

Hayes, Tracy (2018) My post-doctoral journey and plans, highlighting my successes. In: Research and Enterprise Committee Meeting, 14 December 2018, University of Cumbria, Carlisle, UK. (Unpublished)

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**Dr Tracy Ann Hayes (2018) *My post-doctoral journey and plans, highlighting my successes.*  
Presentation to Research & Enterprise Committee, University of Cumbria, 14 December 2018.**

In March this year, I was awarded PhD in Transdisciplinary Research in Outdoor Studies for my study titled: 'Making Sense of Nature: A creative exploration of young people's relationship with the natural environment'. The natural world is under threat from human activities and we need to consider how we protect places, people, animals and plants found there. My focus is on how we can engage the public in this (especially children, young people and families). I am creative in my approach, preferring everyday language and utilising stories. My work emphasises the importance of communication, how we talk to/with people, and how we talk about nature and conservation – the language we use. I also make teddy bears – over 250 so far – that act as an engagement tool and as a way of emphasising a playful approach to outdoor learning. I am sometimes referred to as Dr Bear!

What the examination process and final stages of my doctorate taught me, is that we do not do these things on our own. I was fortunate to have two experienced, knowledgeable supervisors, as well as a network of supportive friends, mentors and colleagues. The examination process added to this, with two constructively critical examiners who challenged my thinking and offered me post-doctoral opportunities to continue developing my work. This has included writing:

- a short journal article, titled 'Dr Bear and the Adventure Bears' in response to John Horton's viewpoint 'For the love of cuddly toys', published in *Children's Geographies*. He has recently invited me to co-author a book, along with another academic from Portsmouth University.
- a book chapter on 'Bear Illustrations in Children's Literature', co-authored with Heather Prince and Ian Convery, for inclusion in a book, titled: 'The Bear: A Cultural and Natural Heritage'.
- another book chapter, co-authored with Heather Prince, called 'Shared-story approaches in Outdoor Studies: the HEAR (Hermeneutics, Auto/Ethnography and Action Research) 'listening' methodological model' for inclusion in a book, titled: 'Research Methods in Outdoor Studies'.

In addition, I've written another book chapter on auto/biographical research and I've edited a book, titled 'Storytelling: Global Perspectives on Narrative'. To do this successfully, I found two people to co-edit with me – one a retired reader of mathematics from Bristol, the other a lecturer living and working in South Africa. Between us we edited 30 chapters by authors from across the world, bringing these together to form a cohesive book which is now in production – due out early next year.

In terms of impact, I am going to focus on three things: BERA (British Educational Research Association); RGS (Royal Geographical Society) and UoC (University of Cumbria). I will then provide an overview of some of my other achievements.

1) BERA: In late October, I gained approval to form a new special interest group (SIG) within BERA, to be co-convened with Dr Mark Leather, University of St Mark & St John – called ‘Nature, Outdoor Learning and Play (NOLAP) – we will launch this with a high-profile event in Spring next year. Aligned to this, I am developing a new research proposal for a collaborative exploratory study into Nature, Outdoor Learning and Play (NOLAP) as a means of encouraging healthy and sustainable lifestyles. I aim for this to include working with Public Health, as well as educational partners.

In September 2018, I was awarded the Anna Craft Creativities in Education Prize by BERA Creativities in Education Special Interest Group. This means a lot to me. I first joined the SIG in 2015, at the BERA annual conference in Belfast. Unfortunately, I never met Anna Craft, who had died of cancer the previous November, aged 52. She was known for championing the role of creativity in education and for developing the term “possibility thinking”, which is used to describe the move from *what is* to *what might be*. One of her obituaries describes her as “A spirited and engaging colleague ... warm, wise, respectful of others’ perspectives and able to possibility-think her way forward whatever the challenge”. Her approach to creativity is something I aim to emulate in my work.

2) RGS: During my PhD, I was elected to the role of conference officer of the Geographies of Children, Youth & Families Research Group (GCYFRG), one of the special interest research groups at the RGS. This year I completed my three-year term of office, and was asked to stand for another term of three years. I was also successful in my application to become a Fellow of the RGS – recognition of the geographical focus for much of my work. I attend their annual conference each year, both as a convener of sessions and a presenter.

