

Digitisation and securitisation of upbringing: interdisciplinary interventions

23rd to 24th March 2020

Liverpool Hope University Conference Centre, Hope Park, Liverpool

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- Babs Anderson (Liverpool Hope)
- Kip Kline (Lewis University, Chicago)
- Michel Vandebroek (Ghent University, Belgium)
- Ben Williamson (University of Edinburgh)

This event is free, but registration is required at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/86108066545

Further information on the location of the conference, travel, and accommodation options is available at <https://schoolofeducationathope.wordpress.com/events/digitisation-and-securitisation-of-upbringing-interdisciplinary-interventions/>

OUTLINE

We are warned of an emerging 'crisis of childhood'.¹ Policy responses to this have given rise to discourses and practices of risk management and early intervention in early childhood education and parenting, to ensure that optimal learning potential is reached and to safeguard against future harms.

This conference will bring together specialists in early childhood, digital sociology, and educational philosophy to explore the ethical, political, and pedagogical implications of these emerging and powerful trends.

The way that individualisation, digitisation, and securitisation are recasting how we think about parents, teachers, and children raises pressing questions:

- To what extent is children's freedom of movement delimited by these developments?
- To what extent is parents' political agency in relation to the next generation reconstituted by digitisation and securitisation?
- To what extent is teachers' professional judgment framed by these concerns rather than pedagogical ones?
- To what extent does the focus on an individualised form of citizenship compromise our ability to tolerate plurality?

This conference offers an opportunity to frame the way these questions are pursued, to hear specialist analysis that offers new insights in to these concerns, and meet fellow parents and early childhood educators grappling with these issues.

Any questions? Please email upbringingconference@gmail.com

¹ www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/press-releases/2019/july/childhood-in-crisis/



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ABSTRACTS

Parents as their child's first educator?: A changing landscape in practice

Babs Anderson

In this paper, I examine the implementation of 'British values' in early years settings in England, as required by the Prevent Duty (Her Majesty's Government, 2015). I seek to unravel the implications for the relational discourse between parents and early years settings, which provide for the education and care of children from birth to five years of age, by locating the discussion in an intersectionality (Bilge, 2017) of parenting, nationality and professional relationships. The early years leaders expose a sense of disquiet in their dual position: first, as instruments of counter terrorism and agents of securitisation subject to scrutiny by the regulatory body, OFSTED; and second, as practitioners with the espoused values of the EYFS of welcoming parents from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds as their child's first and most enduring educator. The nationalistic framing of 'British' values is contested by both practitioners and parents, viewing this as a barrier to professional relationships.

Ecstatic Parenting: The 'Shareveillant' Subject and the Overproduction of the Self in the Digital Age

Kip Kline

Clare Birchall describes 'shareveillance' as "a state in which we are always already sharing" (Birchall, 2017, 2). Both the compulsion to share and the veillance (that is, the *watching*) of that sharing are hallmarks of social media outlets and, I argue, the breeding ground for the 'shareveillant subject'. This subject is doomed to overproduce itself because it is compelled to contribute to the 'equal access to all possible human experiences.' This demands both constant curation and production of self ('sharing') and keeping track of other possible human experiences by watching what others share ('veillance'). Here I argue that parents are a specific category of shareveillant subject. Shareveillant parents overproduce their own selves and the selves of their children in a scientized pursuit of perfection. This overproduction of the self in parent and child might, in Jean Baudrillard's terms, be called the 'ecstatic' form of raising children. Things no longer derive meaning from their opposites but rather elude the dialectic and potentialize themselves into extremes, and into obscenity. No longer being relative to their opposites, these ecstatic forms are thus 'caught in an intensifying spiral – more true than true, more beautiful than beautiful, more real than the real – [and are] assured a vertiginous effect that is independent of all content or specific quality ...' (Baudrillard, 1990). This seems to be where the notion of 'parenting' is going: an ecstatic, perfected form of raising children through the compulsion to regularly, as a matter of habit, share oneself and one's children and watch other parents and their children.

Measuring the Young Child: Counting what counts?

Michel Vandebroek

The datafication of childhood has reached the youngest children. The newest initiative in this vein, the International Early Learning and Child Wellbeing Study (IELS) of the OECD, is but one example of how the child is measured before school age. We take this as an example through which to analyse what is measured (and what not), how measuring is conceived of, and – interestingly – how the debate on what counts is held behind closed doors, creating a democratic deficit. We take the dust off the work of Paulo Freire to find some inspiration for alternative stories about education in general and early childhood education in particular.

Bio-data futures: behavioural genetics, genoconomics, and bioinformatics in upbringing and education

Ben Williamson

Significant scientific advances in genetic sequencing and analysis have been made possible in recent years by technical developments in bioinformatics. The increasing computational capacity of bioinformatics technologies, twinned with the storage of digitized DNA records in 'big data' biobanks has opened up the human genome to a diverse array of analyses. A recent surge of educational genetics studies based on big data samples of up to a million has begun to raise challenging new findings about the links between genes, heritability, and educational outcomes. Bioinformatic techniques such as 'genome-wide association' and 'polygenic scoring' are producing new kinds of genetic bio-data that are in turn becoming expert sources of knowledge for rethinking the upbringing and educating of children. This presentation takes as an empirical opening a recent 'controversy' over the use of bio-data to make genetic predictions about educational and life outcomes, and specifically explores the implications of data-intensive bioinformatics in shaping conceptions of upbringing and educating of children.



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