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Reading Circles as Adult Literacy Education

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http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/CPEN_13.html

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Reading Circles...

- are centred around a written text
- involve reading
- are non-hierarchical
- involve turn-taking
- are collaborative
- involve peer teaching and learning
- are based on discussion
- are therefore a particularly **adult** form of education



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Research case study 1

Researcher motivation:

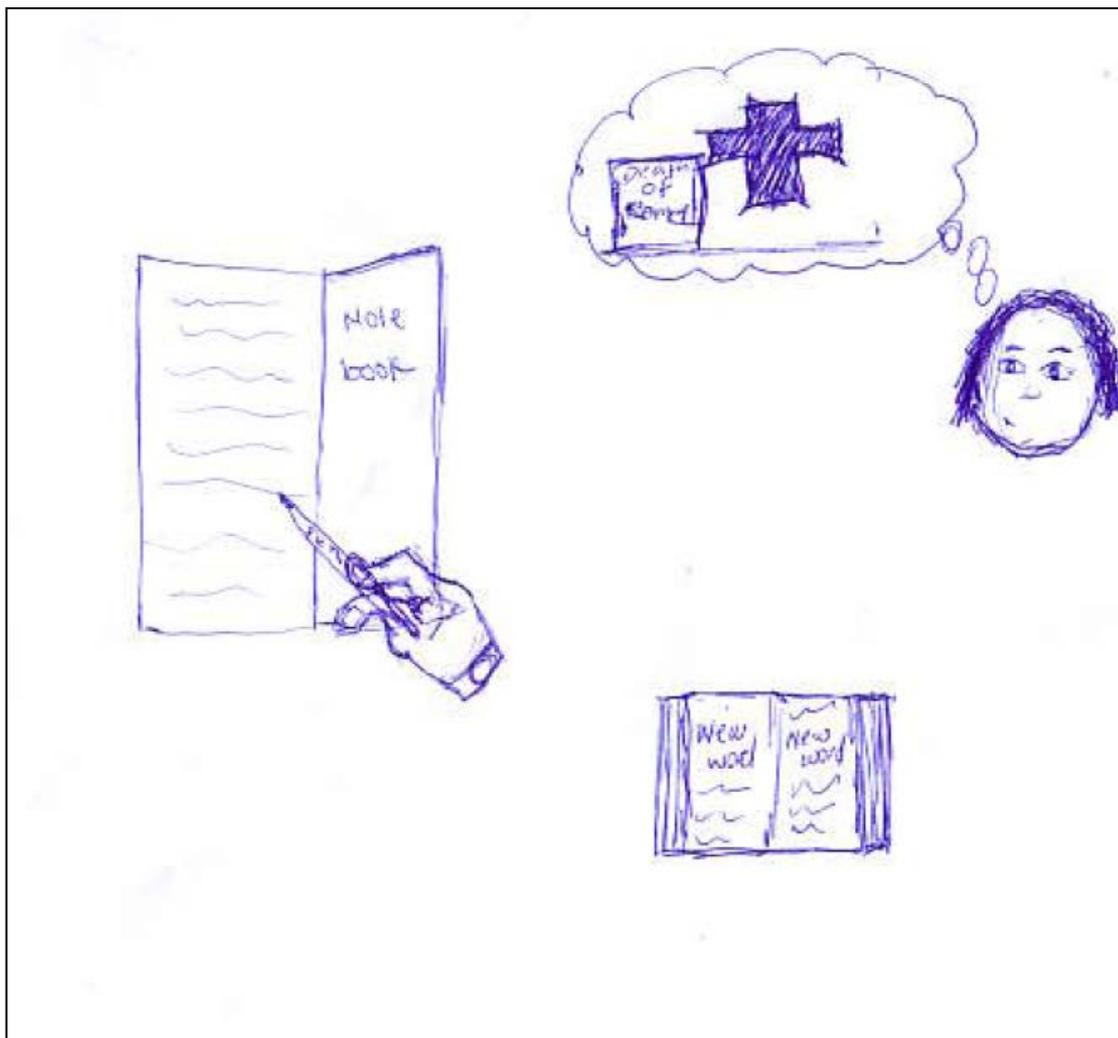
- Better, different, more *adult* ways to develop adult emergent reading
- Interest in the relationship between fiction and literacy development
- Interest in communal reading practices

Learners' motivation:

- Desire to try reading more, different, longer texts
- Read stories and novels
- Increase confidence reading
- Talk together as a group
- Practice reading aloud
- Learn new words



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That's the notebook that I took the notes down in, and that's me imagining what's going on, about Roma and things, and then that's me looking up new words in the dictionary, to learn new words. These were the main things that I was doing.



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Journey to reading books,

+ makes my job enjoy by

looking for new life of reading for me.

