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# Children's Family Troubles? Changes and Challenges Through Diverse Lenses

Friday, 21 June 2013, 11:00 - 17:30

London South Bank University, Keyworth Centre, Room 806, 8th Floor, Keyworth Street, London SE1 6NG

Maps and Directions <http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about/maps.shtml>

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A Families, Relationships and Communities research programme symposium.

**This symposium** will consider children's family lives and 'troubles' through diverse lenses, across varied disciplines, cultural contexts, and practice settings, addressing such themes as:

- Changes, challenges and troubles as pervasive features of children's family lives
- Expectations of childhood and of parents and their material underpinnings
- Cultural resources in the framing of troubles, and potential responses
- Consideration of these issues in relation to the potential for 'harm' and in practice settings.

These contentious and difficult issues pose questions and dilemmas for policy makers, practitioners and service users, researchers and academics, as well as family studies scholars more generally who are interested in issues of family change.

## Programme

**Morning session:** Chair: Dr Carol-Ann Hooper, Department of Social Policy & Social Work, University of York

11:00 Welcome and introduction

11:15-12:00 Professor David Morgan (Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Morgan Centre, University of Manchester), ***Family troubles, troubling families and family practices***

My main aims are to explore what might be involved in the bracketing of the terms 'families' and 'troubles' and to see to what extent the 'family practices' approach might illuminate these connections. In the course of this discussion I also elaborate a difference between 'troubled families' and 'troubling families'. I shall illustrate some of these themes through a fictional family, the one represented in Terence Rattigan's play, *The Winslow Boy*.

12:00-12:45 Professor Jo Boyden (Director of Young Lives, University of Oxford),  
***Changing expectations of children and childhood in four developing countries: challenges for intergenerational relations***

This paper discusses findings from Young Lives, a longitudinal, mixed-methods, study of child poverty that has been following the lives of 12,000 boys and girls in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam since 2001. The four countries represent a diversity of political, cultural and socio-economic contexts within which to explore changes in children's experiences and outcomes and in the institution of childhood more broadly. With three of the countries having now graduated into middle-income status and the fourth, Ethiopia, experiencing unprecedented levels of economic growth, Young Lives children face quite different prospects — and challenges — than previous generations.

Specifically, the remarkable expansion of formal education and of child rights discourse has transformed popular perceptions concerning what is good for children and what is bad, as well as children's use of time and space and their aspirations for the future. In the process, a growing tension has arisen between children's individual rights and their collective familial responsibilities, associated with new social risks and new challenges in inter-generational relations.

12:45-13:00 Questions and discussion

13:00-14:00 Lunch

***Afternoon session: Chair: Professor Val Gillies, Social & Policy Studies, London South Bank University***

14:00-14:45 Dr Jonathan Dickens and Dr Georgia Philip (School of Social Work, University of East Anglia), ***Challenging meetings and talking about troubles: families and professionals in statutory meetings about children***

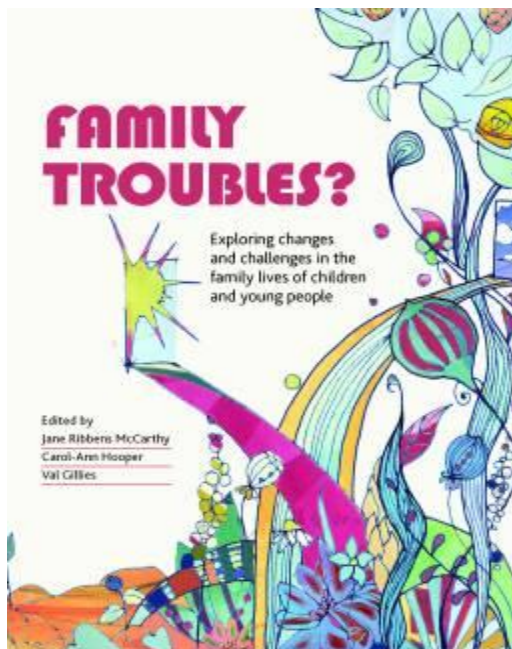
Meetings between professionals, parents and children are key settings where family troubles are discussed and defined in practice, and agreements or plans made to address them. Such meetings are often loaded with heavy expectations and both implicit and explicit moral ideas about professional roles, parental responsibilities and children's welfare. There may also be extensive procedural requirements about how they should be conducted. In practice, one of the core requirements is to build and maintain effective relationships in challenging circumstances. In this session, Dr Jonathan Dickens and Dr Georgia Philip will compare and contrast the ways that these roles, responsibilities and tasks are conceived and exercised, in two types of meeting: one, the 'pre-proceedings meeting' for families where children are on the edge of care, and the other the 'looked after children review', for children in local authority care. Issues to be considered include: how are challenges made (either to birth or corporate parents), and what kinds of ethical frameworks, professional rhetoric, and relational strategies can be seen in play, in these settings?

14:45-15:30 Professor Ann Phoenix (Co-Director of the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London) ***Situating children's family troubles: Resources, relationality and social context***

Since children's lives are so much lived in their families, many of their troubles are played out in family contexts, even if not directly produced in families and, as with many troubles, some are persistent, while others lose importance relatively quickly. All are, however, socially situated and contingent on family relational practices, the resources children and other family members have available and the societal context. This talk draws on participants' accounts from a variety of research projects to consider how family troubles are constructed by children themselves and by adults looking back on childhoods. It argues that some things that might seem manageable to some children are family troubles to others because of the relational and societal contexts and the resources available.

15:30-16:00 Questions and discussion

**16:00** **Book launch:** This symposium follows on from a two day Colloquium held in 2010; a launch of the edited collection from this earlier event, and wine reception will take place following on from the symposium.  
<http://www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781447304432&sf1=keyword&st1=Jane+Ribbens+McCarthy&m=1&dc=3>



Convenor: Dr Jane McCarthy, The Open University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Social Policy & Criminology  
Co-Convenors: Prof Val Gillies, London South Bank University, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, Dr Carol-Ann Hooper, University of York, Social Policy and Social Work