



## **ESRC Seminar Series on *Play, Creativity and Digital Cultures***

### **Core group members' research interests**

#### **Eve Bearne [Eve.Bearne@care4free.net](mailto:Eve.Bearne@care4free.net)**

For some time I've been keen to see how multimodal texts can be brought more centrally into the literacy curriculum of primary schools. Recent research has been focused on how to describe and give value to children's production of both paper-based and screen-based multimodal texts - narrative and non-narrative. I'm also interested in how children's knowledge of texts, drawn from their popular cultural experience, feeds into their handling of the kinds of texts they are asked to read and create in school. I've been looking at gaming particularly and the structures of games, play and texts.

#### **Helen Bromley [helen.bromley@btinternet.com](mailto:helen.bromley@btinternet.com)**

#### **Professor David Buckingham Institute of Education, University of London [d.buckingham@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:d.buckingham@ioe.ac.uk)**

I am the Director of the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media at the Institute of Education in London ([www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk](http://www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk)). Most of my research is about children and young people's uses of media, including old media such as television and film and new media such as games and the internet. I have also done a great deal of work on media education (or media literacy). Our current projects include a study of people's everyday uses of camcorders, and a project on children making computer games. We are also about to start a new European project about young people's civic participation via the internet. I'm currently working on a book about technology in education; a jointly authored book about children, media and migration, based on a number of previous research projects; and an edited book on young people, digital media and identity, as part of a major new initiative funded by the MacArthur Foundation in the US.

#### **Dr Andrew Burn [a.burn@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:a.burn@ioe.ac.uk)**

**Professor Victoria Carrington** [victoria.carrington@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:victoria.carrington@plymouth.ac.uk)

**Dr Beth Cross** [beth\\_cross@yahoo.com](mailto:beth_cross@yahoo.com)

**Julia Davies** [j.a.davies@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.davies@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Clare Dowdall, University of Plymouth** [clare.dowdall@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:clare.dowdall@plymouth.ac.uk)

I am interested in how preteen children represent and mediate their social identities using digital technologies in a range of online and offline semiotic domains. Play and its relation to social identity construction is therefore a key area that I hope to learn more about through this ESRC seminar series. In particular, I have become interested by children's use of social network sites (friendship sites) to maintain and develop relationships online. However, through spending some time with Clare (my twelve year old neighbour), I have become aware that her online social identities and practices cannot be separated from the everyday social identities that she builds. Leander and Holland (2004) describe how cultural personas are formed and laminated over time and space. For my PhD, I hope to explore how preteen children mediate their social identities in across the line spaces and consider how new technologies may impact on social identity formation in relation to risk-taking and reputation.

**Janet Evans** [janetevans@btinternet.com](mailto:janetevans@btinternet.com)

I am interested in investigating how children and young people *play* with the often thought-provoking words/lyrics from popular culture songs, song lyrics and music videos. Do they relate the real life situations being considered in many song lyrics to the reality of their own lives and if so does a critical understanding of the issues being covered help them to deal with their own personal concerns and anxieties? I want to take a closer look at the use of artistes' and singers' websites, chat rooms, emails, fanzines, music downloads etc.

I am also interested in how young children's interests in moving image (film, TV, DVD) can be used to develop a critical understanding of the underlying meanings in certain, thought provoking visual texts. Individual short films from British Film

Industry (bfi) Education resources and short animated videos from the British Animation Awards (baa) have been viewed and discussed prior to organising a variety of literacy events to enable a fuller understanding of the medium and the message.

**Julia Gillen, Open University** [J.Gillen@open.ac.uk](mailto:J.Gillen@open.ac.uk)

I am interested in the discourse of users of technologies new to them as well as child language and socialization more broadly. One of my main areas of investigation is children's telephone talk: see <http://childphone.open.ac.uk/> for the Childphone project. I am also becoming increasingly interested in the negotiation of relationships online and how usage of digital technologies may affect the English language.

**Lynda Graham** [lynda\\_j\\_graham@hotmail.com](mailto:lynda_j_graham@hotmail.com)

I am interested in the use of digital technologies in classrooms of recently appointed teachers in primary schools. In a world of rapid innovation and change in digital technology, it is likely that those teachers in our schools with the greatest knowledge, understanding and skills in this area are the youngest, most recently appointed teachers. However, this group probably has least influence in curriculum planning in the school and in curriculum development.

In *Young Fluent Readers*, Margaret Clark (1976) helped educators to see ways in which some young children learn to read without formal instruction; this then led educators to think about implications for the teaching of reading in the classroom. In this study I hope to give voice to 'digikid' teachers, those who have chosen to take on a range of digital technologies in their own lives and in their lives as classroom teachers, and to consider implications for the classroom and the school.

**Naomi Hamer** [naomihamer@yahoo.com](mailto:naomihamer@yahoo.com)

**Jacqueline Harding** [j\\_harding2000@yahoo.com](mailto:j_harding2000@yahoo.com)

My work in the early year's arena over the last twenty years, has fostered my interest in media-led play. It began to appear to me that young children 'play' (in a

literacy kind of way) with character-led magazines and related media in much the same way as they 'play' with toys. It could be said that I was witnessing a new kind of playful media experience that children from the pre-digital era would not have experienced – therefore a new kind of play that warranted the closest of examination. My PhD is exploring this area and hence, the work undertaken by the group is of utmost interest to me.

**Andrew Lambirth, Canterbury Christ Church University**

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I'm interested in the tensions that exist between play, popular culture and state institutions like schools. It can be argued that forms of play that transgress the culture and rules of school are not tolerated, consequently definitions of play are restricted to those that can be controlled and which embrace school environments. With the introduction of more tolerant attitudes towards popular and digital cultures in school, I'm interested to examine the conceptualisation of play associated with popular culture in schools and the forms of play that are encouraged and discouraged with its use.