In June 2015 I was awarded the Reflective Essay Postgraduate Prize by The Higher Education Research Group (HERG) – one of the RGS’ other SIGs. This essay has now been revised and accepted for publication as a book chapter, titled ‘Developing an academic identity: What’s the time Mrs Wolf?’, in a book on ‘Research Impact and the Early Career Researcher’, part of Routledge’s Higher Education Studies Series. I am exploring some creative projects focused around storied approaches to research and conservation education – in particular, I want to rewrite the Little Red Riding Hood story from the wolf’s perspective. This will be clearly related to conservation education initiatives and how we can communicate with the general public.

3) UoC: In May last year, after handing in my thesis for examination, before the VIVA, I was awarded an Early Career Researcher Grant by UoC to support post-doctoral study, for a new project titled ‘Playing with Words... Connecting through Story’. This award enabled me to travel to Canada to present two posters and a playshop at the International Play Association, and to undertake fieldwork in both UK and Canada on public conservation education initiatives. I am particularly interested in how we address the ‘predator/carnivore issue’, which is relevant to re-wilding work in the UK (and elsewhere). From this I am developing a number of papers, presentations and further research ideas, with dissemination and output activities aimed at a diverse audience, including academics, students, practitioners, policy makers and the general

public. A year earlier, in June 2016, I was the recipient of the (previous) Vice-Chancellor's Award for Early Career Research Excellence.

Summarising my non (or rather less) academic achievements, in May 2016, I was painted by Freya Pocklington as part of her project 'Women's Work', part of the National Trust's programme of activities celebrating 150 years since Beatrix Potter's birth. This was on public display from 2nd September to 27th November 2016, with an audio recording of me reading a story and links to my research. As a volunteer with the NT, I was also involved in the celebrations and spent her birthday in her garden at Hill Top, reading her stories (mainly Peter Rabbit) to visitors from across the world – a dream come true. Following on from this, I was interviewed on why I volunteer which was published in the National Trust Members' magazine.

In the latter phase of my PhD, I was commissioned by one of the organisations that participated in my research, to develop a toolkit, titled 'We're ALL in the Wild. An inclusive guide to supporting young people with SEN/D to discover their local outdoor spaces'. As part of this commission, I delivered a CPD workshop for practitioners from across the North of England to encourage social action in outdoor spaces with young people who may have SEN/D. This commission introduced me to HASCE, and I have since undertaken commissioned research and evaluations with them – something I really enjoy. For example, I worked the evaluation of activity and engagement related to the delivery phase of the SNROS Heritage Lottery Funded Project: 'Back On Our Map' (BOOM)- which gave me the opportunity to make the most of my skills related to nature, wildlife and engagement with people. I have also been involved in HASCE's recent bid to DEFRA – unfortunately not successful, although a great learning experience. Alongside this, I was contacted by an external organisation – an evaluation design agency – who have included me within their bid to DEFRA, as a topic expert on youth volunteering and engagement. Fingers crossed they are successful.

The focus of my presentation today has been my research – however as a full-time lecturer my research has informed my teaching – for example: my work has impacted on the way we approach undergraduate research in WCF. Last week I was invited to Lancaster University as a guest lecturer to deliver a session on Research Methods for Children's Geographies – and really enjoyed working with students from another university and sharing my research with them. Next week, I will be volunteering alongside some of our students in Haverigg prison, supporting families to visit their loved ones at Christmas – this supported student volunteering project is now in its third year and is something I love being involved in.

I want to thank you for asking me to give this presentation today – preparing for this has made me to go over the last few years to gain an overview of my progress. I now know that I have given 35 oral presentations; four of these have subsequently been published; nine poster presentations and written (or in process of writing) 6 book chapters – and edited a book. With regard to my future plans, I have papers and book chapters to complete, and others in the early stages of development. I want to continue enjoying what I do and exploring new areas of work. I am ready for new challenges and I am looking forward to attending the research event at York St John in January – thank you Diane Cox for putting my name forward. I have many plans but I also want to stay open and responsive to new ideas as they emerge – as this is an approach that has been successful for me so far.