~~It is my new~~



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Right, ‘the journey to reading books’ it means that now I can pick up a novel or a book, knowing that I can read it and I will understand. And ‘to make my job enjoyable’ because I understand if something is written down I can read it, because they do a lot of writing and if the nurse is not there I just have to pick it up and read what they have done, without them –the care plan I can do that. And actually I’m looking forward to a new life of reading for myself.



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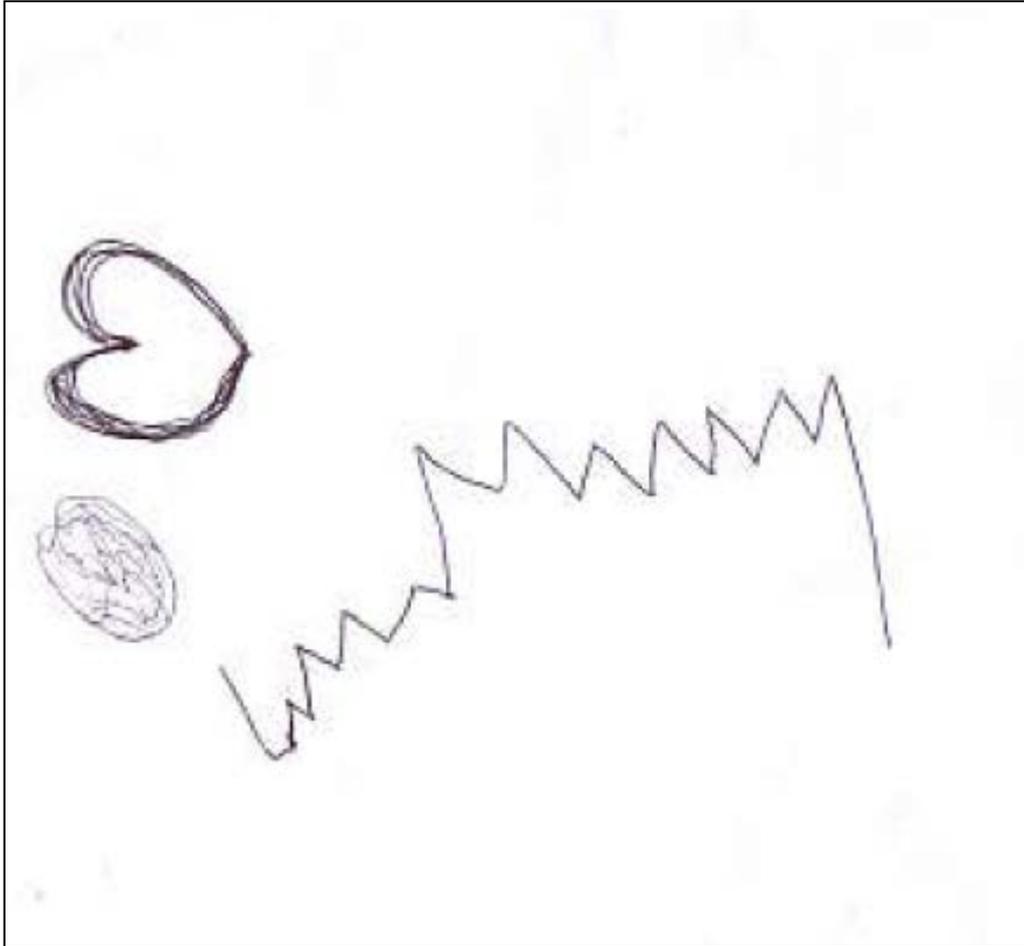


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It's a cake [...] Everybody liked it. We all took part in it. And it was complementary. Everybody was complementing, trying to understand, trying to understand each other's points.... Everybody had the physical cake, the book. Everybody could pick it up and eat it whenever they felt like it... I don't think there's any boundaries...everybody took part; [...] there wasn't any boundaries, everybody explored, everybody was free, explored their own...wasn't afraid to explore.



