

ESREA – European Society for Research on the Education of Adults, Life History and Biographic Research Network

The Annual Conference is to be held in the beautiful city of Canterbury, England at Canterbury Christ Church University, England from Thursday 28th February to Sunday 3rd March 2013

Researching Learning Lives: on discipline, inter-disciplinarity and imaginative imperatives in auto/biographical and narrative research

First announcement and call for papers/proposals/round tables etc.

There may be a paradox at the heart of researching learning lives, in all their complexity: the need, on the one hand, to absorb ourselves in particular disciplines, and to be disciplined in our work. This includes drawing on rich traditions, whether sociological, psychological, narrative or literary etc. However, on the other hand, we may be aware of the limitations of strict disciplinary boundaries, and how lives often defy some of our attempts at categorising or understanding them. And if we need discipline in our methods, we need to be aware of the danger of how this can 'discipline' the other, and impose regimes of truth on subjects, subjectivities and intersubjective processes.

There are also echoes in our conference theme of C. Wright Mills and the normative, imaginative, interdisciplinary imperative, which he saw to lie at the heart of biographical enquiry: of the need to connect history, structuring and agentic processes, in biographical work, in thinking about the constraints to, and possibilities for, human flourishing. Others, perhaps inspired by feminism, stress connectedness and relationship as being essential to the imaginative processes of chronicling and interpreting learning lives. They may also draw on critical feminist theoretical perspectives in challenging whose and what knowledge counts; and/or on Foucault in terms of how subjects, including researchers, have been disciplined to think and practice in constrained and constraining ways.

In our conference, we want to create spaces for dialogue: between those emphasising, for example, the social and those focusing more on the psychological/psychoanalytic in their research, as well as between colleagues who may, for instance, draw on literature, including fiction, for their inspiration, rather than 'social science'. There will be a series of keynotes from internationally renowned colleagues, dialogues/round tables, alongside individual papers and symposia, focusing on our theme of discipline, its importance and discontents in researching learning lives.

The ESREA Life History and Biography Network

The network has been active and influential over many years. It consists of diverse researchers, new and experienced, drawing on differing disciplinary backgrounds. It includes researchers and doctoral students from every part of Europe, north, south, east and west, and beyond. The Network first met in Geneva in 1994 and has provided the basis for diverse and influential publications, as well as for major collaborative research projects (including the recent, major RANLHE Europe-wide study of non-traditional students in universities); and for many other forms of collaboration, such as an Erasmus doctoral programme for research students on methodology.

Auto/biography and Narrative Research Theme Group at Canterbury Christ Church

Canterbury Christ Church University is also home to an extensive body of research in the broad field of auto/ biographical narrative studies and life history. There is a thematic group that brings together academics from different disciplines, with particular strengths in education, health and social care studies. The thematic group has provided a base for major funded research, and there is extensive work on narrative and careers counselling, on researching professional lives as well as those of students, as well as on life writing, life stories and community development. The group contains a substantial cluster of doctoral students, who draw on this family of methods to chronicle and theorise change and transitional as well as transformational processes in many contexts.

Guidelines for submission of paper abstracts/symposia

Paper abstracts should be sent as an attached file [either in *.doc, *.docx, or *.pdf format]. All abstracts should be typed on one side of A4, and must not exceed 500 words [single spaced]. They must include a title and 3 keywords, the author/s name/s, affiliation or institution.

- The conference languages are English and French.
- All abstracts for papers or other suggested presentations must be submitted by Monday 12th November 2011 to gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk
- All paper proposals will be blind reviewed by a scientific committee.
- Acceptance will be confirmed by Monday 3rd December 2012.
- Final versions of papers (no more than 5000 words including references) must be submitted by Monday 4th February 2013.
- Presentations must not exceed 20 minutes in time length. There will be at least 10 minutes time for discussion of each paper.

ESREA will be offering 3 bursaries (300 Euro each) for doctoral students.

Further information about the conference will be available in October, including details of the Conference website.

For questions and expressions of interest in the meantime, please contact, the Conference administrator: gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk

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