



# News

Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

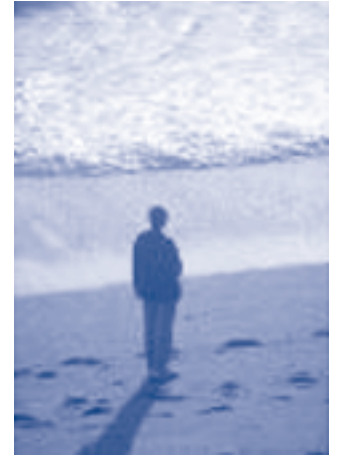
CRFR News 6 Winter 2004/05

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The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships was set up in January 2001 to produce research and commentary on families and relationships relevant to Scotland and to disseminate such work widely. It was established with a grant from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and receives funds from the Scottish Executive and various other sources. CRFR facilitates a network of researchers and those interested in families and relationships research, produces regular research briefings and information bulletins, and holds events.

# Not such a solitary existence



Following the release of the new Bridget Jones film, CRFR has received a lot of interest in its study of solo-living across the lifecycle.

The one-year study, has explored the circumstances and characteristics of the growing number of adults aged between 30 and 74 living alone, through secondary analysis of the cross-sectional Scottish Household and General Household Surveys and most recently, the longitudinal British Household Panel Survey (BHPS).

Our analysis has shown that the extent of solo living has gradually increased between 1991 and 2001, and that its likelihood varies by gender and age. Between the ages of 25-44 men are twice as likely as women to live on their own. And overall, men below the age of retirement are nearly 5% more likely to live on their own compared to women.

Almost a third of all UK households consist of one person. 15% of those aged 30-74, where people have traditionally been more likely to be married, now live on their

own. Scotland tops the UK with the highest proportion of single-living, 17.9% of Scots compared to 15% in England. However, the image of the lonely spinster or bachelor is also a dated one. Singletons have as much, or more, contact with friends and family as those living with others.

Adam Smith who has been working on the study said, "Solo living affects city populations in particular where single professionals often choose to settle and take advantage of a metropolitan lifestyle. What we regard as 'the norm' is changing and this has implications for families, relationships as well as working and housing arrangements."

The latest phase of research has focused on individuals' moving in and out of living alone. We have looked at how these transitions relate to other social and economic factors such as changes in marital status.

The study is currently drawing together findings from all the datasets analysed and a summary of conclusions will be presented in a CRFR Research Briefing in early 2005.

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In consortium with Glasgow Caledonian University and the Universities of Aberdeen, Glasgow and Stirling

# Young People's Experiences of Parental Drug and Alcohol Misuse

*"In time right, maybe when I move... after a few years I'll forgive them. Absence makes the heart grow fonder and all that crap. But I keep reminding myself, no I cannae forgive them because they did put me through absolute hell every single day of the week. It was twenty-four hours as well, you know." (Ian 23, mother and father alcohol misusers)*

**Parental drug and alcohol misuse can create considerable problems for children. CRFR, (funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation), carried out a study of the experiences of young people growing up in homes where drugs or alcohol were an issue. The study was published by JRF in October 2004 .**

## The study

We interviewed 38 young people, 15-27 years old, from a variety of backgrounds and current circumstances, who had a parent or parents with a drug or alcohol problem. Our interests were in the impact of parental substance misuse problems, how young people deal with the situation, and what policy and services can do to help. We were especially concerned that the voices of older children and those affected by alcohol problems were not presently being heard. Policy debates tend to focus on younger children – under the age of 16 – and on drug rather than alcohol use.

Recruitment for the project was a great challenge. This is a very difficult to reach group and only tenacity and a huge amount of legwork, along with the helpfulness of many service workers, allowed the fieldwork to be completed. The young people were recruited from services, a drug treatment clinic, and higher education institutions. We wanted a sample that was socially diverse, and which included young people not in touch

with services. To some extent we achieved this, although it may be that there is actually a higher proportion of young people who have not been involved with services than we found in our study.

## Findings

In common with other research in this field, we found that parental drug and alcohol problems created difficulties for children. Parents were reported as often not 'being there' for children. Parents could become a source of worry and concern for the child, some of whom adopted a parental role themselves, taking responsibility for the stability and wellbeing of the family.

