

Generating alternative discourses of childhood as a resource for educational policy making



The aspiration of this seminar series is to bring together people working in the field of childhood in order to better understand how critical interdisciplinary research and practice might improve the education system's capacity to engage with, and intervene in the lives of young children in the 21st century. The series will also bring together visual, object-based and written texts of childhood in the form of exhibitions, research studies and museum artefacts to generate alternative discourses of childhood as a resource for educational practice and policy making.

Seminar 1

(De)territorialising the field - the focus and impact of government policy, educational research and practice

(Manchester Metropolitan University, Thursday 23rd June 2011)

This first seminar will generate an overview of challenges that permeate the relationship between educational research, policy imperatives and inquiry-led practice in UK contexts. It will offer an opportunity for attendees to grapple with concerns around the polarisation of paradigms and discourses that current circulate within educational policy, practice and research in childhood contexts.

Seminar 2

Entangling the issues - theorising the condition of the child today

(Birkbeck College London, Friday 21st October 2011)

This second seminar will initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue between leading academics and researchers working across the field of childhood. The seminar will examine the origins of the present interest in interdisciplinary and integrated work; the institutional contexts and constraints within which such work is being produced; models of the child being presented in various research studies.

Seminar 3

Historical legacies: interdisciplinary concepts of objects, personhood and identity
(V & A Museum of Childhood, Wednesday 18th January 2012)

This third seminar will focus on addressing the challenges of theorising the historic relationships between the familiar developmental educational discourses and notions of transgression from an interdisciplinary perspective. We will also question 'what are the objects / artefacts of childhood', attending to the interests of historians, anthropologists, and philosophers and opening up ideas about objects that 'carry' the traces of narratives and discourses around children, their lives and communities.

Seminar 4

Interdisciplinary ethical challenges - the 'state' of the society and world in which children are growing up
(University of Sheffield, Thursday 29th March 2012)

This fourth seminar will examine the ethical challenges of attempting to study 'the child' across disciplines such as sociology, art and visual anthropology and the role of childhood research in empowering individuals and societies to make change. We will evoke awkward conversational encounters that consider a series of images of the child alongside UK policy documents that construe the young child in particular and sterile ways. The seminar will conjure a disruptive methodology that engages with the complexities and intricacies of children's worlds, to rupture the familiar devices that frame the child.

Seminar 5

The Other Child: exploring the strangeness of infancy and early years
(Salford University, Wednesday 23rd May 2012)

This fifth seminar will explore what Tobin and Kincheloe refer to as 'difficult knowledge' (2006) about children/childhood. The seminar will interfere with the spurious legibility of the child, 'interrupting the fluency' of our own narratives of childhood. We hope to invite participants that are interested in looking for ways to overcome the inertia of the discourses of early childhood. In order to do this, the seminar will tangle with art history, childhood artefacts / objects, surrealism, visual anthropology, literary theory.

No charge for attendance – limited places.

To request more specific information, please email Barbara Ashcroft on b.ashcroft@mmu.ac.uk

The seminar series is being led by the Centre for Cultural Studies of Children and Childhood, Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University in partnership with University of Sheffield; V&A Museum of Childhood; Birkbeck College; and the University of Salford.

