

All Young Stories: Access and inclusion in children's research and art

An interdisciplinary symposium on the 26th of June at Keele University

Call for Contributions

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef) not only asserts the right of children to have an 'active voice' to express their views, feelings and wishes, but also that such expressions should be considered and taken seriously. Art and collaborative research can offer a foundation upon which this right can be asserted, practiced and promoted. This may involve giving children an active role in exploring issues relevant to their lives, gathering young perspectives and offering stories that reflect their experiences. However, children who may have alternative ways of communicating, processing sensory input and responding to social situations may be excluded from these activities and opportunities as they do not meet their specific needs. A child's story or individual experience may be overlooked or excluded as it differs from the status quo. Moreover, research highlights that when 'neurodiverse' children are represented on stage and screen, the portrayal often sticks to the medical model of disability with a focus on stereotypical symptoms and 'traits' (see Nordahl-Hansen et al 2017).

This raises the question: Are all young stories being heard and taken seriously as well as being represented in literature and performance?

This interdisciplinary symposium seeks to explore research and art for – and with – children who have learning disabilities, learning difficulties and/or other educational needs. The event will conclude a three year long project supported by the Leverhulme foundation which invited children and young people attending special schools (as well as their teaching staff and parents) to do art research together (www.artresearchtogether.uk). The symposium aims to continue and develop the project's exploration of collaborative research and inclusion within the arts, with a specific emphasis on children and young people, and to encourage a wide range of interested parties and stakeholders to take part.



The day will incorporate input from children and young people representing their views and wishes for future research and artistic opportunities. Keynotes will be given by Ellie Griffiths (Artistic Director Oily Cart) and Professor Nicola Shaughnessy (School of Arts, University of Kent). Dr Ben Fletcher-Watson (Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh) will present on "The Future of Relaxed Performance" and there will be panel discussions involving teachers, parents and practitioners, focusing on story sharing and the need for future research developments. Finally stand up poet and researcher Dr Kate Fox will develop a poem based on the activities and discussions on the day.

The symposium would like to invite short proposals (250 words) for 5 to 20 minute long presentations in a variety of forms (papers, posters, provocations, examples of practice, film, music). Contributions may engage with but not be limited to a range of topics and interdisciplinary subjects such as:

- Storytelling for children with learning disabilities/difficulties
- Inclusive research, neurodiversity and collaborative research methodologies
- Accessibility within the Arts

- Disabled Children's Childhood Studies
- Theatre, literature, puppetry, music and visual arts for diverse young audiences
- Stereotypical representations and tokenism on stage and screen
- Disability, children's rights and advocacy
- Research and/or the arts in special education
- Relaxed performances and relaxed venues
- Decolonisation in research and art for/with children with disabilities
- Inclusive research outcomes – their impact and policy relevance
- Disabled young people and employment opportunities in the creative industries

Please send abstracts, notification of attendance and general queries to Dr Karian Schuitema: k.schuitema@keele.ac.uk. The deadline for proposals will be 15th April 2019.

If you would like to participate as a panel member, please get in touch before the deadline.

Ways of disseminating the contributions, discussions and themes of the symposium (for example, in the form of a special issue or edited volume) will be considered.

The event will be at Keele University and free for all participants. As an inclusive event we are aiming to make sure the day is accessible for everyone. There will be a separate space available during the day and we encourage participants to get in touch about any other ways they may be supported to take part.

For more information and to download this call for papers, please visit:

<http://artresearchtogether.uk/news-events/>

Nordahl-Hansen, A. Tøndevold, M. Fletcher-Watson, S. 2017. 'Mental health on screen: A DSM-5 dissection of portrayals of autism spectrum disorders in film and TV'. *Psychology Research*. Vol 262: 351-353. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2017.08.050>

Unicef, 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child' Available at: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Participation.pdf>