*"I shouldnae have had to grow up like that. I wouldnae say I grew up.... I would say I've been dragged up because I had to do all that" (Emma 21 mother alcohol misuser)*

*"My mum used to protect me... She'd be like 'right just go up to your room and pretend you're sleeping'...She said she'll have a word with him and try and calm him down...And I'd hear my mum screaming at night as well. When he used to hit her." (Robbie 18, stepfather alcohol misuser)*

The effects of drug and alcohol use were broadly similar, but there were some differences, with young people's accounts suggesting that violence was strongly associated with alcohol misuse. Alcohol was more public and could create problems on special occasions, whereas drug use created more worry and stigma for children.

## Resilience

Part of the focus of the work was to look at what helped young people

cope in these circumstances. Knowing that they were 'cared about' even when not particularly well cared for, was very important to the young people.

*"Just one, just as long as one person can, one parent can hold it together I think is the main thing"* (Jemma 22, father heroin misuser)

Adults other than parents could also play a significant role, and when young people had a strong personal relationship with a service provider this was highly valued. Others could step in to help: grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbours, could all be involved in looking after and looking out for children. When they had these kinds of support, the young people felt themselves to be in a better position; when they did not, the accounts they gave were especially bleak.

Some young people tried to separate themselves from the situation when they could, either by not being in the house through going out, going to friends houses, to school, or by going to their rooms. Some of the people interviewed tried to challenge or assert control over their parent's substance misuse, either confronting the parent about it, or removing substances from them. Most of these attempts were

earlier in the young people's lives and by their mid-teens most seemed to have given up thinking they might be able to do anything to control their parent's substance misuse.

*"My dad's a druggie, ken...it's the way he is now, eh, he's decided"* (Tom 22 and Peter 25, fathers heroin misusers)

### The future

In interviews we looked both back and forwards across the young person's life, elucidating accounts of their lives up to the time of interview, and asking them to think about their future trajectories. Some were strongly 'future oriented.' They had a well worked out plan to move ahead with. Others were very much living in the present, taking their lives day by day. Many of the latter were struggling with drugs problems themselves. Of course we are in no position to make judgements as to who is likely to be in a worse or better situation in 5 or 10 years time. We must also bear in mind that 'just taking things day by day' can be a perfectly sensible and robust response to a situation of

*"I'm pretty optimistic about the future. I'm looking forward to it. I mean I'm enjoying my time now, but...I'm looking forward to travelling and painting and things like that."*  
(Julia 16, mother and father alcohol misusers)

ongoing precariousness, uncertainty or difficulty. What is apparent is that all the young people were dealing with the legacies of parental drug and alcohol use problems while they were at various points in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. One of the ways in which they dealt with this legacy was to try and reclaim some of the freedoms of childhood that had been lost to them.

The research highlighted how family structures and dynamics change under stresses such as heavy drug and alcohol use. Roles within the family alter, responsibilities shift, and the threads of care and support extend outwith the nuclear family to include the extended family, friends, neighbours and service workers. Like a net, strain on one part warps the shape of the whole, but it takes a lot for it to be entirely broken. The more threads in the net, the better for the child facing this strain.

*The report was written by Angus Bancroft, Sarah Wilson, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Kathryn Backett-Milburn and Hugh Masters and published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, who funded the project.*

# Event report



**The research report, 'Parental Drug and Alcohol Misuse: Resilience and Transition Among Young People,' was launched at a special event at the University of Edinburgh on Thursday 21st October.**

The launch event was attended by a mainly practitioner audience, with some policy workers and academics. Glenn Liddall of the Sunflower Garden project spoke on supporting children affected by drug use. The Sunflower Garden project works with children and parents who have a drug problem. Glenn spoke about the work of the project in the context of issues raised in the report. An extensive and lively discussion followed. Feedback from the launch event was entirely positive, with participants particularly interested in ways in which they might use the research in their work:

*"It is always useful to be aware of current research and policy issues that allow us practitioners to step back from the practicalities of provision and look at the 'bigger picture'."*

*"This is a developing agenda in respect of which good research is scarce. We will look at the findings to see what lessons there are for policy development"*

This is a summary of our new and recently completed projects. For our full range of research activity please visit [www.crfr.ac.uk](http://www.crfr.ac.uk)



# Research round up

## Families, relationships, government and services

### Sure Start Scotland Evaluation: Mapping Exercise 2004

CRFR and the Scottish Centre for Social Research have been commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department, Research and Economic Unit to conduct a second mapping exercise of Sure Start Services in Scotland. CRFR conducted the first mapping exercise in 2001. Since then it is anticipated that a range of further developments will have taken place across local authorities in Scotland. This mapping exercise will measure developments against the 2001 baseline as well as identifying whether factors identified as helping or hindering service development in 2001 are still relevant. The research will involve the gathering of quantitative and qualitative data from all 32 local authorities in Scotland, with two further in-depth case studies. The research began in October and will be completed in March 2005.

