

# Welcome



Childhood Remixed, University Campus Suffolk's (UCS) peer reviewed online journal, is in its fourth year and I am very pleased to introduce the 2015 edition. This edition emphasises the value that our editors place on a multidisciplinary lens as the framework for exploring contemporary debates and discussions relating to children and childhood. In this edition, articles explore concepts of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' examining contemporary challenges to children and childhoods but importantly, also reflecting on the continued need for mechanisms of change. This innovative online journal presents a range of topics using a variety of forms to present robust academic debate including essay formats, short stories, scripts and podcasts. Contributions are drawn from established academics as well as past and current undergraduate and postgraduate students from a range of academic disciplines.

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This collection of articles will be of interest to a wide range of academics, practitioners and students and each provide a unique theoretical perspective on 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. In their article, Keith McAllister and Sean Sloan explore notions of an inclusive built environment and challenges factors associated with choice and assurance for the child with ASD. In his essay, Johnathan Dotchin presents an historic evaluation of education policy and provides a vigorous exploration of equality against recent policy initiatives. This exploration is very timely recognising the potential for further new policies in this an election year. Contributions by Barlie Allsop and Selena Timmins Chapman will I am sure stimulate hearty debate about children and their relationships. Both these contributions are presented using innovative formats—one in the form of a short story and the second as a drama script. Both offer insights into childhood and offer the reader the opportunity to analyse both adversity and resilience as significant features of childhood. Becky Blunk offers a thought-provoking professional reflection on the concept 'inclusion'. Using a podcast presentation, Becky enables the listener to engage in an analysis, and discussion of key ideas and perceptions and to tussle with issues pertinent to education and development in the twenty-first century.

Finally I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all our contributors for contributing to this multidisciplinary forum and to our editors for their unfailing commitment to the journal and its continued success. To our readers, I hope you find this edition of interest to you.

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**Keith McAllister**

Keith McAllister is a RIBA Chartered Architect, Stage 03 Co-ordinator and Lecturer in Architecture at Queen's University Belfast. His current research projects include Architecture and Autism, alongside optimising Learning Environments for those with Special Needs with an ongoing emphasis on highlighting the need and benefits of a more inclusive built environment. He has practiced architecture in Russia, Italy and the UK and is the extremely proud father of an autistic son.

**Sean Sloan**

Sean Sloan is currently a final year postgraduate student undertaking his RIBA Part 2 Masters of Architecture course at Queen's University Belfast. Having worked on a number of Special School projects for a leading Belfast architectural practice, Sean has developed an acute interest in how materiality, environmental comfort, way-finding and the manipulation of building fabric can instil a safe and memorable environment that will encourage all users to take ownership of their own personal physical and psychological space.

## Navigating and exploring the ASD-friendly landscape

**Abstract**

As a society we have a responsibility to provide an inclusive built environment. For those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) however, the world can be a frightening, difficult and confusing place. The challenge of integrating more fully into society can be distanced by an alienating built environment. This is particularly debilitating for younger children who can find themselves detached from learning and interaction with their peers by uncomfortable surroundings.

Subsequently there has been a growing interest in promoting ASD-friendly environments, especially in a school setting. Strategies to date have generally followed a widely accepted reductionist or generalist approach. However, the authors now contend that there needs to be a greater discussion of what truly constitutes an ASD-friendly environment, in conjunction with investigating what strategies best articulate a progressive

approach to supporting those, and especially the young, with ASD in our built environment.

Hence this paper first introduces some of the challenges faced by those with ASD in trying to cope with their surroundings. It then outlines a triad of challenges to overcome when considering what truly constitutes an ASD-friendly environment. The authors then highlight the need and advantage of supporting change and adaptation in our shared inhabited landscape through providing both choice and reassurance for the child with ASD.

It is hoped that by increasing awareness and then questioning what genuinely constitutes an ASD-friendly environment, it might ultimately help facilitate greater inclusion of the ASD child into mainstream education and society at large.

### **Keywords**

Architecture; Autism Spectrum Disorder; Children; Design; Inclusion

### **Introduction**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a term that covers the many sub groups within the spectrum of autism. Autism can be termed as a lifelong complex developmental disorder, the range of which is such, that while some with ASD may be able to live relatively independently, others will require lifelong continuous support. ASD is characterised by a triad of qualitative impairments in social communication, social interaction and social imagination. (Wing & Gould, 1979) Additionally, those with ASD often struggle with sensory sensitivity to visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive, gustatory and olfactory stimuli. (Hinder 2004).



*Figure 1*

Being sensory sensitive and unable to fully integrate and communicate with others means that those with ASD can find the world a disorientating and even frightening place. (Grandin, 1995; Grandin & Parkin, 2014; Harker & King, 2002) For the young child this is especially damaging. Any unwanted distraction can impact badly upon that child's ability to learn. The background and surrounding environment that most of us are able to ignore or cope with, can instead act as a barrier between the child and others, further hampering that child's development. [Fig 1]

For designers and other professionals, this is indeed a stark reality. We all have been entrusted with the duty, responsibility and privilege to provide an inclusive environment that will promote wellbeing and enrich life for all. By contrast, the disorientation and fear experienced by those with ASD is very far removed from this ideal and greatly distances them from the possibility of ever feeling genuinely at ease in their surroundings. To add to this concern is the fact that the incidence of young school presenting with ASD is on the increase. The UK National Autistic Society has put the current incidence of ASD at around 1% of the population while some studies suggest even higher rates of incidence. (Baird et al, 2006; National Autistic Society, n.d.)

Consequently there has been a growing interest in the relationship between ASD and the built environment. (Humphreys, 2005; Whitehurst, 2006; Scott, 2009; McAllister, 2010). This concern has led to the realisation that there are merits in promoting an ASD-friendly environment where a child with ASD will feel more comfortable and at ease. The focus of this concept has to date understandably been the school setting, as that provides an important learning environment in the development of all children and one that can be made ASD-friendly with the support of knowledgeable and committed teaching staff.

However, the authors contend that there still needs to be a greater discussion of what truly constitutes an ASD-friendly environment alongside investigating what strategies best articulate a progressive approach to supporting those with ASD in our built environment. Without this critique there is always the risk that what is being considered as an ASD-friendly model may not in fact be the best strategy to employ if wanting to support the development of young children with ASD.

### **The ASD-Friendly Environment?**

Currently there are two main viewpoints as to what might constitute an ASD-friendly environment. Firstly, for those with sensory sensitivity difficulties, many of whom have trouble coping with visual or auditory distraction a '*reductionist*' strategy can be employed where the environment is purposely visually and aurally quiet, with minimal distraction. With regard to the school environment, the writer Donna Williams, who has ASD, outlined her ideal classroom as;

It would be an environment where only what was necessary to learning was on display and there were no unnecessary decorations or potential distractions. It would be one where nobody unexpected would enter without everyone getting a cue and processing time to expect the change. (Williams, 1996, p.284)

This description helps illustrate the many concerns the writer had when at school. She makes the case for constancy, structure, with neither the unexpected nor superfluous. In many ways, Donna Williams is advocating a potential solution for classroom and interior design for the ASD pupil. If designing for the '*worst case scenario*' then all children would be catered for on the autistic spectrum. Recognising this as a conceivable solution, as designers we need to ask ourselves, why not then always have learning environments that are totally calm, quiet, without distraction and enclosed from external influences? Would that not constitute an inclusive design solution?

However if we consider inclusive design as ***better design*** this is not necessarily the case. The classroom and the wider school are learning environments for life, places of preparation for the challenges and negotiations we all face in our everyday life. Constantly cocooning the ASD pupil from all external factors may not then necessarily help them reach their full potential in life. Therefore, having a completely 'reductionist' environment may not be the best solution for young children with ASD.

Subsequently there are now an increasing number of design guidelines that offer advice on what is needed in an ASD-friendly environment. This second more '***generalist***' approach however runs the risk of losing its prescriptive value when dealing with children who first and foremost are individuals. The advice provided in the 2009 UK Government published Building Bulletin 102 (BB102) '*Designing for Disabled Children and Children with Special Educational Needs*', illustrates this fact when listing the design issues for children with ASD as;

Simple layout: calm, ordered, low stimulus spaces, no confusing large spaces; indirect lighting, no glare, subdued colours; good acoustics, avoiding sudden / background noise; robust materials, tamper-proof elements and concealed services; possibly H&S risk assessments; safe indoor and outdoor places for withdrawal and to calm down. (DfEE, 2009, p.199)

The widespread exclusion from, or when included, the general nature of the design considerations listed in the current guidelines is in no doubt due to the difficulties and challenges presented when dealing with a spectrum of disorders. (Khare, 2010; Mostafa, 2008; Young, 2004). Not only may those with ASD exhibit different sensitivities and personal difficulties, the



severity of these too can vary. In effect, the design parameters are fluid and variable. There is of course the danger when dealing with autism, as with any disability, that overly prescriptive design guidelines will not take into account variations between individuals and their different levels of ability. Moreover, individuals may present with more than one disorder. Therefore, the challenge is both complex and difficult. But the need to confront these difficulties is huge. At stake is the wellbeing and inclusion for young children with ASD who like all of their peers, deserve to be able to maximise their potential in our society.

Hence there is merit in considering and reflecting upon what really does constitute an ASD-friendly environment. This is arguably especially important when recognising that promoting what might constitute an ASD-friendly environment for young children has a major limitation as an operating strategy because, simply put, the world in which we live in and are preparing our children to cope with is itself, frequently *ASD-non-friendly*. Central to everyday life in the 'sensorium' that constitutes our built environment, is learning to cope with the sudden and surprising. However this is often difficult for the person with ASD, who preferring structure and routine, does not want to be confronted with the unexpected and the incidental. [Fig 2] But remembering that maximising a child's ability to cope with change and external factors is an important and vital consideration if preparing a child for the challenges of later life, there is a need for teachers and professionals to encourage children to try and engage with the variety of environments that make up school and our cities.



Figure 2

The authors contend that both the 'reductionist' and 'generalist' ASD strategies, whilst extremely well intentioned, tend to shy away from this important fact and by doing so, potentially reduce the benefits of what an ASD-friendly environment actually is and what it can be. If going to be successful, an ASD-friendly environment must be one where the child with ASD is introduced to different spatial conditions and sensory experiences, beyond that of both the reductionist and generalist strategies, in order to better cope with the challenges they will face in later life.

In effect, just as those with ASD have a triad of impairments to contend with, so too do we as professionals, then have a **triad of challenges** to overcome. Not only are there the challenges firstly of the differing severity of the autism inherent within the spectrum and secondly, the varying and differing range of sensory difficulties of an individual with ASD to contend with, there is the third difficulty in our built environment to consider—how best to promote and bring change and subsequent independence for the ASD child in that environment. Successfully tackling this triad of challenges would hopefully then allow, the design of the best possible and most appropriate built environment that will aid in a child's education and development. With increased performance and a better ability to cope with the challenges of their environment, the ASD child is more likely to manage to integrate more fully into mainstream education and society in general. Gibson (1979, p.127) emphasises the transaction that occurs between children and place by stressing the fact that it is a reciprocal relationship. It is one therefore that can have a profound effect on a child's wellbeing and future prospects of integrating into a world that is inherently full of change and surprise. A necessary skill in doing so is to be able to negotiate and cope with different environments and events in our buildings and cities.

