

## The Challenge of Children's Representations Seminar Series

This seminar series seeks to explore the politics of children's rights and representations. It focuses on the interplay between the claims of different actors in the field of the representations of children and their rights, including children themselves, and the basis upon which these claims are made. The seminars are based on the work of a group of academics who have been working together for the last two years to explore children's representations in relation to the research they have been conducting in various contexts including: Ghana, India, Sweden, Belgium and within the international human rights community.

2019 marked 30 years since the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The adoption of this treaty signified a culmination of over 100 years of discourse on international children's rights which had predominately been led by Western European and North American governments, charitable organisations and middle-class philanthropists seeking to improve the conditions and welfare of children, initially in their own contexts and later, further afield. As a new treaty of the United Nations, the Convention was perceived as representing a key achievement in the history of the organisation and marked a turning point in how children were perceived in international law by elevating children from 'objects of adult charity' to independent rights holders. The Convention achieved this by not only including protection and provision rights within its contents, but also ensuring that the participation rights of children were provided for. This is significant because hitherto, international children's rights discourses and programmes were characterised by the silencing of children's voices, even in their efforts to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of this group. Hence, with the recognition of the right to participation, a whole new domain emerged in the field of childhood practice, policy and scholarship which, in turn, addressed novel concerns such as children's agency, the age at which children are seen as being able to effectively participate, the intersections between race, class and gender in children's experiences of participatory rights, children's responsibility and practices of children's active involvement in decision-making processes. The persistence of these debates in academic, professional and policy sectors today highlights the extent to which children's representation is critical to a fuller understanding of not only children's rights, but also of inequality as well as the delivery of social justice for this group.

The project is led by Dr. Afua Twum-Danso Imoh who is based at the University of Bristol (UK). The co-investigators of the project are as follows: Professor Yaw Ofori-Kusi, University of Energy and Natural Resources (Ghana); Professor Bengt Sandin, Linköping University (Sweden); Dr. Jonathan Josefsson, Linköping University (Sweden); Dr. Sarada Balagopalan, Rutgers University (USA); Professor Karl Hanson, University of Geneva (Switzerland); Dr. Didier Reynaert, University College Ghent (Belgium). Papers presented will be based on the work of this group.

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