth pointing out that these critiques have also been problematized in relation to childhoods in European and North American contexts. Focusing predominately on two key strands in childhood studies – the social construction of childhood and children's lives as worthy of study in their own right - this presentation will: firstly, explore the utility of these concepts for framing research and exploring children's lives, especially within the diverse contexts that exist in the South; and secondly, put forward some suggested approaches to researching childhood which may enable us to develop a more holistic understanding of how different groups of children experience childhood in their societies.

Presentation streams - list of abstracts

Cara Blaisdell, University of Edinburgh

Children's participation as a 'lived' right: ethically important moments in an early childhood setting

This paper engages with current debates in the study of children's participation, an area of scholarship where childhood studies and children's rights studies overlap. An emerging body of literature conceptualises children's rights as 'lived'—negotiated, ambiguous, and subject to multifaceted interpretation. This idea of children's rights as 'lived' provides a useful platform for the study of children's participation. A 'living rights' perspective can help move the study of children's participation in a relational direction, going beyond technical concerns to focus on a more critical, ethical examination of the way participation is understood and experienced by both children and adults.

In this paper, I discuss findings from my doctoral research, which investigated how children's participation was 'lived' at one early childhood education and care setting in Scotland. At this nursery, practitioners advocated 'listening to children' and being 'child-led' in the nursery's daily activities. This meant that daily life was not controlled by practitioners—rather, children and practitioners negotiated together what the day would bring. However, there were sometimes moments of tension in these negotiations; these moments could be quite difficult for both practitioners and children. This paper draws out some of these 'ethically important moments', noting that a willingness on both sides to tolerate compromise, ambiguity and contention was an integral part of 'living' children's participation in a meaningful, sustainable way. The paper considers how these findings can contribute to an activist agenda that advocates for young children's participation while acknowledging the complexity of participation in practice.

Michael Boampong, University of London (Birkbeck)

Transnational Childhood and Social Reproduction in the Economic Crisis: Towards New Perspectives on Social Field

My multi-sited (i.e. UK and Ghana) ethnographic research focuses on *how migration in the context of economic crisis and restructuring affects social reproduction processes among Ghanaian transnational families*. Migration is a livelihood strategy and remittances are a critical source of household income. Social reproduction theory has been a critical approach towards understanding labour migration's social nature. However, social reproduction theory seems to underestimate the centrality of children compared to women when one considers terms as 'mothering from a distance' (Parreñas 2001). Theorising transnational fields has marked a major shift from viewing migration as one-time movements to a series of movements (imagined/physical mobility) across time and space. Beyond state citizenship the transnational field suggests simultaneous *ways of belonging* and *being* which has implications for political, economic, social and cultural connections between places/countries and

therefore the hybridity of childhood. Nevertheless, the literature on the transnational fields largely focuses on adults than children. Transnational childhoods are simultaneously horizontal and vertical formations due to two responses. First, it may be in response to culturally embedded *ways of being* (e.g. culture of interdependence and reciprocity). Secondly, it may be in reaction to national political and economic processes (e.g. poverty in times of austerity). Therefore, beyond children's vulnerability to economic crisis, my paper will argue that childhoods – for migrant and settled children – should be conceptualised as transnational. Transnational childhood needs to be theorised in relation children's agency and social competence, structural constraints and opportunities, inter/intragenerational relationships and reciprocity, identity construction within different places and (im) mobility patterns.