### **An Alternative Paradigm?**

If the concept of the ASD-friendly environment is to be best realised, the authors posit the question, 'might promotion of adaption and resilience' offer an alternative paradigm for young children with ASD rather than something that is fixed or reduced to a checklist? Central to this tenet is the belief that if successful, such a strategy would need to include participatory change by those most knowledgeable about ASD; the parents, teachers, health professionals and most importantly of all, those with ASD themselves. Harker and King (2002) make the simple but important observation that 'a good understanding of autism is essential when considering the physical environment for those with autism.' Those who know most about the condition and the experience of having autism are those with the disorder. There is therefore the need to engage and learn from those with ASD if wanting to best understand the condition. Just because a child cannot necessarily speak verbally with us does not mean that they cannot communicate how they feel in a space. In fact the opposite

is true, often the behaviour of a child in a space tells us a great deal about how they are feeling in that environment.

By way of discussion, let us offer the following illustration which may (*hopefully*) be helpful in understanding the challenge. Irrespective of our separate environments; whether room, house, building, countryside, or city, instead consider that we all inhabit a common landscape. It is one that is shared by all. It therefore becomes a landscape where all of us will want to find our places of comfort. This will of course differ from one person to the next, but if it is a landscape offering a full spectrum of different spatial experiences, that place of comfort is there somewhere for everybody. The variety of spatial experiences will therefore include a complete range of different scales and experiences; the big and the small; a range of different enclosures, the crystal and the cave; the quiet and the loud, the colourful and the muted, the familiar and the unfamiliar, that will appeal to the full range of likes and dislikes of society. [Fig 3]

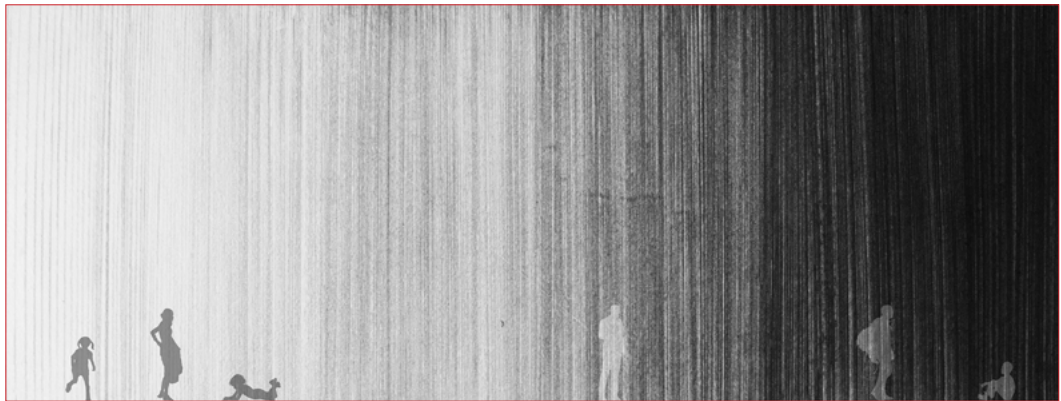


Figure 3

Whilst this might at first seem an overly implausible supposition, it is an idea that does stand up to architectural scrutiny. The architect Louis Kahn famously stated that a plan, whether it be of a house or a city is basically 'a society of rooms'. (Lovell, 2000, p44) This simple but elegant idea is telling: not only are all of our environments rooms of one sort or another, whether garden, park, street, or other example, but importantly, they are a 'society.' Kahn therefore makes the insightful observation that it is how the different rooms inter-connect and to what extent they support and complement one another that is crucial. [Figs 4.1–4.3] Therefore, if able to navigate one's way through the 'society of rooms' or 'inhabited landscape,' we will all be able to better enjoy our built environment, whether at the scale of the city or the scale of a house by firstly, locating rooms that offer us comfort and by secondly, being able to cope with the negotiations of those journeys.



Figures 4.1; 4.2 ; 4.3

Continued on next page...

Being able to do so therefore necessitates asking '*what is most needed?*' if we are to encourage children with ASD to engage with and enter confidently into this shared 'inhabited landscape'. Firstly, if setting out on any voyage of discovery, it is expedient to have the navigational skills to know where one is. This though is more than making sure that one does not get lost. All too often we regard getting lost as a most traumatic experience. However what is worse and completely different, is *not knowing where one is*. If lost, one can find one's way back to where one was earlier. However not knowing where one is, is finding oneself in an alien 'terra incognita' without any map or knowledge of where to then move on to.

To help prevent against this dread we need to provide navigational aids and the security of knowing that we can return to a place of shelter and security when needed. That is especially true for the child with ASD. Having a 'home base' where the child can go to if upset or tired is essential. That should be a place of familiarity and repose, where the child can feel most at ease. In a school setting that might be a personalised workstation or their classroom base. In the home setting it might be a bedroom or favourite chair. It is where they can feel most comfortable. In a shared environment it is often the quiet room that is most important in giving a child the opportunity to relax and 'recharge their batteries' before re-joining their peers. Physically anchoring any child in space is beneficial for reasons of both safety and assurance. For the child with ASD this is absolutely essential.

Navigating through any landscape is easier if there are dedicated reference points and routes to follow when travelling. Writing about the city in 1960, the urban planner Kevin Lynch described five elements that facilitate legibility and recognition when in a city environment; these being paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. In effect, all are navigational aids giving the resident or visitor clues and the reassurance of being able to know where one is in a city. Lynch's five elements do not only work on a city-scale, but also in the smaller building or room scales. [Figs 5.1; 5.2; 5.3] Colour coding doors, structuring furniture to make 'rooms within a room' and having a specific area associated with a particular activity are utilising in turn, identifiable landmarks, edges and districts as advocated by Lynch. These are just some of the elements that can be used in a home or school setting to help the young child with ASD feel more comfortable and at ease.

Memory and ritual can also provide helpful reminders and reassurance so we know where we are. Often it is the memory of past events that make a room important or legible to us. Ensuring that one event happens in one 'room' or a 'room within a room' is a very useful device for the child with ASD to know where they are both spatially and temporally. Whilst that may not always be possible, we can try to provide 'rooms' in our inhabited landscape for the child with ASD to rest and prepare for the challenge of entering the next challenging environment. This may be as

simple as a place to sit and prepare before moving on or alternatively, a place to sit and watch others in preparation for the next leg of their voyage of discovery through our shared inhabited landscape. Crucially, and most importantly of all, choice is offered to the child, both in offering a variety of environments to select from and also as to when and where the child might enter into that environment within the larger landscape.



Figures 5.1; 5.2 ; 5.3

The Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger (2008) also proposes that the buildings we inhabit are representative of a larger landscape. Most famous for his Montessorri schools where students are given a variety of 'rooms' to inhabit with varying degrees of privacy, Hertzberger likened the school to a '*micro-city*' where respectfully, playground, assembly hall, corridors and classrooms share the same characteristics and meaning for the young pupil as piazza, agora, roads and homes. [Figs 6.1; 6.2; 6.3] All have different characters where different events take place. All help prepare the child for life beyond school by providing a variety of options and social opportunities to the child in the school environment. If accepting that premise, we all need to find ways to help the child with ASD integrate more fully into those environments.



Figures 6.1; 6.2 ; 6.3

## Conclusion

If wanting a more inclusive and dignified built environment for all, ensuring personal choice is vitally important. Hence the advantage in considering our built environment purely as an inhabited landscape, made up of rooms of different character, providing choice to all. However if wanting it to be truly inclusive, people need not only to be given the freedom to choose but also the skills to make those choices. Therefore, if upholding the ideal of social inclusion for all young children with ASD, we need strategies that best provide a supporting plan that helps those with ASD cope with change. It is our contention that what is often termed an ASD-friendly environment is unintentionally flawed in that does not necessarily best prepare the child for the many challenges and negotiations inherent within our built environment. Hence our 'alternative paradigm' which suggests that we need a range of differing environments that the child with ASD can encounter; including having a safe secure home base, navigational aids to explore and the time and space to prepare for change between different environments. This too will have limitations, but these can hopefully be minimised if we include those with ASD and those most knowledgeable about ASD into the process. With the individual and our built environment intricately bound in one another, neither can really be understood without the inclusion and consideration of the other. This however needs to be done objectively, when we critically evaluate and consider both accepted and new strategies. It is through acknowledging this tenet that we offer our 'alternative paradigm', not necessarily as an answer, but hopefully as a suggestion that may generate debate and discussion so that our built environment may indeed become a more inclusive place for all.

At stake is the wellbeing of a vulnerable section of our population, those with ASD. It will be no easy task. But with our built environment presenting many opportunities to the young for deeper cognitive and personal development, it is something that must be worth doing. Then our built environment stands a better chance of becoming a shared and equitable landscape to be enjoyed and explored by all.

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**Barlie Allsop**

I have been studying at UCS as a part-time mature English student for seven years and have now graduated. Creative writing and poetry were always my favourite subjects as a child and I have really enjoyed these elements of the degree. The Changing Room was written as an assignment for one of the modules.

I am married to Tim, have four wonderful daughters, a variety of animals and we live by the sea, which we swim in every morning during the summer. When my studies allow, I enjoy writing, photography, reading historical fiction, sewing, knitting, swimming and spending time with my family and friends. I hope you enjoy my story.

## The changing room

The church clock was striking the hour as I picked up my briefcase from the hall, and left the house in Nightingale Avenue. The wind was cold and biting, and I was glad of my scarf which I tightened against the chill.

It was late afternoon on Wednesday and I had left at exactly the same time as usual. My timing on a Wednesday was always meticulous. The pavement I hurried along was covered with colourful leaves which crunched underfoot and indicated a sharp overnight frost. The street lamps, timing reset, began to flicker on as I entered the park. It was quiet but for a few dogs and their owners, some teenage boys playing football, and a handful of people, like me, hurrying across before the park keeper blew the whistle to lock the gates.

The route I took always went past the children's play area. It was deserted now, but I slowed down to look. I knew every inch of the space and the equipment and I knew where to sit and watch. The bench partially obscured by bushes, was perfectly placed to observe unseen and unnoticed. The safety fencing here was mesh netting, not high wooden rails. It gave an uninterrupted view of the children, away from the benches where their parents sat on the opposite side of the enclosure.

Once through the park, I crossed the road, negotiated the temporary pedestrian walk way and entered a small shop. The owner, sitting behind the counter, reading the evening paper, looked up as I came in.

Continued on next page...

'Evening, you here for your usual?'

'Yes please. But I would also like a copy of The Complete Piano Player Book 1. Do you have it in stock?'

'Yes, came in today. Do you want me to reserve you a copy each week? Make sure you get it?'

'Not sure at the moment. Can I let you know next Wednesday?'

'Yes, that'll be fine. Fancied something easy for a change, eh?'

I put the change into the Salvation Army collection box on the counter.

'Sorry, can't stop.'