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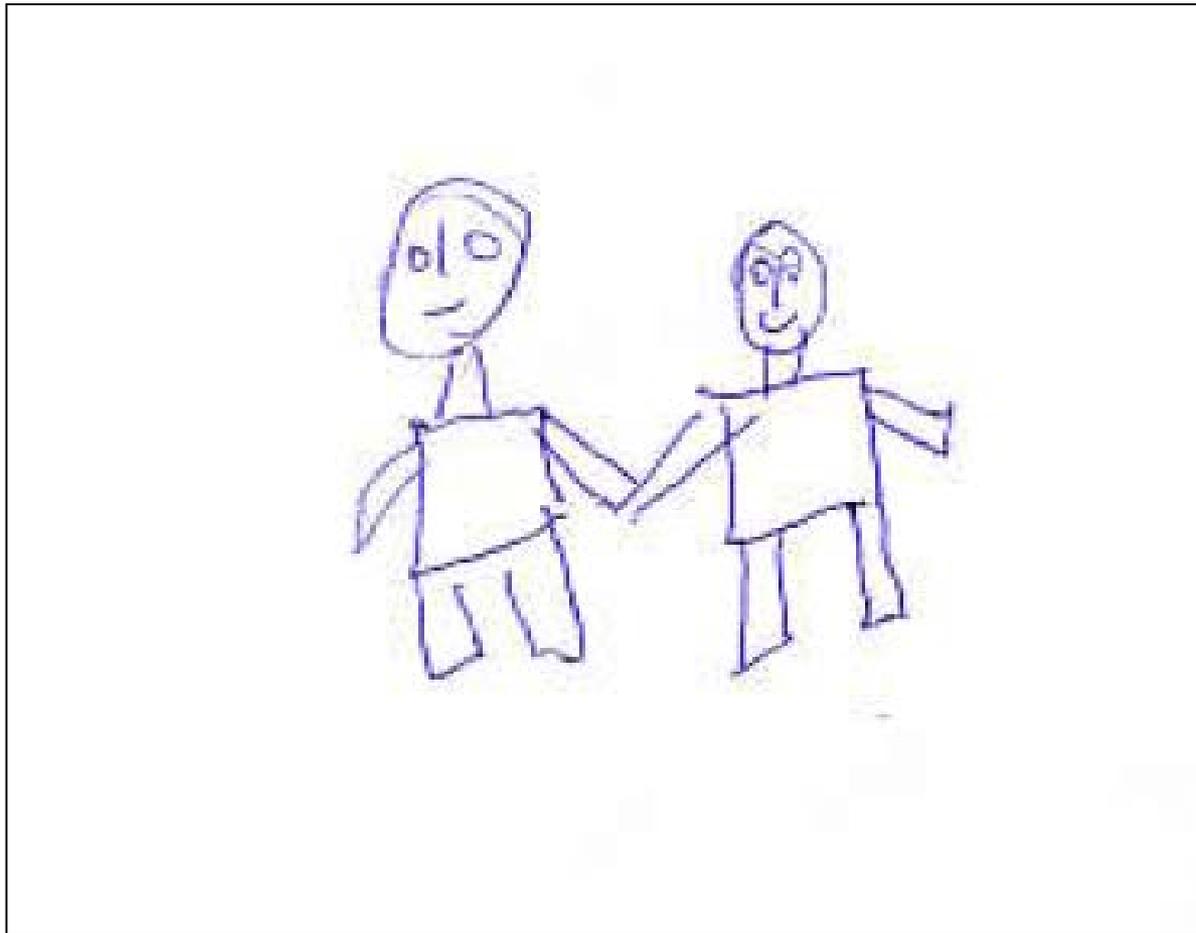


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That's the brain, and the heart, and this is, like, when I start to read and I am happy and I like it, I am happy it goes up and then it goes down because I feel sad about it and then up more and then down more [...] most of them [emotions] come from my brain. No, my heart- no, both of them- it's your heart and brain. When she [the reader] is reading something happy she is happy and when things are not right in the story and she feels sad; it changes as she reads.



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It's a brother and a sister, with arms joined [...] I think it's about compassion, all about compassion. His compassion for her and her compassion for him. [...] Sometimes we are narrow minded and see things just from our point of view, and someone has to remind us to be open, to understand what happens to other people and understand other people.



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Reading circles as ‘ideal andragogy’

- Peer teaching and learning
- Mutual exchange of expertise
- Mutual scaffolding
- A ‘negotiated syllabus’ (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000)
- Participant-led differentiation
- Literacy and language needs met
- ‘Learning words’: decoding & vocabulary, reading aloud, listening and recording (study skills, spelling)
- Learning about the world, others’ lives, working in groups

See Duncan 2012 for findings on reading and novel reading



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Research case study 2

Two reading circles in libraries in Greater London: two observations of sessions, 2 focus groups, 6 interviews, in one month.

Motivated by a desire to better understand '***Reading for Pleasure***' for emerging adult readers

A pedagogic label: what pleasure?

- entertainment and escape
- cognitive work and narrative creation
- emotional stimulation, empathy and intersubjectivity
- ethical contemplation: the should and could
- companionship



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Benefits

- Personal skills and ‘reading identity’ (cycles of confidences, practices and skills)
- Achievement...being someone ‘able to...’
- Telling the stories of who we are
- Family and community participation, libraries as community hubs
- Learning
- ‘Connected-ness’



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Duncan, S. (2013) *Understanding Reading for Pleasure for emerging adult readers*. NRDC: London.

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