Lara Bober, McGill University

Environmental ethics and health equity: challenging ableism in children's literature

Children's lives are shaped by a number of policy and advocacy arenas, including the environment, health, and education. This essay draws connections between children's literature, curriculum theory, environmental education, teacher education, schooling, and parenting in analysing representations of illness and (dis)ability in recently published award-winning fiction for children. Classic children's literature is replete with flattened representations of disability invoking notions of sentimentality or sympathy; often depictions of characters with disabilities are included as literary symbolism or to emphasize moral decisions of other characters (Curwood, 2013). Studies of contemporary children's and young adult literature have concluded that, despite many positive shifts in public thinking and in the educational sector, literary representations tend to homogenize, essentialize, and marginalize experiences of disability. Positive social change can be discerned in the introduction of literary awards focusing on representations of disability. This essay will argue that positive representations of child protagonists living with illness and/or (dis)ability serve two concurrent objectives: these stories provide counter-narratives (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000; Curwood, 2013) which emphasize children's capabilities and self-advocacy, while at the same time providing pedagogical tools to educate young readers about ecology through wonder and imagination (Greene, 1995; Lesnik-Oberstein, 1998; Maagerø & Østbye, 2012). Additionally, environmental themes in children's literature provide a counterpoint to constraints imposed by architecture as well as pathological perspectives focusing solely on medical intervention. Compelling depictions of children's interactions with natural environments bring into relief the barriers created by social environments. Children's literature can also provide an enduring contribution to public debates on the social, historical and cultural positioning of disability, leading to new ways of conceptualizing environmental ethics.

Jacob Breslow, London School of Economics Gender Institute

Childhood as a Technology of Power: Unpacking the Negotiation of Black Childhood in the United States

Examining childhood as a highly productive technology of power, this paper builds on my interdisciplinary doctoral research to argue that childhood studies must alter its critical methods in order for it to continue to adequately respond to the realities of “childhood.” Childhood studies, I argue, must further attend to the ways in which childhood—as a conceptual frame for bodies, experiences, ways of life, and forms of relation—is variably deployed across individuals and populations within and beyond the “early years” of life. This deployment extends entangled investments in ageism, racism, normative sexualities, and the gender binary, and requires new conceptual frameworks to understand and interrupt its mechanics. Using a Foucauldian analysis to frame childhood as a technology of power, I argue for an extension of childhood studies’ object of analysis towards the range of techniques which have been deployed in order to produce sets of populations as knowable, and disposable. Rather than argue that specific historical and socioeconomic realities make different people and populations experience childhoods differently, I argue that “childhood” itself is a logic through which inequality, violence, and death is distributed. Offering a piece of my larger activist and academic project, this paper specifically attends to the historical negotiation of black childhood within the United States. It traces this negotiation both as a means of interrupting racism justified through “childhood,” and as an exploration of what a re-framing of childhood as a technology of power might open up more widely for the field.

Patricio Cuevas Parra, University of Edinburgh

All views matter: Critically exploring the process and outcomes of child-led research in conflict-prone and other complex environments

Over the past decade, academics and practitioners have studied the engagement of children and young people in participatory research processes. However, scant attention has been paid in the literature to research led directly by children. In my research project, I am exploring whether child-led research is an effective method of supporting children and young people to participate in decision-making processes. This study uses a case study approach to examine two sites where children and young people claim that they have conducted child-led research. This first case study is a group of Syrian refugee children who led their own research on issues affecting their refugee situation in the host countries of Lebanon and Jordan. The second site is in Bangladesh where members of the Children’s Parliament conducted a child-led research on their situation in the country.

Through this project, I also critically explore issues related to ethics, methodology and gatekeepers’ roles, along with an analysis of how research conducted by children can be translated into practice as part of an emancipatory and activist agenda. The research also reflects critically on theoretical boundaries, tension between process versus outcomes,

homogenization of children versus diversity, and children's findings versus decision-makers' skepticism.

Kjersti Grinde, Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB)

Retrospective Methods in Childhood Studies

This paper seeks to explore research methods in childhood studies in lieu of my PhD research on childhood and transracial adoption in Norway, where emphasis is placed on understanding how adoption impact on childhood experiences. The paper seeks to outline a discussion of the current dominance of methods focussing on children's everyday lives and the active inclusion of children and young people, here and now, arguing that the value of retrospective methods has been largely omitted from childhood studies despite the ability of such methods to provide us with a glimpse into childhood through the viewpoints and active reflections of adults. This paper argues that although providing us with a different lens through which we can understand childhood, retrospective methods provide an important contribution to understanding different childhoods - one that relies on memories and the lived experiences of adults exploring their childhoods in retrospect. The paper seeks to discuss how also retrospective methods deserve to be included in childhood studies as a valuable method for understanding childhood.

