

Mr Michael **Brodski**

University of Mainz

**Stream E:** Cultural Change and Creativity in Science and the Arts

**Title:** Screening Universals: A Biocultural Approach to Childhood Studies and Visual Arts

**Abstract:** Following Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* (1960) and the following approaches in childhood studies dealing with the interconnection of childhood as a cultural construction and media, different kinds of media – either paintings, photography, film or new media - seem to be mere symptomatic sources of representing time-specific ideas of childhood such as innocence, vulnerability or naughtiness. In this way, visual media only serve to reproduce culturally manifested clichés as to how adults imagine childhood. Thus, such rather culture-centered positions of medial depictions still seem to dominate childhood studies. On the other hand, the occasional evolutionary attempts (e.g. Boyd 2001) are harshly criticized in themselves for just constructing essentialist ideas about how children seem to be (e.g. Lesnik-Oberstein/ Cooks 2017). Trying to present an alternative biocultural approach, this paper attempts to argue that the invention and development of different media also enabled to depict quite universal relations between children and adults aside of cultural specificity. Employing conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) as well as related studies in metonymy in relation to media studies (e.g. Lakoff 1997, Kövecses 2006, Fahlenbrach 2010, Forceville 2006, Urios-Aparasi 2008), this paper endeavors to show how, for instance, event structure metaphors as well as metonymic child portraits in photography or close-ups in film seem to reflect on quite innate ideas how adults separate children via an embodied reception. This approach will additionally built upon analytical philosophy, implementing David Archard's definition of a concept as an ahistoric but universal depiction of childhood (Archard 1993).

**Bio:** Michael Brodski is currently working on a PhD thesis on cinematic representations of childhood and child figures at the University of Mainz (Germany) where he also works as an associate lecturer. Michael holds a MA in Film Studies and a BA in Film Studies and Philosophy. His main research interests include childhood studies, children's film and intermedial representations of childhood and children's culture, cognitive film theory, Soviet and Russian cinema and culture, as well as cinematic portrayals of remembrance.