'You're always in such a hurry. Thanks for the change. Cheerio.'

I dropped the bag into my briefcase and hurried out. He was only being friendly, but talking wasted valuable minutes and I had none to spare. I would be late.

The church hall was in darkness when I arrived and unlocked the side door. Luckily no-one was waiting outside. I slipped into the dark building and reached for the light.

The lights came on one by one in the big hall, which was already warm. I hurried across the wooden floor, my footsteps echoing and solitary, and opened the door to the changing room.

Old mis matched sofas placed around the edge of the room attempted to make the room comfortable. In a funny way they managed to do this. Perhaps this was because the room had become so familiar and so important to me. The floor, stripped bare, splintered and worn in places, gave the room a feeling of character. A small kitchen, adequately equipped, led off from the main room. There was an old pool table, used by the youth club on other days, and various cupboards used to store equipment. In one of these cupboards was my piano stool, which I placed with the piano in the big hall, ready for the first class.

Looking at the time, the tell-tale feelings of anticipation began to rise in me and checking my briefcase for the piano book, I returned to the kitchen, put the kettle on, and sat down to wait.

The first girls arrived with their bags banging against their legs, chattering and laughing about their day. Within 10 minutes, the room had become noisy, busy and squashed. Younger siblings played on the floor with the toys they had bought and older siblings sat and observed. The children came from everywhere. Some walked, some journeyed by car, some by bus and some were just dropped off at the door and collected at the end of the class. Some were already changed and some were not, but within ten

minutes of arriving the kaleidoscope of colour had gone. They all looked the same in their pale pink leotards, organza skirts, pink ballet shoes and hair in buns.

The class lasted for an hour. If Miss Evelyn ran over time too much, I would not have time for my break. This always worried me. I liked to be seated and waiting in the changing room when the next class arrived. Today, I was lucky. The moment I waited and prepared for all week, was nearly here.

Susan arrived first. Alone and quiet, she smiled at me and put her bags down in the corner. Slowly, the room began to fill up. My eyes scanned the faces and lingered at the entrance. A sudden banging of the outside door and the sound of familiar voices. At last. The girls entered the room. They were all dressed in the same familiar uniform of the local High School for Girls. Their dark navy blazers looked far too large for them and clearly indicated that this was their first year at high school.

As soon as she walked into the room, I saw her. Her dark, shiny, beautiful hair framed her exquisite face. She was laughing and I could see her perfect white teeth, her delicate pink lips. I knew I was staring, I couldn't help it. It was impossible to tear my gaze away, although I knew I must. One of the mothers might notice.

I busied myself, making more tea, suddenly aware of every move I made, trying to look casual and normal, but I knew exactly where she was in the room and I stole another look before hurrying out to deliver the tea.

Miss Evelyn was talking to me. I needed to concentrate. The Academy was changing the syllabus as well as the music for the graded ballet classes. We were to begin with grade 4. I would have to do some practice at home.

The girls began to drift in. My eyes were on the door. I could hear her laughing long before I could see her. 'Hurry, Jess.' Miss Evelyn said she had some news for them all. She didn't look like a Jess, she looked like a Milly. She smiled at me and gave me a secret wave before joining the others at the barre.

The news was that along with the new syllabus and music, Miss Evelyn had decided to change the uniform to navy blue. 'New everything!' she said. I looked at the pink leotards. I liked them. The fabric showed every contour of their young bodies. From where I sat at the piano, when they were at the back of the hall they could almost be naked.

The class finished fifteen minutes late. My smiles and nods of encouragement were not wasted and when I beckoned Jess to me, she walked over, smiling.

'I bought you this,' I said, handing her the piano book. 'To get you started.'

'Oh! Thank you. It's so kind of you. I saw this in the newsagent's and really wanted it. Do you think I will be able to do it?'

'If you go carefully and take your time and practise what you have learnt, I'm sure you will be able to. See how you get on, and if you think it is any good, I will get the next one for you.'

She was alive with excitement and enthusiasm. As she looked at me, I could see the light dancing in her eyes and it took my breath away. I remembered my first piano book and the thrill and pleasure it had given me.

'I wish I could start this very minute!'

We laughed together for the first time. It was a brief, precious moment but I knew I would hold it in my heart forever.

The class had finished for another week. As I returned my stool to the cupboard I felt the usual panic rising in me. I made another cup of tea. I didn't want it, but drank it. The more unhurried I appeared to be, the longer the children took to change and leave. I watched her. I watched her from the kitchen. I yearned to reach out and touch her. To feel and smell her skin, her hair, her clothes. To be close to her. It was all I wanted.

I walked into the changing room and sat down. One of the mothers began to talk to me. I had no choice. I replied, but I was resentful. She was on the other side of me and I could no longer see her even from the corner of my eye.

The room was a sea of pale pink. Apart from their different sizes and colour of hair, it was difficult to distinguish them individually. This discipline of the class went far beyond the lesson, but not for long. Within ten minutes the block of pink had been disrupted, and was replaced with a myriad of colour as the girls dressed to leave.

One by one they left. They left alone, with fathers, grandfathers, older siblings, aunts, uncles, some left in groups and some left in pairs. I watched intently those who left with their mothers. Going home to their very different lives, different homes, different families. Jess seemed to linger.

She smiled at me whenever our eyes met. Was this deliberate? I almost didn't dare to believe it. She seemed to be waiting until the others had left. My mind was racing. Was it really this simple? A cheap piano magazine was all it took? Behaving as normally as possible, I went into the kitchen to wash my cup. I was gone for a few minutes, but as I walked back into the room, I knew she had gone. I felt the disappointment kick me in the pit of my stomach. The week stretched ahead of me: bleak, dull and long.

As I locked the building, I realised I had left my briefcase by the chair where I was sitting. Unlocking the door, I re-entered the hall and made my way to the changing room. The strength of the feelings I had experienced this evening suddenly felt overwhelming. I sat down to think and regain some energy for the walk home. I thought about my life, something I found myself doing more and more with my approaching fiftieth birthday. I tried so hard not to have regrets, but instinctively turned my thoughts to my failed, childless marriage of twenty five years, knowing the secret I kept inside me had been instrumental in its demise.

The sound of efficient footsteps brought me suddenly out of my thoughts. The door opened and a smartly dressed woman walked into the room. My heart lurched as I saw Jess two steps behind her.

'I'm so sorry to disturb you. It's Miss Harriet, isn't it?'

'Yes, yes. You're not disturbing me, it's fine. I was just getting ready to leave.'

'It's just that..., Well, Jess has been begging me to speak with you about piano lessons.'

She sat on the chair beside me and Jess came and stood close to me on the other side.

My hands began to tremble and I could feel my pulse racing.

'She had a couple of lessons at school, but she really didn't like the teacher. We have been told by the Head of Music that she has a natural ear for music and a perfect touch on the piano. I'm not at all sure where she gets it from, but we feel it would be such a shame for her not to persevere, at least for a while. She has promised she will start again, but insists on me asking if you will teach her. I hope you don't mind.'

Mind? Mind! I knew my eyes betrayed my feelings. I could feel the blood pumping through my body, hear it pulsing in my ears. I tried to sound calm.

'I would be delighted to teach her. I could do most evenings after school, except Wednesdays. When would suit you?'

'We are free on a Monday evening.'

'Lovely. Let's start this Monday, at about 4.15? I'll write down my address.'

And that was the beginning. For the next six years we spent hours playing the piano. Slowly to begin with. But she practised whenever she could and progressed to exams, festivals, performances. Like me, she learned other instruments, and played them all well, but the piano always came first. Sometimes now, she plays for the ballet class. Often she comes round to my house and plays the piano purely for enjoyment. I listen to her, wherever I am, inside or out in the garden and it overwhelms me with pride.

Next month she will be 18. I hope she looks for me. I hope she searches for me and understands. I hope she forgives me. I pray that she will allow me to share the rest of my life with her.

**Johnathan Dotchin**

Having spent my formative years in education in South Africa and moved to the UK for the final years of school I have experienced multiple schooling systems and have constantly been aware of the similarities and differences between them. Throughout my life I have worked as a volunteer Youth Worker and sit on the board of a charity for young people in Ipswich; this has given me an insight into the effects of education delivery on children's lives. This awareness developed into academic interest when I began a degree in Early Childhood Studies in 2013. When given an assignment in my first year on an aspect of Education Policy I jumped at the chance to use my own experiences to inform an academic critique of the segregation of children in education; the assignment developed into the article before you.

## A postcode lottery and the segregation of children?

## A brief history of education policy in Britain through a discussion of segregation along class lines.

**Abstract**

Despite a common assumption that education as a right for children can, and should provide an equality of opportunity for all to achieve, this article argues that the education system in Britain continually, and systematically, disadvantages those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and allows the segregation of children along class lines. Drawing on research into the effects of particular decades of education policy development on the lives of children this paper contends that despite political rhetoric calling for equality in education, class division remains an entrenched and on-going challenge for the education system. This discussion begins with the 'Postcode Lottery' created by the 1944 Education Act and moves through the creation of the Comprehensive System and its' subsequent, apparent failure. It then explores the introduction of the free market into education by the 1988 Education Act and concludes with the creation of Academies and Free Schools by New Labour; this article argues that with or without intention, education policy has been unsuccessful in eradicating the presence and consequences of social inequalities in children's life chances.



Despite a common assumption that education as a right for children can, and should provide an equality of opportunity for all to achieve, it is argued that during the twentieth century social origins have continued to have “a profound and often negative effect on educational achievement” (McKenzie, 2001, p. 172). In 1996 the Independent Schools Council calculated that tax breaks given to Private schools with charitable status equated to a state subsidy of almost £2000 per pupil per year. Some £200 a year more than the Government spent on the education of a child in a State Primary school in the same year (Goldson, Lavalette and McKechnie, 2002). Thus the state had in effect funded private education and in doing so reinforced inequalities in education which inevitably follow the class divisions within society. This paper evaluates the significance of such policy decisions with particular reference to a continuing class divide in the British education system. In structure this paper uses particular decades of policy development to demonstrate how the perpetuation of inequality in education through class division remains entrenched and an on-going challenge for the education system.

It is important to begin by defining what is meant by education and the term postcode lottery. A Utilitarian perspective, as demonstrated in the white paper *Better Schools* (1985), argues that the purpose of education is to prepare children for employment (Department of Education, 1985). Whilst this may be a somewhat bland concept, it is, at least in theory, fairly unproblematic. However this definition neglects the social dimension of education. Education systems have functions, social functions and therefore, possible social consequences (Chitty, 2009). An historical example of this is the desired effect of compulsory education until the age of 15 to combat Beveridge’s giant of ignorance and help create full employment and a stable and just society. However, the ideals of the Welfare State and the post-war consensus on education and societal reforms were to be relatively short lived and alternative views of the actual function of education became more prevalent. The education system actually operates to perpetuate the social relationships of economic life; that one of its main functions is to reinforce the hierarchy that children and adults experience throughout their life course (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). One explicit way that this inequality, often a result of policy making, is articulated has been through the creation of a postcode lottery of education. First evident in the 1944 Education Act, where the tripartite system introduced selection policies which stratified more by social class than ability (Kelly, 2007). The postcode lottery refers to the ways in which the ability of a child’s parents to be able to buy a family home in the catchment area of a good public school directly affected the educational outcomes for their children. The Tripartite System was merely the beginnings of segregation along class lines and the policies of the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s served to embed them further.