Krystallia Kyritsi, University of Edinburgh

Creating methodological choices that are meaningful for children and actively involve them in the data generation process

The aim of this paper is to explore the question: What is needed to push the boundaries of childhood studies in order to make important methodological contributions to this field? The overarching aim of my research is to explore children's and teachers' perspectives on creativity within one primary school classroom in Scotland. In an effort to offer new avenues for encouraging children's active involvement in data generation, I introduced an innovative model for obtaining informed consent: the secret boxes. This model was based on arguments that encourage researchers to consider the plurality and diversities of childhood (James, 2010), as well as the need to implement ethical procedures that respect children's autonomy as research participants (James and James, 2012), and to respect their anonymity (Tisdall et al., 2009). This paper contributes to the dialogue regarding the future of childhood studies by presenting findings concerning the implementation of the 'secret boxes' model. Its contribution further draws on the suggestion that researchers should utilize opportunities found in children's social worlds rather than creating special research opportunities (Davis et al., 2000). Following the aforementioned suggestion, the paper discusses the findings of a) the use of cultural artefacts that were chosen by the children themselves to communicate with me during

the interviews and b) opportunities for the children to critique particular stages of the research process and the research findings.

Dr Lydia Marshall, University of Warwick

Pushing boundaries: Critical realism and childhood research

This paper argues that the ontology of critical realism can help childhood researchers to make critical connections and contributions across disciplinary and spatial boundaries. A critical realist understanding of human agency provides the necessary framework for the 'new and revised theorisations around children and young people's agency and relationships' called for by Tisdall and Punch (2012: 241). It can help researchers to address the current limitations of the 'new' sociology of childhood, which has tended either to present children simply as the site of social construction, or to emphasise children's economic rationality and competence in order for them to be taken seriously as social actors. At the same time, evidence from research with children can further the contribution that critical realist theory adds to broader discussions in sociology about the nature of human agency. Findings from research with children attending primary schools in urban Ethiopia, for example, demonstrate the ways in which generative mechanisms in the spheres of interpersonal relationships, broader social structures and material realities shape human behaviours and understandings, as well as revealing the ways in which vulnerability as well as competency can constitute a reason for human action. Finally, the paper argues that critical realism can help childhood researchers to make critical contributions across spatial boundaries. Again drawing on evidence from research with children in Ethiopia, it demonstrates the ways in which critical realism facilitates understanding of the 'ultimate' or moral concerns that motivate children to act that go beyond 'Western', individualist concerns.

Zoi Simopoulou, University of Edinburgh

Thinking of preschool children's play from a space between psychoanalysis and existentialism

"She takes the pile with the numbers. She begins to sort them. A group of children have stuck their faces on the glass wall by the drawing table. She sees them, she looks at me and laughs. They are observing us. I see the slow muscly movement of their mouths, the wet plasticity of their skins on the glass and I begin to feel that I look into a fish tank. Or, do they look into a fish tank?"

With this research I look to explore pre-school children's relationships with the existential as it is played out in their everydayness. My interest lies more with the subjective meanings and the affective qualities of this relationship, that is, how it is embodied in the child's play, in the form of a word but also an object, an image, a movement or silence, in his or her ordinary doing and his or her very being at the nursery. As well as how the existential reveals itself in the child's everyday relationships with others and how it is precisely through my

relationship with the child that I, as someone who looks for it, can get closer to it. For the purpose of that I do psychoanalytic observations but take a relational turn as it is informed by recent developments in relational psychoanalysis. In doing so, I look to make some space for a view of the existential as it is relationally and reciprocally experienced in the context of the observational relationship and communicated also by means of interpersonal unconscious dynamics.