For further information contact Amanda Carty or Sarah Cunningham Burley.

kinship relationships and to assess how well family law mirrors public views. CRFR is collaborating with the Scottish Centre for Social Research on a family change and family law module in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. This work is being jointly funded by the Scottish Executive Legal Studies Research Branch and the Nuffield Foundation. The module aims to increase our understanding of public knowledge and views about the rights and obligations of same and opposite sex cohabitants, step-parents and grandparents, and the extent to which family obligations - both moral and legal - should be based on ties of social parenthood, as distinct from or in addition to, biological parenthood. The study will interview a representative sample of the adult Scottish population to establish the extent to which family law is in tune with existing social norms, how far the imminent reform of family law in Scotland will improve the fit between the law and social norms, and how accurate is the public's understanding of family law. Fieldwork is underway.

For further information contact Fran Wasoff.

steering group comprising of partners from CRFR and Glasgow Caledonian University has been set up alongside an advisory group. This advisory group has recruited both external and internal partners.

This first stage of empirical work sets out to identify how women working in the Scottish food retail sector, experience family-work balance. Nine food retail businesses have been enlisted: one large business (Scottish Co-op); and eight SMEs.

Twenty-one interviews with women have been undertaken, informing the development of a questionnaire, due to be administered in the New Year, to approximately 1000 women working within these nine companies. The first conference paper exploring key themes from the interview analysis, will be presented at an international conference entitled 'Community, Work and Family: Change and Transformation' at Manchester Metropolitan University, in March 2005.

Currently, four survey sections entitled: your job; you and your family; policies; and your comments, have been developed in an attempt to gather detailed evidence from women on their experiences of work, health and caring, their anticipation of future employment, and their training and financial issues. The questionnaire has recently been piloted to women working in another Scottish food retail company. Respondents may enter into two, £100 prize draws. Preliminary survey analysis is anticipated early in 2005.

For further information contact Laura Rankine.

## Social inclusion, families and relationships

### Family change and family law module in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey

As families in Scotland become more diverse in form, and as family transitions have become more commonplace, there is a need to develop a fuller understanding of public attitudes to

## Health and wellbeing, families and relationships

### Work-Life Balance in Scottish Food Retail Companies

Stage 1 of the three-year European Social Fund project, exploring the work-life balance of women employed within food retail businesses in Scotland, is now well underway. An academic

## Children, young people, families and relationships

### Children's concerns about health and wellbeing

CRFR has collaborated with ChildLine Scotland (a telephone counselling service for children and young people) to examine children's concerns about the health and well-being of their parents' and significant others' and how this impacts upon their lives. Utilising ChildLine's unique caller database which contains both quantitative and qualitative data, the research team are examining approximately 9,000 records from children aged 11 to 15.

The key themes identified so far are:

- Children who are concerned about the health and well-being of their parents' and significant others' report these as forming part of, or contributing to, a complex set of problems.
- Children are primarily concerned about how their parents' and significant others' health and well-being issues impact upon their own lives.
- Parental alcohol misuse is the most frequently discussed health issue accounting for 28% of the calls.
- Children communicate a complex understanding of factors that lead to the onset of health and well-being problems for their parents' and significant others'. For example, many children discuss factors such as bereavement, unemployment or divorce and separation as leading to parental substance abuse, depression or mental health problems.

This research will be launched at a conference in Spring 2005. There will be opportunities for policy-makers and practitioners to contribute to developing policy and practice implications in the lead up to the launch.

For further information contact Sharon Ogilvie-Whyte at CRFR.

### Cool with Change

The young people and family change project, now known as 'Cool with Change', is a collaboration between CRFR and Scotland's Families. The project aims to explore the effects of family change on young people's

informal support systems and their coping mechanisms, as well as eliciting young people's views on service provision.

The survey questionnaire has now been developed and piloted with a wide range of young people, many of whom have experienced family regrouping. This was administered in Glasgow schools in November 2004. The questionnaire aims to recruit young people for interview and gather baseline data from Scottish pupils aged 11-14, in particular their experiences of family change and their views about support systems. The main interview phase began early in 2005. The Cool with Change research team will also recruit young consultants in participating secondary schools through a survey of older children. We will meet with our young consultants at key stages throughout the life of the project. Our first meeting, early in 2005, focused on developing the interview guide. In subsequent meetings the young consultants will advise the research team on dissemination strategies and ideas for service development.