Controversially it can be argued that schooling has both reflected and created social inequalities amongst children; producing in each generation similar patterns that may last into adult life. Wyness (2006) contends that childhood is located within a broad social, political, economic and cultural backdrop to the extent that a child's school status provides a clear indication of their social status; thus making sociological and cultural aspects of childhood more significant than biological factors in shaping their future. This claim arguably represents an opportunity for the state to enable children to transcend biological impediments by providing a socially equal education system which alleviates entrenched social inequalities. Yet, ultimately children become highly segregated in education (Wyness, 2006) with perhaps the most explicit example being the divide between state and private schooling (Goldson, Lavalette and McKechnie, 2002). How this economic and class based division within education came about is the topic of this paper.

Prior to the introduction of compulsory schooling in the 1880 Education Act; which could be seen as unifying the once segregated children, there was little or no provision by government. The only children in education were those whose parents could afford to pay for a private education or who were placed in faith or charity run schools (Chitty, 2009). The 1880 Act gave local authorities an annual grant to pay for the education of children in their locality however there were gaps in the types and levels of education provided with many schools still being fee paying and government grants falling short of what was needed. Indeed Chitty (2009) argues that there was a fear of mass education of the working class from the upper and middle classes and that this was partly to blame for the patchy provision. The First World War and the recession which followed effectively postponed any practical reforms of education however the Boer War highlighted the necessity to ensure Britain's children were healthy and educated enough to function in modern society (Chitty, 2009).

By the Twentieth Century attitudes to education reflected the social values of universal provision but with a recurring debate and anxiety about how to educate the working class. Chitty (2009) argues that the debate did not centre around providing secondary education free to all but rather whether the working classes could or should be educated to the same level as those from the middle and upper classes seeing as they would ultimately end up in lower paid, less skilled jobs. Alcock (2008) contends that the Butler Education Act (1944) can be seen as one of the biggest segregators of children with the introduction of Grammar, Secondary Modern and Secondary Technical schools. The creation of the Tripartite System was supported by the psychologist Cyril Burt's research which argued that IQ was testable at 11 (Burt, 1957) and the Norwood Report, published in 1943, which proposed that children developed one of three types of mind and that these different types of mind could best be accommodated in different

types of schools (McCulloch, 2002).

It is interesting to note that the now widely discredited psychologist Cyril Burt went as far as to link IQ with social class. IQ tests, although theoretically unbiased, did prove to be a basis for class segregation as children whose parents could afford it sent their children to private classes to ensure good results. A significant factor in the 11+ Tests proved to be the 'Cultural Capital' required to pass. Cultural Capital, as defined by Bourdieu is forms of knowledge or skills, gained through the family or education, which give someone who possesses them a higher status in society. Researchers such as McKenzie (2001) cite examples of questions relating to topics such as classical music; disadvantaging those children from lower socio-economic groups who may not have encountered classical music. In addition to these factors there were more Grammar schools set up in affluent areas than in poorer areas. This resulted in children living in poorer areas and passing the 11+ often being unable to attend a Grammar school. This was the beginning of the postcode lottery. It was widely assumed that the new Tripartite System created in the 1940s would create better opportunities for working class children and increase social mobility (McKenzie, 2001). Passing the 11+ and achieving any qualifications were seen as major achievements and a vast improvement, especially for children from the working classes. Prior to the 1944 Education Act it was the norm for many of these children to leave education and enter employment to ease the financial burdens on their families. The Tripartite System was seen as a ladder of opportunity for working class children. Progress for working class children was apparently being made (McKenzie, 2001).

The increase in secondary education places made a difference in tackling social inequalities for some, but for many children their life chances remained predetermined. Part of the cause of this, Tight (2009) argues was the attitude of some universities. Despite what would later be identified as the 'failings' of the Tripartite system there was a vast increase in the number of students achieving the minimum standards necessary to attend university. Due to the increased demand for university places, the government rapidly increased grants to universities to expand and take on more pupils. However, many established universities believed it was not worth expanding simply for the sake of it; that there was essentially a 'pool of ability', mostly taken from private schools, that was capable of higher education and expansion was not, therefore, necessary or indeed desirable. The ideal of social mobility promoted by the Tripartite System did not, therefore, carry through to universities and ultimately compounded the segregation that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds faced.

Despite its initial aspirations, by the 1960s it was evident that the intended outcomes of the 1944 Education Act were not being met (McKenzie, 2001). The inaccuracies of testing the IQ of 11 year olds as a measure of intelligence were now widely accepted and reinforced by the

number of children who had failed the 11+ yet had gone on to achieve in later exams, higher education and careers. According to Dean (1998) this led to The Labour Government announcing their intention for education to continue along comprehensive lines to address the problems of the 11+ and Tripartite System and alleviate social class inequalities. The 1970s and 1980s saw a period of great reform and upheaval for the education system and throughout this time there was continued criticism and reform of the Comprehensive System, mostly by Conservative governments. Two significant criticisms of the Comprehensive System emerged from the Black Reports of 1969 and 1977. These reports attacked the egalitarian nature of the Comprehensive System and criticised its progressive teaching methods; blaming them for the perceived fall in education standards and the rise in ill-discipline (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013). McKenzie (2001) contends that the Comprehensive System was blamed for the economic collapse of the 1970s and 1980s in its failure to provide the skilled workforce that industry needed. Perhaps more fundamentally research undertaken at the time indicated that social inequalities in education remained an issue and that the Comprehensive System had failed in its goals of social mobility and addressing the class inequalities in education which the Tripartite System had failed to do (McKenzie, 2001).

The scene was set for the reforms of the 1979 and 1988 Education Act. Rhodes Boyson, a Conservative Minister of Parliament blamed the education system for many of the ills of society and, supported by Margaret Thatcher, proposed payment by results and greater selection powers for schools (Boyson, 1975). Thatcher's justification for selection in state schools was due to her blaming the falling education standards on schools catering for the 'middle range' of students instead of striving for excellence (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead 2013). The 1986 and 1988 Education Acts lifted the restrictions on school enrolment policies; giving schools more option in selection and providing parents with the ability to apply to schools outside their placement area (Wyness, 2000). This perpetuated the postcode lottery through which existing social divisions in the wider society were reproduced. Conservative spending cuts and the subsequent fragmentation of social classes, combined with the growth in type and number of ethnic groups led to even more segregation (McKenzie, 2001).

In addition to the changes in enrolment policy a raft of other reforms were put into place. The 1988 Education Act introduced the market into state education following the Conservative's ethos that privatisation led to increased choice and better provision, at a lower cost. This act gave schools powers to opt out of local education authority control and become grant-maintained; more comprehensive and strict curriculums were introduced; and City Technical Colleges (CTCs) which offered more vocational courses were introduced (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013). CTCs were designed to reduce inequalities in education by giving all children the

opportunity to continue into higher education in some form and were originally to be set up in deprived, inner city areas but this idea was overruled by the majority of the Conservative party who wanted them sited in more affluent areas (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013). Ultimately the majority of Grant Maintained Schools were set up in Conservative controlled Local Education Authorities (LEAs). This perpetuated the postcode lottery and the situation was exacerbated by the slow uptake of the Comprehensive System across the country. Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead (2013) argue that the introduction of Comprehensive Schools was slower in some areas than others and in consequence there were Grammar Schools in existence as late as the 1980s. Where Grammar Schools still existed they tended to be smaller than Comprehensives and once schools were given the power to control enrolment some of the smaller Grammar Schools were able to stay small and exclusive through rigorous selection processes. In addition they cite examples of a disparity in teaching methods and curriculums across different LEAs and Chitty (2009) claims that CTCs gave major businesses the ability to buy-in to schools and have a level of influence in areas such as the curriculum. Whilst this can be argued to be good for the economy by providing a workforce with the right skills it limited the options for children who did not want to enter employment in the dominant industry in the area and whose parents could not afford to send them to school elsewhere or move. It is worth noting at this point that the majority of reforms introduced during the Thatcher government did little to change the Private Education System. Whilst the State System had been in a state of upheaval from the 1960s through to the 1990s the Private System remained relatively untouched, continuing to offer an advantage to the pupils who could afford to attend (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013). Class, social and economic divisions in society more generally continued to be maintained and reproduced within education.

McKenzie (2001) argues that by the 1990s there had been a blurring of the lines of class division in British society, however despite this, inequalities remained. There was more pressure than ever before on education to provide children with the necessary skills for the workplace with a growing number of children leaving school without sufficient qualifications. Thus the ideal of vocational courses increased again and political support for them continued. Research released in 1993 showed clear evidence that Grant Maintained Schools were avoiding the less well-off in society and less able children. Nevertheless the Conservative Government announced continued support for their selection policies in 1994 and evidence which pointed to clear class divisions in the policies of Grant Maintained Schools was disregarded (Abbott, Rathbone and Whitehead, 2013).

New Labour, whilst maintaining support for vocational courses and Grant Maintained Schools, which were to become Academies, came to

power in 1997 and promised to put education at the top of their agenda and ensure that any child, from any background, could achieve their full potential (Whitty, 2002). New Labour promoted themselves as being more aware of the civic role of schools and their site for socialisation, stating that schools were a place to grow society and equality (McKenzie, 2001). They introduced Free Schools to allow charities, religious groups, businesses and even groups of parents to directly influence education and reformed Grant Maintained Schools into Academies. Bhattacharya (2013) contends that Academies and Free Schools were designed, at least according to the political rhetoric, to enable all children to achieve their full potential by ensuring the excellence of schools. This echoed similar meritocratic, pro-market and pro-equality of opportunity policies of New Labour. Free Schools were designed to be levellers of social inequality with their independent status giving them the option to address the issues in their locality.

However Hatcher (2011) argues from an alternative perspective. All LEAs were required to give a percentage of their budget to fund Free Schools and Academies even where there were none within their area, affecting the budget for State Schools. In addition, the pupil premium, where education funding follows the child, affected the budgets of State Schools by reducing the number of children and hence budget they received. Children who lived in deprived areas where Academies or Free Schools had not been set up were, therefore, at a disadvantage as funding to State Schools was essentially cut. A BBC Report in 2011 argued that the government provided £50 million of capital funding for the setting up of Free Schools whilst at the same time cutting the overall schools capital budget by 60%. Much of the money cut came from budgets to build or improve new State Schools in deprived areas (Berg, 2011). The report indicated some of the unintended consequences of this policy including Free Schools being set up in locations where places were available in existing schools. This resulted in funding and staff cuts and enforced a reduced subject curriculum. Claims made by school professionals suggested that Free Schools were being set up in affluent areas and marketed deliberately to attract middle class parents away from existing schools. This approach ensured the perpetuation of the postcode lottery of education.