Joan van Geel and Valentina Mazzucato, Maastricht University

Youth mobile trajectories: Thinking beyond ‘stay behind’ versus ‘migrant’ youth categories in the study of youths and migration

In this paper we deploy a transnational perspective to analyse youth mobility. An increasing amount of young people grows up transnationally, having both Global Southern and Northern societies and educational systems in their biographies. Adult migrants have widely become understood as ‘transnational’ implying continuous double engagements with more than one country simultaneously. Yet, children and youths are conceptualized as either immobile, when they ‘stay behind’ in a country of origin while their parents migrate abroad, or as moving only once when they follow parental migration or decide to migrate independently. Yet between these two extremes is the possibly more common phenomenon of youths with a migrant background who are mobile on a frequent and regular basis between their country of origin and their country of residence. These mobilities take place for a variety of reasons and at different stages in youths’ lives, during which they exercise different degrees of agency over the decision to be mobile. Through the analysis of different types of mobility of young Ghanaians living in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, we propose a typology of their mobile trajectories to describe the types of mobility between Ghana, The Netherlands and sometimes third countries: 1) singular mobility, 2) plural domestic mobility, 3) multiple mobilities, 4) complex multiple mobilities. The notion of mobile trajectories and the analysis leading to a typology shows that current approaches to migrant youths that either categorize them as ‘stay behind’ or ‘migrant’ youths are too simplistic in how they conceptualize youth mobility and that the diversity in youths’ mobilities needs to be taken into account when thinking about how migration affects youths.

Jenny Wood, Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Environment and Real Estate Edinburgh

Planning for Children: furthering the children’s rights agenda in the Scottish town planning system

The UK ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991, signaling their international commitment to uphold and further children’s rights in all aspects of public life. Whilst in some areas of the public sector the links between their practices and the UNCRC have been direct (such as education and child protection), for other sectors the link is less straight forward, and not

well understood by professionals. This paper explores how this disconnect between what the UNCRC commitments entail, and what public practitioners understand, impacts on the extent to which children are provided for and can participate in public life. The main question to be addressed here is 'How can childhood researchers make critical connections and contributions across disciplinary and spatial boundaries?'

Through an exploration of the insights childhood studies can provide in creating child-friendly environments and fostering children's participation in decision-making, the paper assesses how these can be incorporated into the work of town planning professionals. By using interview data from local authority workers, combined with insights from an ethnographic action research project with primary school children, it focuses on the discrepancy between child-focused social policy and planning policy in Scotland. The paper concludes that there is potential for knowledge and understanding from the children's sector to improve planning practice, but without specific policy intervention this is unlikely to occur.

Francesca Zanatta, University of East London

Trapped in the dyad?

Can we theorise childhood outside of Western Psychology's normative boundaries?

For over one hundred years, Western Psychology has been preoccupied with developing an understanding of the dyad par excellence: mother and child. Feminist approaches instigated a process of analysis denouncing the limitations of existing theorisations on the dyad, responsible for the normative ideal of motherhood. As a result, although these theories are still profusely adopted in making of judgments on the quality of mothering, the normative white-middle class mother has been deconstructed and (m)others had the opportunity to be explored in alternative schemas.

The child has however remained in a permanent status of need. A handful of studies have promoted the analysis of psychological theories from a child-centred perspective (Woodhead, 1997), but none have fully challenged the status of children as that of helpless and dependent objects, in receipt of vertical relations.

Would a radical change in the conceptualization of childhood, right based rather than need based, promote the liberation of mothers and children alike from their static status in society?

This paper, based on reflections formulated over a two-year ethnographic study with Caribbean families in London, aims to instigate an analysis of the possibility of a reformulation of theories and policies through a framework granting children the role of protagonists (Parada et al, 2010).

Guided by the core teachings of structural family therapy (Minuchin and Fishman, 1981) and mindful of the conceptualization of *dividuals* (Strathern, 1988), this investigation promotes a dialogue across disciplines and analytical frameworks to reconceptualise children as active members within a system of polythetic and dynamic *family* paradigms.