See the Cool with Change web page for further details: [www.cfr.ac.uk/Research/coolwithchange.html](http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Research/coolwithchange.html)

## Older people, families and relationships

### CARE – growing older with a learning disability and dementia.

This project is a collaboration between CARE (an organisation that provides residential and day services to people with a learning disability) and CRFR. Phase one of this project (a review of current literature and health/social care policy in the area) has now been completed. Following extensive work on the ethics protocols, COREC and ADSS have given permission for us to begin phase two. This phase involves a range of methods and approaches to understand better what different stakeholders perceive to be important when a person with a learning disability (LD) develops dementia. People with an LD and dementia at CARE will be interviewed, along with their paid supporters, practitioners and family members. An ethnographic strand to the work also means that Liz Forbat will

be spending extended time with CARE, getting to understand their systems and identify their strengths and where there is room for improvement. Phase three will begin in Spring 2005. This will be an opportunity to implement good practice protocols across CARE.

For further information please contact Liz Forbat, Heather Wilkinson or Diana Kerr.

## Dementia, families and relationships research

Following the successful launch of the recent Home for Good Report (Wilkinson et al) the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have now funded two new projects in the area of aging and learning disability. The first, 'Top Tips' is producing a pack of materials for direct care staff and will be completed by Christmas 2004. The second project is for 16 months and explores the pain detection and management practices of staff working with older people with LD and dementia.

In relation to this area of work, Professor Chris Bigby spent two weeks with us in December. Chris is well known for her research and practice development work around social relationships among people with a learning disability. Chris took part in a workshop for PhD students on December 6th and was the keynote speaker at a day event in Newcastle on December 7th.

CRFR were well represented at the Gerontology Society of America Annual Conference held in Washington DC in November 2004. Liz Forbat presented a paper and Heather Wilkinson hosted a symposia on Critical Health Issues, as well as chairing the formal special interest group on Developmental Disabilities.

**Recent publications:** Wilkinson H and Kerr D (2004) Top Tips: fact sheet for caring for people with learning disability and dementia. York. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Wilkinson H and Kerr D (2004) Dementia and learning disability. Plain Facts materials. Bristol. Norah Fry Institute.

# Postgraduate students at CRFR

There is a group of postgraduate students attached to CRFR, with some based at the University of Edinburgh, and others in our collaborating institutions. Some are funded through collaborative studentships (known as CASE studentships) by the ESRC, whilst others are funded through the ESRC's open competition, or other means.

Susan Elsley



**Heroes and Heroines or just like us? Children's views on childhood in children's books**

This study explores children's views on how childhood is represented in children's books. It considers children's perspectives as to whether fictional texts accurately reflect their everyday lives and relationships, comparing these with children's experience of other forms of popular culture such as television and films. The research aims to gain a better understanding of how children view childhood, seeking insights into the role and importance of books and other media in children's lives and their significance in providing cultural and social spaces for children. Qualitative research with children and young people aged 10 to 14 years is currently being undertaken.

Susan is studying part time for her PhD and holds a policy and research post with Save the Children. She has a longstanding interest in research with children and young people.

Mary Anne Kochenderfer



**Healing communities: music as therapy for trauma**

This project investigates music programs designed to rebuild and heal war-torn communities and young people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Music programs first became popular as a form of post-war therapy in Bosnia-Herzegovina and these programs are being replicated in other war-torn regions. Research examines established, but unevaluated, music

therapy and community music programs with therapeutic aims in Bosnia by exploring young clients' perceptions of therapeutic music programs and how these perceptions agree with or differ from those of the musicians and music therapists running the programs. Results of this research will provide a greater understanding of the purpose and value of music as a form of therapy for post-war trauma.

Mary Anne Kochenderfer is studying for a PhD in Community Health Sciences in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine under the supervision of Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Kathryn Backett-Milburn. She received a B.A. in music and an M.A. in Education from Stanford University (in June 2002) and taught secondary school in California for one year before moving to Scotland.

Find out more about all our phd students and their research on our website: [www.crfr.ac.uk/Research/phdpge.htm](http://www.crfr.ac.uk/Research/phdpge.htm)

## recently published

**The effect of parental substance abuse on young people.** Findings 064 October 2004, JRF (available free on the JRF website) [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

Bancroft, A et al (2004) **Parental drug and alcohol misuse: resilience and transition among young people.** JRF - price £13.95.

Wilkinson H and Kerr D (2004) **Top Tips: fact sheet for caring for people with learning disability and dementia.** York. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Wilkinson H and Kerr D (2004) **Dementia and learning disability.** Plain Facts materials. Bristol. Norah Fry Institute.

Forbat, L (2005) **Talking about care: two sides to the story.** Bristol: The Policy Press.