This paper has presented a fraction of the policies which have affected education since 1944. Whilst class segregation as a single issue is complex in the education system, the evidence presented here clearly demonstrates that, with or without intention, education policy has failed to eradicate its presence and consequences in children's life chances. Despite alternative political administrations holding opposing views on the value of social justice, the education system in Britain has continually, and systematically, disadvantaged those from lower socio-economic

backgrounds and continued to allow the segregation of children along class lines. Kelly (2007) argues that the financial position of a child's parents has been and continues to be, the stratifying principle affecting a child's education and life chances. This is to the detriment of individual children and our society as a whole.

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**Hannah Bias**

Hannah successfully graduated from UCS in 2014 with a BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Studies. When she is not busy looking after her young son, Hannah works at a local Primary school where she is training to be a Primary teacher. Inspired by Leyla Hussein's guest lecture on FGM at UCS in February and her own growing interest for children's rights, Hannah was awarded a 'first' for her dissertation project. The following article and poster presentation are a glimpse of her passion for this sensitive topic area.

## Female Genital Mutilation: A legitimate cultural rite of passage or a gross violation of children's rights?

In the time it takes for you to read this article, somewhere in the world a girl-child is being held down, and her genitals cut as part of Female Genital Mutilation (Kristof and WuDunn, 2009). Unknown in Western Societies until the 1960's, (Althaus, 1997), this highly complex deeply rooted practice is steeped in tradition which in practising communities holds incredible marital, social and cultural significance (Lockhat, 2004). In contemporary times this subject lies at the centre of much medical, anthropological and political debate (Momoh, 2005)—a prime example of how cultural traditions can be interpreted as a gross violation of human rights in one culture, yet supported and encouraged in others (Dorkenoo, 1995).

Due to the pain and trauma it can cause to individuals, the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nation Children Education Fund (UNICEF) and the World Medical Association (WMA) view Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a gross violation of children's rights (Dorkenoo, 1995). However cultural relativists maintain that practices such as FGM cannot be judged by Western values, and can only be understood within their own cultural context (Dorkenoo, 1995). Therefore to present an objective view of both sides of the FGM debate, this article will discuss views, both for and against the practice.

The WHO (2008:1) defines Female Genital Mutilation as '*All procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons*', and when discussing Female Genital Mutilation it is essential to



examine the various terminologies as it is also known as Female Genital Cutting and Female Circumcision (Momoh, 2005).

'Female Circumcision' was the original term used by practising societies, as they often compared it to 'Male Circumcision', as both procedures remove healthy genital tissue, and are carried out on children without their consent (Obermeyer, 1999). However this comparison is heavily criticised by the WHO (2013), as on female bodies this surgery is far more invasive, and results in significant medical problems with no health benefits. This is not the case with male circumcision, as research has found it can help prevent persistent bacterial infections, some genital cancers as well as tightness of the foreskin (NHS, 2013). To give emphasis to the severity of the procedure, the 1990's saw human rights activists used the term 'Mutilation' (Rahman and Toubia, 2000). However the term became problematic, as parents in practicing societies felt that the term was highly judgmental and derogatory, thus not helping when trying to argue for its abandonment (Population Reference Bureau, 2010). The term "cutting" is often cited by practising communities and therefore has increasingly been used to avoid alienating various cultures (Shell-Duncan and Hernlund, 2000).

FGM is performed in a variety of ways and recognising the need for a standardised definition the WHO and UNICEF released a statement in 1997 to classify FGM types in to 4 categories (World Health Organization, 2008). Type 1—'Clitoridectomy' is the removal of the clitoris, while type 2—'Excision' is the removal of the clitoris as well as the labia minora (Desert Flower Foundation, 2013). Type 3—'Infibulation' is commonly practiced in Somalia and Sudan and involves tissue removal to narrow the vagina, and complete removal of the clitoris, labia minora, and the inner surface of the labia majora (World Health Organisation, 2008). The raw edges of the vagina are brought together using thorns and the child's legs are tied together for two to six weeks, allowing scar tissue to form acting as a barrier to sexual intercourse and only allowing minute amounts of urine and blood to escape (Miller, 2011). Lastly, Type 4 includes all other harmful techniques to female genitalia such as piercing, scraping and pricking, and is often called 'symbolic circumcision'. Despite still being controversial, it has been proposed as an alternative to more severe forms of FGM but accounts for only 5 percent of procedures (UNICEF, 2013).

Performed by women with no medical training, FGM procedures often include the use of unsterile knives or broken glass in unhygienic conditions (Dareer, 1982). No form of anaesthesia is used and force is required to hold the child down as the operation takes place (Amare and Aster, 2006). The age at which FGM takes place varies and a study by Koso-Thomas (1987) found that it was performed at just 7–8 days old in Ethiopia, 6 years old in Somalia and puberty in Sierra Leone (Koso-Thomas, 1987).

Today, more than 125 million females have been subjected to FGM, and while the majority of FGM procedures take place in Africa and the Middle East, it is not constrained by national borders. Indeed, growing migration rates have significantly increased the amount of females who have undergone FGM and are now living outside their native country (Yoder et al., 2004). The European Parliament estimated in 2009 that around 500,000 girls are living with FGM in Europe (European Parliament, 2009), whilst a study undertaken in the UK in 2007 suggested that 23,000 could be at high risk each year in England and Wales alone, with a further 66,000 living in the UK with the consequences of FGM (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011).

Clearly, FGM is a politically contentious subject and its increasing prominence in global media, has led to the anti-FGM movement with numerous interventions aiming to globally eradicate the practice (Abdi and Askew, 2009). The 1970s saw a rise in Western feminists' seeking to completely eradicate FGM practices by presenting girls as victims of male control, as they believed that FGM played a significant role in the patriarchal oppression of girls across the globe (Dorkenoo, 1995). Western feminist Salmon (1997) asserts that the practice is a way for males to keep control of females, as women are seen as unequal. Alo and Gbadebo (2011) reported that Somali men look down on women, viewing them as 'big footed children with milk-full breasts which hold no brain' (Alo and Gbadebo, 2011). Boddy (1998) asserts that these notions and the practice of FGM are the definitive representation of the oppression of females still taking place developing countries (Toubia, 2000). While the Western feminist approach was highly influential (UN, 2008), the majority of practicing societies objected to the way it was handled, with the use of disguised examples of racial superiority (Walley, 1997).

As a result of the feminist backlash, the 1980s saw a discourse change with medical professionals engaged to deliver information about the impact of FGM focusing on the effects it has upon health (Muteshi and Sass, 2005). Penn and Nardos (2003) reported that 80% of girls who experience FGM have some form of medical complication with severe bleeding and septicaemia often being fatal. Unhygienic environments and un-sterilized instruments can often result in blood poisoning and a high risk of HIV transmission, while other complications are said to include tumours, increased risk of hepatitis, urinary incontinence, painful sexual intercourse and other sexual dysfunction (Mitchum, 2013). FGM also increases risks during childbirth as highlighted by Banks et al. (2006) who studied over 28,000 women in FGM societies and found those who had been 'cut' experienced deliveries with higher rates of still birth and early neonatal death. The incidences of caesarean section and haemorrhage were also higher, resulting in life-threatening complications for mother and child due to problems with vaginal obstruction (Banks et al., 2006). With this insight,

the biomedical discourse would seem likely to be pervasive (Obermayer, 1999). However, it made minimal impact on rates of FGM, which resulted in a paradigm shift towards a children's rights approach (Hepburn, 1988).

The rights of the child has been high on the global agenda, with the first legally binding international document to include an extensive range of child rights brought in to force in 1990, named the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC, 1989). UNCRC requests that children be protected from all harmful traditions and appropriate measures should be taken to abolish practices which cause detrimental effects to children's health (Article 37—UNCRC, 1989). As mutilation of healthy body parts is part of the FGM procedure, the negative effects are believed to seriously violate their rights, and contravene the best interest of the child, by restricting their ability to develop normally (Article 3—UNCRC, 1989). There are difficulties with this approach, as it fails to understand the significant value parents place on FGM with its perceived economic and social benefits for their child (Merry, 2006). In practising societies the child's right to develop "normally" appears to have been socially constructed to include being circumcised, and despite Westernised social constructions believing the process is abusive, parents believe that FGM it is in the best interest of their daughter's development (Boulware-Miller 1985, cited in Shell Duncan, 2008).

According to the UNCRC those performing FGM are violating the child's right to express their own view freely on matters that affect them, as they are too young to be in a position to give informed consent about decisions that may affect the rest of their lives (Article 12—UNCRC, 1989). Even when the child is somewhat aware of the FGM practice about to take place, Dorkenoo (1995) argues that the issue of consent remains, as these children are too young to be consulted, sometimes just a few days old and therefore have no voice in the decision made on their behalf by members of their family (UNCRC, 1989).

With the UNCRC ratified by every country in Europe, there have been numerous European countries that have developed specific criminal law provisions against the practice (End FGM—European Campaign, 2011), and despite the UK making FGM illegal since 1989, Dorkenoo notes that because FGM is a cultural practice, the UK government officials are still hesitant to interfere through fear of appearing racist, and therefore unintentionally helping the practice to prevail (Dorkenoo, cited in Johnston 2012). However with aims to eradicate the practice, the UK pledged £35 million to the issue of FGM (Department for International Development, 2013), and as recently as March of this year it was publically announced that the UK would be carrying out its first ever FGM prosecution (whereas in France, according to 28toomany.org (2014) FGM convictions already total over 100). The subject of FGM lies prominently in the nation's mind, after recently receiving media coverage in the form of high profile airtime on mainstream

Channel 4, questions have been asked with regards to the legitimacy of the prosecution, with some critically evaluating it as more of a political statement (Scullion, 2014)

Although logical from a Western perspective, the concept of human rights has been complicated to establish in practicing FGM countries as the ideological concept is considered abstract (Tierney, 2009). Indeed, Western concepts do not convert easily from one community to another and fundamentally biomedical interventions, Western feminism and human rights approaches have all failed to acknowledge the importance that FGM holds, as a lived in cultural justification for the communities in which it is practised (Merry, 2006).

Cultural justifications for practising FGM are deeply rooted in the belief systems of the communities that practice it, and strengthened by cultural relativists such as Davis (2004) who believes there are no universal human standards, and the values of one culture cannot be compared to another. Davis maintains that FGM has great relevance within practicing cultures, and those outside of said culture should be wary of making judgement interference (Davis, 2004). Adams (2004, cited in Jones 2010) highlights that by applying Western notions of biomedicine, feminism and human rights we ignore the cultural justifications of those who participate in FGM, and therefore these need to be discussed in order to truly understand the practice.

The reasons to practice FGM are diverse; however a common justification relates to religious beliefs. Yet, according to Forward UK (2014), this is a flawed argument as FGM practices are said to predate Christianity and Islam. Among the Kisi tribes in Tanzania, FGM is also used to reduce a girl's sexual feelings so she maintains what her community have socially constructed to be proper sexual conduct, as the intense fear of severe genital pain is expected to discourage her from forbidden sexual acts (28toomany, 2014). However critical evaluation helps to refute this notion as many countries where FGM is practised have high numbers of prostitutes, which proves it does not guarantee chastity (Moges, 2009).