The connection between style and play in popular culture are also very interesting – how adopting a style can allow children to imagine themselves differently. Barthe's (1983) 'a dream of identity' – linked to Vygotsky's (1978) idea that play can make unrealisable desires be gratified are interesting notions – are important here.

I hope to be working with some Year 5 and Year 6, so called, underachievers – using digital literacy practices (video movie making), but also finding opportunities to talk to them in connection with some of the above issues.

**Dr Jackie Marsh, University of Sheffield** [j.a.marsh@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.marsh@sheffield.ac.uk)

I am Reader in Education at the University of Sheffield. I am involved in research relating to the nature and uses of popular culture, media and new technologies in early childhood and their relationship with communications, language and literacy events and practices in both homes and early years settings and schools. My most recent project was 'Digital Beginnings', a national survey of 1,854 parents of children

aged 0-6 in England and over 500 early years practitioners in the early years settings attended by the children (<http://www.digitalbeginnings.shef.ac.uk/>).

**Guy Merchant, Sheffield Hallam University** [g.h.merchant@shu.ac.uk](mailto:g.h.merchant@shu.ac.uk)

I am currently the co-ordinator for the work of the Language and Literacy Research Group at Sheffield Hallam University, and I am also the Research Convenor for UKLA. I have published in the field of digital literacy, and my work ranges from studies of children's engagement with new technology in early years settings through to the use of chatrooms by teenagers. A key feature of my work is the use of onscreen writing and the ways in which playful engagement with new technologies provides a new space for identity performance.

**Elaine Millard** [e.millard@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:e.millard@sheffield.ac.uk)

I am currently about to investigate Blogging in a large secondary school in Brent. I will do a survey to see who does what, reads what, etc. Given that only 5% of adult Netters are Bloggers, the investigation will find out if this is also true in adolescent population. The research will also include interviews with individual Bloggers to see if they share any core interests.

**Kate Pahl** [k.pahl@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.pahl@sheffield.ac.uk)

I am a lecturer in education at the University of Sheffield. My research interests include the relationship between artefacts and narratives in homes, digital cultures, multimodality and creativity in literacy education. I am currently involved in a research project for Creative Partnerships looking at visual methodologies and learning. I am funded by the AHRC's diasporas, identities and migration programme to research artefacts and narratives of migration in homes in the communities of Rotherham and to create an exhibition from these resources. I am the author with Jennifer Rowsell of *Literacy and Education: The New Literacy Studies in the Classroom*, (Paul Chapman) and, also, with Jennifer Rowsell, editor of *Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies: Instances of Practice* (Multilingual Matters).

**Lydia Plowman, Institute of Education, University of Stirling**  
[lydia.plowman@stir.ac.uk](mailto:lydia.plowman@stir.ac.uk)

I have particular interests in children's learning and play with new technologies, and I co-manage two research projects funded by the ESRC, one called 'Interplay: Play, Learning and ICT in Pre-school Education' ([www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/Interplay](http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/Interplay)) and one on 'Entering the e-Society: young children's development of e-literacies' ([www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/Research/e-Society](http://www.ioe.stir.ac.uk/Research/e-Society)). For Interplay, we are particularly interested in how children use ICTs within nurseries' free play ethos and how practitioners may need to adapt their pedagogy. For e-Society, we are interested in young children's uses of technologies at home. I also coordinate a series of ESRC seminars exploring how educational research can inform the design of interactive media in conjunction with NESTA Futurelab.

**Muriel Robinson, Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln**  
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My interest in this area grew out of earlier work looking at the ways in which children make sense of narratives in print and on television which suggested that there are many similar strategies being deployed. More recently, I have worked with Margaret Mackey developing the idea of an asset model of literacy, namely a model which starts from the experiences, knowledge and skills that children have to draw on in any one situation rather than the more common deficit model which views popular culture as a negative influence on schooled literacy. At present I am particularly interested in the ways in which the next generation of primary teachers in England is being prepared and the extent to which they can be seen as Prensky's 'digital natives' (2001). Early work suggests that the students make a clear separation between the technologies of play and pleasure they use in their personal lives and the more functional uses of technologies they find in classrooms.

**Julian Sefton-Green, [seftongreen@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:seftongreen@blueyonder.co.uk)**

I am an independent consultant and researcher working in Education and the Cultural and Creative Industries. I am currently an Associate Research Professor at the University of South Australia, where I am developing a city-wide initiative to

develop new kinds of spaces for learning. I worked at WAC Performing Arts and Media College - a centre for informal training and education - where I directed a range of digital media activities for young people and co-ordinated training for media artists and teachers. Prior to that I worked as Media Studies teacher in an inner city comprehensive and in higher education teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses, leading teacher training degree in media education. I have researched and written widely on many aspects of media education, new technologies and informal learning. My current research interests are: exploring the non-formal learning sector; evaluating the impact of national creativity programmes. I am also working on projects exploring entry into the creative and cultural industries by traditionally excluded social groups.

**Rebekah Willett, Institute of Education, University of London**

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My research interests include gender, digital technologies, literacy and learning. Previous research projects have included 'Shared Spaces: Informal Learning and Digital Cultures'; 'Educaunet' - a European programme to develop critical awareness of Internet risks through media education; and 'Girls, Digital Technology and Popular Culture', an examination of the knowledge of digital technology that Canadian and British pre-teen and teenage girls are acquiring through computer play on and off the Internet. I am currently working on an AHRC research project called 'Camcorder Cultures: Media Technologies and Everyday Creativities'. I am a member of the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media (<http://www.childrenyouthandmediacentre.co.uk/>) which is based at the London Knowledge Lab.