# events

## Conference

### Caring for health: families and the NHSS

**21st January 2004**  
**Apex Hotel, Edinburgh**

Families and relationships are crucial to quality of life and have a critical role to play in the NHSS, as carers, supporters, and partners in care. This one day conference will explore ways in which evidence can contribute to a better understanding of the role of families as potential partners in the development of the NHSS for the 21st century.

For further details and a booking form go to [www.crfr.ac.uk/Events/caringforhealth.html](http://www.crfr.ac.uk/Events/caringforhealth.html)

## ESRC Seminar series

### The Ethics of Care: Implications for Research, Policy and Practice, ESRC Seminar series 2005

The series will comprise three seminars:

1. Professional Discourses and Practices of Care, Reading, March 2005
2. Citizenship, Social Movements and Care, Newcastle, June 2005
3. Global Trends and Practices, Glasgow, August 2005

Further information will be circulated through CRFR networks in the coming months.

### Non-familial relationships across the lifecourse, ESRC seminar series 2004/5

#### Seminar 5:

Learning from non-familial relationships, 7th March 2005, Edinburgh.

For further details please go to our website: [www.crfr.ac.uk](http://www.crfr.ac.uk)



### Professor Lynn Jamieson Inaugural Lecture 22nd November 2004

Professor Lynn Jamieson's inaugural lecture explored ideas of changing families and intimacy and how these ideas are played out in public discourse. She explored the pessimistic view of family change characterised by a belief in declining families, lack of community and increasing selfishness as well the more optimistic view of family change as bringing more open equal relationships, and more freedom to be who you want to be. She suggested that both of these ideas leave a gap between how families and relationships are talked about, and the lived reality of most people's lives. Research suggests that we are not as selfish and self-obsessed as pessimists indicate but many relationships don't match the optimistic ideal, and sustaining 'good relationships' typically involves more than the mutually appreciative talk optimists emphasise.

The text of her lecture is available on the CRFR website.

# crfr people

## new staff

### **Laura Marshall**

#### **Training and Events Administrator**

Laura has joined CRFR in this new post. She worked for the last 8 years with Hilton Hotels, based at Edinburgh Airport as Event Manager responsible for the co-ordination and all revenue streams for 22 meeting rooms and an event team of 5 staff. She has recently returned from maternity leave after her son Jacob was born in March 2004.

### **Laura Rankine**

#### **Research Fellow**

Laura has a BA Joint Honours in Psychology and Human Resource Management and is currently finalising her MSc in Occupational Psychology. She is working on a subsequent ESF project, in partnership with CRFR, examining the work-life balance of women employed within the Scottish food retail sector whilst Laura Airey is on maternity leave.

### **Rachel Adam**

Rachel finished work on the South Ayrshire Project and has been involved in Sure Start. She will take up her ESRC fellowship on 1st April.

### **Shirley Davidson**

Shirley returned to CRFR to work with Heather Wilkinson on projects related to dementia, families and relationships.

### **Amanda Carty**

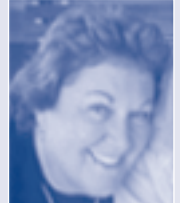
Amanda returned to CRFR to work on the Sure Start mapping exercise.

## congratulations

### **Kathryn Backett-Milburn has been awarded a Personal Chair of the Sociology of Families and Health**

Kathryn graduated in Sociology from the University of Edinburgh, where she also did her PhD. Since then she has continued working at the University, as a contract researcher, in the Departments of Sociology and Geography and, for much of the past 20 years, in the Research Unit in Health, Behaviour and Change (RUHBC). In 2001 she co-founded and became co-Director of CRFR. Kathryn's research interests have focused on the sociology of the family and of health and illness, with a special interest in health promotion/public health.

Kathryn is a Geordie who migrated very happily to settle in Scotland. She is inordinately proud of her two grown up sons who, to her great surprise, are progressing careers in product design and sport and primary teaching.



## goodbye and thanks

Angus Bancroft has left to take up a lecturing post in the School of Social and Political Studies, whilst continuing to collaborate with colleagues here at CRFR on research projects.



## babies

CRFR has two new babies! Daniel was born to Sarah Wilson in August and Laura Airey had Christopher in October. Mothers and babies are all doing well and we look forward to welcoming Sarah and Laura back to work in due course.



## research briefing series

**Research Briefing 19**  
**Supporting vulnerable young people**  
January 2005

**Research Briefing 18**  
**Women and health technologies**  
September 2004

**Research Briefing 17**  
**Growing older with a learning disability and dementia**  
June 2004