Many African traditionalists who support FGM believe vaginal secretions have a strong unpleasant odour, and make the female body unclean and therefore do not allow females to handle food or water until they are circumcised where they will achieve an acceptable level of cleanliness (Amnesty International, 2009). However in criticism of this, the NHS confirms that unless a woman is suffering from a genital infection requiring treatment, natural vaginal secretions are odourless (NHS Direct, 2014). Some cultures also believe that leaving a female with a clitoris will endanger any children she may give birth to, as if the baby's head touches the clitoris during labour, the baby will be born with fluid on the brain (Walker, 1992). In Western medical terms this is known as 'hydrocephalic' and Western biomedical knowledge allows us to refute these claims, as this

condition cannot be caused by touching the clitoris, instead birth defects such as Spina-bifida or infection during pregnancy, such as mumps cause it to occur (NHS Direct, 2014). Most contemporary Westerners would view these myths as ludicrous; however it must be highlighted that the removal of the clitoris was performed throughout Europe and North America as late as the 1950's as it was believed to cure lesbianism, excessive masturbation, hysteria, and nervousness (Bell, 2005). Therefore the practice of female genitalia surgery is actually part of Western medical history, and African Feminist and anti-FGM activist, Comfort Momoh (2005) highlight that only through access to education and advancements in medicine has the western world stopped removing the clitoris.

FGM procedures also take place for aesthetic reasons associated with socially constructed ideals of femininity (Forward UK, 2014) with practicing cultures only considering females to be 'beautiful' after they have had their labia and clitoris removed (Dorkenoo, 1995). Davis (2004) argues that many Westernised nations also perform painful medically unnecessary surgeries purely for beautification reasons including breast enhancement, vaginal tightening, and labia reduction surgeries. Davies continued with line of thought by describing these procedures as not dissimilar to FGM, as they are deemed medically unnecessary and aim to make the females more attractive in line with socially constructed cultural norms. This does appear to represent clear evidence that Western females are still clearly victims of a patriarchal beauty system, which views their bodies as commodities and forces them to take an unhealthy interest in their physical appearance (Morgan, 1991).

What we deem to be 'right' or 'wrong' may depend on the culture in which we reside. However, FGM practices cannot be justified by simply comparing them to Westernised plastic surgery, as there is a fundamental difference - the ability to choose (Momoh, 2005). Consenting adults over the age of 18 choose to have cosmetic surgery, while FGM continues to be carried out on children below the age of legal or reasoned consent, some as young as 7 days old (Moges, 2009). However FGM supporters highlight that there are times where Western world surgery is carried out on healthy children without their consent - where genitalia and reproductive organs of a baby are 'ambiguous' (Chase, 2002). In Western medical terms this is known as 'Hermaphroditism', where medical professionals have to determine the sex of the child. Cultural relativist Meyers (2000, cited in Davis 2004) argues that this bares great resemblance to FGM practices as the child's healthy tissue is removed or altered to make the child appear 'normal' in the eyes of the culture in which it resides.

While cultural relativism does appear to help tease out Western ethnocentric views and create a more balanced understanding of cultural practices, culture itself constantly evolves as it encounters different cultures; therefore using it as a reason for continuing FGM practices lays in the

mistaken belief that culture is fixed. In conclusion, despite being viewed by the majority of the Western world as a gross violation of a child's human rights, practising societies and cultural relativists argue that FGM is a legitimate rite of passage and cite various reasons for its existence. None the less, as this article has shown, these reasons are highly flawed and refuted by Western medicine, religious literature and contemporary anthropological research. Despite this, cultural relativists still question what right Western societies have intervening into cultures that do not concern them. This has deterred many from contesting this highly contentious subject in fears of being labelled a racist. However, it must be argued that we have an obligation

as adults in a global society to protect children regardless of what has been socially constructed as being acceptable within their own culture. No matter how well intentioned, the reluctance to offend other cultures has no doubt aided the continuance of FGM, putting thousands more children at risk of unnecessary physical, reproductive, sexual and psychological pain and suffering.

We as a global society have already failed the 125 million girls that have already been subjected to this barbaric practice, however the arguments provided in this article clearly demonstrate that FGM is **NOT** a legitimate cultural rite of passage, but instead it is **unquestionably** a gross violation of children's rights, and is without doubt Mutilation which should be avoided at all costs.



# Female Genital Mutilation **RIGHT V's RITE**

**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**

- The World Health Organisation (2008:1) defines FGM as 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons'.
- FGM It is a prime example of how cultural traditions can be interpreted as a gross violation of human rights in one culture, yet supported and encouraged in others (Dorkenoo, 1995).
- Performed in a variety of ways depending upon the country it takes place (Forward UK, 2011).
- A highly complex deeply rooted practice, steeped in tradition, and holds incredible marital, social and cultural significance (Lockhat, 2004).

**A Gross Violation of Children's Rights**

<b>Western Feminism</b> (Salmon, 1997).	<b>Biomedical Discourse</b> (Hepburn, 1988).	<b>Children's Rights</b> (Toubia & Sharief, 2003).
<b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</b> (UNCRC, 1989).	<b>African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</b> (ACRWC, 1989).	

**A Legitimate Cultural Rite of Passage**

<b>Religious Beliefs</b> (Althaus, 1997).	<b>Cultural Reasons</b> (Dorkendoo, 1995).	<b>Deeply Rooted Myths</b> (Amnesty International, 2009).
<b>Socio-economic Factors</b> (Momoh, 2005).	<b>Premarital Virginity &amp; Proper Sexual Conduct</b> (28toomany, 2014).	<b>Aesthetic Ideals</b> (Davis, 2004).



**CONCLUSION**

Research has clearly shown that the cultural and religious justifications for the practice of are highly flawed, with the majority refuted by western medicine and contemporary anthropological research.

Despite Cultural relativists still questioning what right we have intervening into other cultures. We have an obligation as adults in a global society to protect children regardless of what has been socially constructed as being acceptable within their own culture.

**FGM is clearly a violation of children's rights and needs to be stopped.**



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**Selena Timmins Chapman**

I was born and raised in Ontario, Canada—hundreds of miles west of Nova Scotia, Canada where the following story takes place. I've never been to Halifax but I was inspired to set my script there after a lecture in which my tutor, James Clarke, talked about the importance of place. I recently completed a BA (Hons) in English at University Campus Suffolk where I wrote a version of the following script as an assignment during my final year. Halifax has a rich history and online archives allowed me to draw on accounts of survivors of the 1917 Explosion, many of whom were children at the time. What follows, however, is a work of fiction.

## Winter will shake

1. EXT. CHERRY HOUSE. 6 DECEMBER 1917. MORNING.

TITLE CARD  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
6 December 1917  
8.46 a.m.

The front of the CHERRY house. The house is in the Second Empire style and appears to be extremely well maintained. Its wood-frame exterior is a pale buttery yellow. Ten windows are visible from the street: two dormer windows set in a mansard roof, three windows on the second story, two windows on the first story, two basement windows, and one window set in the front door. The front door is not centred. Rather, it occupies the bottom left section of the house's facade. There is snow on the roof and on the front stoop. Snow covers the ground in front of the house.

The front door opens and GERTRUDE CHERRY (aged eight) exits. She is wearing a dark blue wool coat and winter boots. Her hat, scarf and mittens have been handmade, not very carefully, from dull-looking red yarn. One mitten dangles from the string at her wrist and GERTRUDE stuffs a piece of buttered toast in her mouth with her bare hand. She puts her mitten on before pulling the door shut by its metal handle.

Continued on next page...

GERTRUDE is halfway down the steps when the front door opens again. IRENE CHERRY (aged twenty-eight) appears in the doorway in stocking feet. She wears an elaborately embroidered white cotton dress with a blue silk satin ribbon belt and matching bow. Her hair is done up in a smart but slightly dated pompadour. IRENE leans out the door, careful not to step in the snow.

IRENE

Did you forget something?

We see that GERTRUDE, her back to IRENE, is annoyed. GERTRUDE uses the back of her arm to swipe ineffectually at the toast crumbs on her face. When she turns to face IRENE, GERTRUDE is smiling. She knows what is expected. GERTRUDE climbs the stoop and embraces her mother stiffly. Irene gives GERTRUDE a perfunctory and somewhat awkward pat on the back before pulling away.

IRENE produces two bags from inside the house and hands both to GERTRUDE. One is clearly a school bag. The second bag is blue canvas with large clumsily-embroidered roses in pink and red. IRENE leans down and uses her thumb to brush away toast crumbs from the side of GERTRUDE'S mouth. This action is warmer than IRENE'S embrace. GERTRUDE makes a face but otherwise suffers this indignity. GERTRUDE'S expression causes IRENE to deflate a little.

IRENE

You'll be late.

GERTRUDE jumps from the stoop to the ground, bypassing the front steps. Snow billows from the impact and IRENE laughs in delight. This time, GERTRUDE'S smile is genuine. GERTRUDE runs down the sidewalk, her bags swinging. IRENE goes inside, leaving the door ajar. A few seconds later, the first-story window closest to the front door opens. Gay-sounding instrumental music comes from within.

IRENE opens the door and comes out onto the stoop. She closes the front door behind her, wincing when her bare hand touches the cold metal of the door handle. We see she wears a wedding ring. IRENE has put on a man's coat and boots that are almost comically too large for her small feet. She hoists herself into sitting position on the stoop's railing. Her feet dangle. From the pocket of the coat, IRENE withdraws a silver cigarette case and a box of matches. As she smokes, she looks down the street where GERTRUDE is quickly disappearing from sight. IRENE appears pensive.

2. EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET IN HALIFAX'S NORTH END. 6 DECEMBER 1917. MORNING.

Numerous CHILDREN (aged four to twelve) are traversing the snowy sidewalks lining both edges of the road. They have arranged themselves into staggered groups of two- and three-abreast. All the CHILDREN head in the same direction, each carrying a school bag. We hear their cheerful laughter and indistinct conversations.

GERTRUDE runs down the sidewalk behind the other CHILDREN. She slows to a stop on the corner on two residential streets rather than catching the other CHILDREN up. GERTRUDE drops her bags on the ground and catches her breath. She stares down the deserted cross street. A MAN in an overcoat, hat, and sturdy winter boots exits one of the houses and hurries down the street toward GERTRUDE'S corner. He carries a briefcase.

GERTRUDE  
(with hands cupped around her mouth)  
Claude! Claude!

The MAN with the briefcase reaches the corner and heads in the same direction as the vanished CHILDREN. He and GERTRUDE pay no attention to each other. The cross street is once more deserted.

GERTRUDE  
Claude! We'll be late! Both of us will be!

The cross street remains deserted. GERTRUDE picks up her school bag and thwacks it against a nearby post, shaking off snow. A healthy-looking TABBY CAT, startled by the noise GERTRUDE makes, shoots out from behind a grouping of metal garbage cans.

GERTRUDE drops her bag and crouches on her heels. She reaches out one hand, palm down, and wriggles her fingers.

GERTRUDE  
(quietly)  
Here, kitty kitty kitty. Here, kitty kitty.

The TABBY CAT scratches its back against the post. It moves neither closer to GERTRUDE nor further away.

GERTRUDE kneels. She is careful to tuck her long coat over her stocking knees to protect them from the packed snow. She pulls off her mitten and

rummages in her blue bag. After a moment GERTRUDE holds her bare hand in the TABBY CAT'S direction. There is a clump of something red and sticky on one of her fingers. The TABBY CAT approaches GERTRUDE. It sniffs curiously at the jam but does not eat it. Instead, it winds its way amongst GERTRUDE'S bags.

A YOUNG MAN wearing the uniform of the British Royal Navy hurries by. He heads in the opposite direction as the CHILDREN. GERTRUDE sucks the jam off her finger. She reaches out to stroke the TABBY CAT. The TABBY CAT allows this. GERTRUDE crouches down to better speak to the TABBY CAT.

GERTRUDE  
(whispering)  
Bonjour, Minette. Hello.

GERTRUDE continues to stroke MINETTE.

GERTRUDE  
(in her normal voice)  
Have YOU seen Claude, Minette?

MINETTE pushes her head against GERTRUDE'S hand. GERTRUDE strokes MINETTE'S head before gently pushing MINETTE aside. GERTRUDE blows hot air on her hand, trying to get warm. She puts her mitten on and clambers to her feet. She places her blue canvas bag in the sheltered space between two garbage cans, arranging the stiff fabric so that the top of the bag stays open. GERTRUDE picks up MINETTE.

GERTRUDE  
It's awful cold out, isn't it, Minette?

GERTRUDE tries to put MINETTE inside the canvas bag but MINETTE balks, struggles, and escapes down a gap between two houses. GERTRUDE is disappointed.

3. INT. CHAPEL, ST PATRICK'S GIRLS' SCHOOL, BRUNSWICK STREET. 6 DECEMBER 1917. MORNING.

A large rectangular room with a steeped ceiling. The walls and ceiling are painted white. The two long walls are lined with narrow stained glass windows. A dais with two speakers' stands is located against the far short wall. This wall houses two large and elaborate stained glass windows. An

Continued on next page...

aisle runs lengthwise down the middle of the room. Rows of chairs line both sides of the aisle. Nearly every chair is occupied by kneeling GIRL between the ages of four and twelve. The GIRLS are not dressed identically but we see a sea of plain, dark-coloured dresses under plain, light-coloured pinafores. The GIRLS face the large windows at the front of the room where a SISTER is leading the group in very loud prayer.

A door SLAMS. Some voices falter momentarily but most continue as if nothing has happened. The SISTER frowns. GERTRUDE enters the room at the back. She has one shoe on and is trying to walk and put her other shoe on at the same time. GERTRUDE hops up the aisle, looking for an empty chair. Several of the GIRLS on the aisle glance sideways at GERTRUDE with friendly, conspiratorial smiles. Others make a point of ignoring GERTRUDE. GERTRUDE'S expression remains serious, but her eyes are very bright. She exaggerates her hopping until—

SISTER  
Gertrude Cherry!

The GIRLS' prayers trail off. We hear shuffling as the GIRLS shift their full attention to the front of the aisle.

GERTRUDE  
Yes, Sister.

THE GIRLS start up a general low murmuring. The SISTER points to an empty chair in the front row. It is not necessary for GERTRUDE to speak, but she hams it up for her audience.

GERTRUDE  
Yes, Sister.

GERTRUDE pulls the heel of her shoe properly onto her foot. She leaves her untied laces dangling and kneels on the chair, facing the front.

The SISTER glares at the GIRLS and the murmuring quickly subsides. She opens her mouth to as if to speak but cuts herself off at the sound of a low but ominous RUMBLING. It sounds as if it is coming from outside the school. The SISTER twists her head toward the large windows at her back. There is a thunderous EXPLOSION. All the beautiful stained glass windows of the chapel SHATTER at once.

The ensuing scene is one of CHAOS. We see GIRLS flinging their arms over their heads protectively. We cannot hear anything over the sound of sounds

of destruction, of rubble, of breaking glass.

4. INT. LIVING ROOM, CHERRY HOUSE. 6 DECEMBER 1917. MORNING.

We see the top left-hand edge of a sturdy mahogany SIDEBOARD scattered with cut-glass objects of various shapes and sizes. The SIDEBOARD and the objects are covered in a fine uniform layer of dust. The paper on the wall is a mustard and cream damask. The room is dim but there is enough light to see a framed sepia PHOTOGRAPH hanging above the table. Women in stiff white dresses line either side of a set of stairs leading to the door of a CHURCH. The women wear white caps with a distinct black stripe. IRENE is at the front one of the rows. She has just become a NURSE.

PAN RIGHT to another PHOTOGRAPH, similar in size to the first and with the same ornate style of frame. IRENE'S husband JACK is seated in a chair. IRENE stands to his side, one arm presumably on the back of the chair, the other behind her back. IRENE wears a pale dress with long sleeves and a high collar. Her cathedral-length veil, trimmed with lace, pools on the floor at her husband's feet. JACK wears a dark double-breasted suit and light-coloured gloves. The spray of flowers pinned to his suit resembles a corsage rather than a boutonniere.

PAN RIGHT to a third PHOTOGRAPH, similar at first glance to the previous photograph. IRENE and JACK pose in the same studio wearing outfits nearly identical those they wore when they married. The veil and flowers are missing, however. JACK props GERTRUDE (at two, the only person not staring sombrely into the camera) on his knee with one hand.

PAN RIGHT to a final PHOTOGRAPH of JACK wearing a woollen tunic with shiny brass buttons. The maple leaf on his cap badge identifies him as a volunteer in the CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Beyond the PHOTOGRAPHS and the SIDEBOARD we see a broad expanse of damask-covered wall, empty but for several large, jagged shards of embedded GLASS.

On the far wall, perpendicular to the wall containing the GLASS, floor-length DRAPES cover a WINDOW. We see a scattering of SNOW blow into the room. The tails of the drapes twist in the wind. Suddenly we can hear the WIND as well. A large section of the DRAPES are sucked to the outside of the house through the open window. We hear a door SLAM.

Continued on next page...



5. INT. FRONT HALL, CHERRY HOUSE. 6 DECEMBER 1917. MORNING.

GERTRUDE stands with her back pressed against the front door. She is out of breath. The door panel above her head is heavily damaged. Pieces of jagged glass stick out the bottom of the frame. We cannot see outside. GERTRUDE'S shoes, laces untied, are dripping melted snow.

Gradually we become aware of voices nearby. Four or five women are speaking agitatedly, their voices overlapping. We can make out a few distinct phrases, places where a voice has risen almost in panic.

FIRST WOMAN

...harbour. We'd never 'ave known, would we 'ave?

SECOND WOMAN

...and on top of the blow-up, more snow tonight!

THIRD WOMAN

A blizzard, is what I heard...

We follow GERTRUDE'S gaze. At the end of the hall, opposite the front door, is the kitchen door. The door stands ajar and we can see the room is bursting with women, old and young. A BOY (aged two) runs into the hall and is immediately scooped up by the armpits by a YOUNG WOMAN. She is too distracted to notice GERTRUDE. The YOUNG WOMAN takes the BOY into the kitchen and closes the door. We can still hear voices, though not as distinctly.

6. INT. LIVING ROOM, CHERRY HOUSE. 6 DECEMBER 1917. MORNING.

GERTRUDE walks slowly into the living room. She has not taken off any of her winter clothes. She stops in front of the glass embedded in the wall. We can no longer hear voices coming from the kitchen. GERTRUDE pulls off one mitten and reaches a tentative hand towards the glass.

IRENE enters the living room with a stack of blankets in her arms. A BABY is wedged awkwardly between the blankets and IRENE.

IRENE

(makes a surprised noise)

She runs over to GERTRUDE and tries to hug her. The BABY and the blankets are in the way. Irene drops the blankets, settles the baby on her

Continued on next page...

chest, and hugs GERTRUDE tightly. GERTRUDE does not return the embrace.

GERTRUDE  
Is that H  l  ne?

IRENE  
(draws back)

Flo is looking everywhere for you and Claude. Did you see Claude? All of us, we're worried sick.

GERTRUDE'S head is pressed beside the BABY. We cannot see her face.

IRENE  
Did you see Claude?

GERTRUDE shakes her head.

IRENE  
(whispering)  
You're home.

IRENE straightens up and swipes tears from the corner of each eye. She shifts H  L  NE to her hip.

GERTRUDE  
I'm getting snow on the carpet.

IRENE  
Oh, it doesn't matter. Would you like to hold H  l  ne?

GERTRUDE appears to consider this request.

GERTRUDE  
No.

IRENE  
Well, be a dear and hold her for a minute, will you?

IRENE puts H  L  NE in GERTRUDE'S arms. IRENE gathers the abandoned blankets and moves out sight Intermittent HAMMERING starts up. It sounds very close.

GERTRUDE is clearly uncomfortable with H  L  NE. She finally manages

to settle HÉLÈNE against her side. GERTRUDE reaches out a finger and very carefully touches the jagged edge of one of the pieces of glass. She then takes HÉLÈNE'S finger and guides it to touch one of the smooth flat surfaces.

7. INT. GERTRUDE'S BEDROOM. 6 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

The attic room is dim. Light is cast only by an oil lamp which sits next to a small electric lamp not currently in use. GERTRUDE is sitting up in bed. She is wearing a cardigan sweater over a nightgown. There are dresses and coats thrown over the bed in place of blankets. We hear the WIND, loud and close, and then HAMMERING. The noise of the wind is muffled. IRENE comes into sight. She sits the edge of GERTRUDE'S bed. IRENE is wearing the oversized coat we saw her in earlier.

GERTRUDE

Why can't I come with you?

IRENE

(sighs)

You'll be safe here.

GERTRUDE

You're not even a nurse.

IRENE

I used to be.

GERTRUDE is silent. IRENE leaves. She comes back after a few moments carrying several BOOKS. IRENE sits down on the bed next to GERTRUDE, her back against the headboard. The books in her lap are in pristine condition. IRENE passes the books to GERTRUDE.

IRENE

For tonight.

GERTRUDE carefully opens one of the books. We see the title and author in large type: THE SNOW QUEEN by HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON. Above the title, in a copperplate hand, is written 'Irene Mary Williams: Her Book'. GERTRUDE flips through the pages. The text is dense to the point of being unreadable, but the book is illustrated with black ink line drawings. We see one particular drawing of the elegant SNOW QUEEN in her large sleigh. She bears a strong resemblance to IRENE. GERTRUDE smooths her hand

over the page. IRENE smooths GERTRUDE'S hair and kisses her on the forehead. GERTRUDE is mesmerised by the book. IRENE is both pleased by this, and disappointed.

IRENE  
Sweet dreams.

IRENE stands and looks for a long moment at GERTRUDE, but GERTRUDE does not look up from her book. IRENE turns to go.

8. INT. GERTRUDE'S BEDROOM. 6 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

The oil lamp has been extinguished. GERTRUDE is tucked up under the pile of dresses and coats, asleep. The BOOKS are in a neat stack on the bedside table. There is enough light still for us to see the titles: they are collections of FAIRY TALES. GERTRUDE shifts restlessly. She dreams.

9. EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD, HALIFAX'S NORTH END. 6 DECEMBER 1917. DAY.

We recognise the intersection of the two streets at which GERTRUDE stood earlier. Now, most of the houses are either flattened or in ruins. The houses that still stand are missing the glass from their windows. There is rubble everywhere: wood and bricks and broken glass. We see GERTRUDE'S bag, flattened and covered in so much dust it looks grey instead of blue. We recognise it by the raised embroidery. The garbage cans we saw earlier are severely dented and most are missing their lids. GERTRUDE walks down the street in her cardigan and nightgown. She is wearing her brown school shoes. There is snow on the ground but GERTRUDE does not appear to be cold. The laces of her shoes are tied neatly. It is eerily quiet.

Gertrude trips over a garbage can lid and discovers a BOY (aged eight) lying next to a heavily damaged brick wall. This is CLAUDE. He has a large shard of glass protruding from one eye and is quite clearly dead. GERTRUDE is dispassionate rather than distraught. She stands over CLAUDE, looking down. CLAUDE'S good eye flutters open. GERTRUDE backs away slowly, then turns and runs as fast as she can.

10. INT. GERTRUDE'S BEDROOM. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

The room is dark. GERTRUDE struggles to sit up, fighting with her makeshift covers. She sobs quietly but messily.

11. INT. GERTRUDE'S BEDROOM. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE lights the oil lamp and climbs into bed. She tosses and turns, unable to sleep.

12. INT. FRONT HALL, CHERRY HOUSE. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE, dressed, creeps down the stairs. The hallway is dim but we can see a strip of light under the kitchen door. We hear SOBBING coming from within, as well as indistinct murmurs of comfort.

Silently, GERTRUDE puts on her coat and hat, mittens and boots. She glances over her shoulder at the kitchen door before slowly easing open the front door.

13. EXT. HALIFAX. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE plods through debris, her eyes on the ground. She holds a hand to her throat to keep her coat closed. SNOW drifts from the sky. GERTRUDE comes across her canvas bag, embroidered with flowers, and eats a piece of bread meant for her lunch. While she is eating, MINETTE wanders over to GERTRUDE and MIAOWS loudly. GERTRUDE ignores MINETTE. MINETTE nudges GERTRUDE insistently. GERTRUDE swats MINETTE away. MINETTE remains nearby as GERTRUDE starts on a piece of cheese.

GERTRUDE

(loudly)

You? You don't deserve any.

MINETTE startles at GERTRUDE'S outburst. She runs a little ways away, reluctant to give up on the possibility of cheese.

GERTRUDE watches MINETTE. She watches the SNOW as it continues to fall on the ruins that surround them both.

GERTRUDE  
(still loudly)  
Okay, okay.

GERTRUDE starts towards MINETTE. MINETTE, perhaps still spooked by GERTRUDE, turns her back to GERTRUDE and moves on dainty feet across a pile of rubble. GERTRUDE has a small piece of cheese left. She follows MINETTE.

14. EXT. HALIFAX. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE follows MINETTE. She needs is forced to look ahead rather than at the ground. Around them, MEN shift the rubble, looking for survivors. They are too busy to take notice of GERTRUDE. Hearing the noise of shovels striking rock, GERTRUDE looks around, taking in her surroundings. We recognise the damaged brick wall from GERTRUDE'S dream. GERTRUDE recognises it as well. She freezes. MINETTE continues her inexorable route towards CLAUDE. GERTRUDE spins around wildly. She spots an abandoned school bag and hurls it at MINETTE. It is too heavy, and GERTRUDE'S hands are too clumsy with cold, for the bag to make its target. It flops to the ground a few feet from GERTRUDE. GERTRUDE runs to the bag, determined now to use its contents as projectiles. She pulls out an object at random: a slim brown book. 'Les Mathématiques' embosses its cover.

GERTRUDE'S attention is arrested. Even MINETTE, atop the wall, pauses. GERTRUDE'S eyes swim with tears and she brushes them away angrily. She thrusts CLAUDE'S book under her arm and yanks more items from the bag. GERTRUDE throws an apple and a small bundle wrapped in newsprint at MINETTE, but these too fall far short of the wall, swallowed by the SNOW. Gertrude faces MINETTE, perched stock-still atop the wall.

GERTRUDE  
(roars wordlessly)

GERTRUDE lunges sideways toward MINETTE, setting her off course, chasing her away from CLAUDE.

15. EXT. HALIFAX. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

MINETTE is no longer in sight. GERTRUDE walks briskly along a deserted street, CLAUDE'S book tucked under her arm. She turns her head in every direction, looking for a familiar landmark. She sees none. More houses

Continued on next page...

on this street are standing than otherwise, but all are dark. Discouraged, GERTRUDE slows. SNOW, which has been falling throughout, starts falling harder and harder. This is Halifax's worst BLIZZARD of the decade. GERTRUDE starts crying. She does not make any noise because she does not believe anyone with ever hear her.

Suddenly, GERTRUDE hears the faint but harsh jangle of sleigh bells. Far down the street she spots the high curved back of a sleigh. She wipes her cheeks and moves doggedly toward the sound of bells.

16. EXT. HALIFAX. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE, nearly running by now, catches up the sleigh. Two horses stand in front of the sleigh, bells bright on their bridles. GERTRUDE ignores the horses. She spots a kindly-looking man leaning on a shovel. He has been digging in the rubble for survivors but is taking a break to smoke his pipe. GERTRUDE turns her head, but there is no one else about.

GERTRUDE

You're not my mother.

MAN

I can't say I think much of your mother, letting you wander the streets on a night like tonight.

GERTRUDE

I want my mother.

The MAN gestures with his pipe to GERTRUDE'S book.

MAN

You like books, eh? Well, they've gone and turned that library into a hospital.

GERTRUDE

(interested)

Where?

The MAN smiles broadly, enormously pleased with his wit. He points. GERTRUDE takes off running.

17. EXT. HALIFAX. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

We see the outside of the LIBRARY, a large stolid building. As we move closer, we can see that the glass in the window frames has been blown out. Nonetheless, its windows blaze with warm, steady electric light. It is snowing harder than ever.

A small quick form emerges from the snow. This is GERTRUDE. She pounds up the library steps.

18. INT. LIBRARY. MAIN FLOOR. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE bursts through the large front doors of the library. The scene is one of ORGANISED CHAOS. The library is well-lit and as busy as if it were daytime. Both floors are scattered with cots, nearly all of which are occupied. MEN and WOMEN bustle from cot to cot, or else stand or sit next to particular cots, tending patients. Many of these patients are CHILDREN. In the background is the steady rhythm of constant conversation, punctuated every now and then by a shouted order, or a scream of pain, or a loud whimper.

Inside the library, GERTRUDE skids to a stop. She scans both the floor she is on and the next floor up. GERTRUDE does not see IRENE, nor do we. A few NURSES turn to look at GERTRUDE, but she does not appear injured and they quickly lose interest.

GERTRUDE walks quickly toward the stairs at the far end of the room. She scans each stack as she passes, hoping to catch sight of IRENE.

19. INT. LIBRARY. TOP FLOOR. 7 DECEMBER 1917. NIGHT.

GERTRUDE takes the stairs quickly. At the top she surveys the floor she has just gained. She does not see IRENE. She goes to the railing and leans over, scanning the floor below. She does not see IRENE. She turns around and targets a MAN standing nearby, wearing a stethoscope. He flips through pages attached to a clipboard.

GERTRUDE

(out of breath)

Have—you—seen—Irene Cherry? Nurse Cherry?

The DOCTOR looks up, annoyed at the interruption. He shakes his head.



DOCTOR

This is no place for a little girl.

GERTRUDE ignores him. She scans the floor again. All of a sudden she catches sight of IRENE at the far end of the floor. She is sitting next to a cot occupied by a YOUNG GIRL. IRENE holds the YOUNG GIRL'S hand and speaks softly to her. We do not hear what she is saying. She does not notice GERTRUDE.

GERTRUDE runs full tilt across the floor toward IRENE. She weaves between cots and narrowly avoids several collisions with DOCTORS and NURSES. She causes a commotion and soon IRENE looks up, startled. Her hair has come loose from its pins and she looks exhausted. IRENE'S expression is one of puzzlement at first, then annoyance, then finally joy.

IRENE lets go of the YOUNG GIRL'S hand. Before she can stand, GERTRUDE scrambles onto her mother's lap. She puts her arms around IRENE's neck. GERTRUDE still clutches CLAUDE'S book in one mittened hand. IRENE and GERTRUDE are both crying, GERTRUDE more so than IRENE. IRENE hugs GERTRUDE tightly. GERTRUDE presses her face against IRENE'S shoulder.

IRENE

It's okay. It's okay.

20. EXT. GRAVEYARD. HALIFAX. SUMMER 1918.

It is a bright summer day. We see row upon row of sharp new gravestones. Trees and shrubs dot the graveyard. There are no buildings in sight. IRENE and GERTRUDE walk down the path that cuts through the middle of the GRAVEYARD. IRENE wears a white nurse's uniform and cap. GERTRUDE wears a yellow cotton dress printed with tiny flowers. She carries a simple glass vase containing bunches of hand-picked DAISIES. GERTRUDE and IRENE walk in step, a foot apart from each other. They do not speak. They leave the path and cut amongst the graves. They know where they are going.

GERTRUDE and IRENE stop in front a particular grave. The stone reads:

CLAUDE HEBERT  
Beloved son of  
EDOUARD and FLORENCE  
June 29 1909–December 6 1917  
Requiescat in pace

Continued on next page...

GERTRUDE'S hand places the vase with the daisies carefully on the grass in front of the grave.

TITLE CARD

Winter will shake, spring will try,  
summer will show if you live or die.

—old superstition

TITLE CARD

On the morning of 6 December 1917, the munitions vessel Mont Blanc caught fire in Halifax Harbour. The resultant explosion devastated a large part of the city of Halifax, killed and wounded thousands and left thousands more homeless. It was the largest man-made explosion before the advent of the atomic bomb.

Many of the casualties were children.

END

**Becky Blunk**

Becky Blunk is an Academic Liaison Librarian for the Department of Children, Young People and Education, Psychology, Sociology and Social Work, Science and Technology, and the Suffolk Business School at UCS, where she is also currently a student on the MA in Learning and Teaching course. Becky is particularly interested in the life stories of students, as well as their perceptions of identity and the role it plays in their experiences as learners.

Becky was also heavily involved in the implementation and use of Lego Serious Play (LSP) within the institution as a means for encouraging student creativity and engagement with learning across departments and faculties. Becky has a BA in History from Louisiana State University and an MS in Library and Information Science from the University of North Texas.

This submission, completed as an assignment for the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion module of the MA in Learning and Teaching, was inspired by Becky's love of Expressionism and experiences teaching and supporting a range of students of various backgrounds, skills, and interests in her work as a librarian.

## All in it together: Inclusion in education

*All in it together: Inclusion in education* is a video submission. This will need to be viewed on an internet enabled device. Please click on the image below to launch the video on YouTube or go to: <http://bit.ly/1JstATA>

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