

Enquiring Minds

Position paper: Childhood - growing up or just made up?

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Overview

This article explores current debates about what 'childhood' means. It demonstrates how childhood is imagined differently in a range of diverse sorts of texts and media. These include popular media designed and written for a child audience, policy texts intended to support children to grow up as educated and social people, and academic research-based publications which theorise childhood as a social rather than simply a developmental or innate stage of life.

By distinguishing these different views about childhood, it is hoped that the article can support classroom teachers to identify the complex ways in which children come to perceive themselves and the ways in which society perceives and treats children. This is important at a time when the rights and responsibilities of children are taking on heightened significance in educational policy, when children are being increasingly seen as active and demanding consumers of popular media and culture, and when academic research and theory is tending to emphasise children's autonomy and competence.

The article is arranged to introduce the reader to recent theories of childhood and to emerging ideas about children's rights; it then examines the role of the media in the production of ideas about childhood, and takes some specific examples of critical approaches to popular media texts to illustrate how childhood is itself being presented to children through the media they consume; and it concludes by focusing on the ideas about childhood that are emerging in educational policy documents. By presenting some preliminary excursions into this choice of sources it is hoped that the article locates some symmetries and disparities in the contemporary perception of childhood that are relevant at a time of renewed debate about curriculum, teaching and learning.

Theories of childhood

Childhood should not be regarded as a single homogeneous category¹. David Buckingham argues that "what childhood means, and how it is experienced, obviously depends on other social factors, such as gender, 'race' or ethnicity, social class, geographical location, and so on"². While it is clear on a plain biological basis that children are identifiably different to adults and that, in the main, they follow fairly predictable patterns of physical development, it is increasingly argued that not all children have the same sort of childhood and not all people or societies share the same view about what childhood is. This makes the term 'childhood' much more complicated than it first seems. Extreme examples such as child soldiering and children's beauty pageants indicate the extent to which childhood can only act as an umbrella term for what are in fact a diverse array of childhoods that are socially, geographically and historically contextual. More locally, it has been argued that in contemporary British culture childhood is variously conceptualised according to the categories of evil, innocence and rights, all of which have their own histories³.

Such diversity makes it difficult to provide a definitive account of what childhood means. Hugh Cunningham, for example, argues that the idea of a fully-formed

and global "history of childhood" is impossible. In his review of past childhood studies - including Philippe Ariés' landmark 1963 attempt in *Centuries of Childhood* "to write about concepts of childhood, about the way children have been treated by adults, and about the experience of being a child" - Cunningham points out that studying childhood requires consulting works of sociology, anthropology, psychology, psychoanalysis and demography, as well as primary documentation such as diaries and autobiographies, and contemporary material artefacts such as visual images and miscellaneous written material⁴.

It is important to note that the study of childhood has only a short history. As a distinct discipline it is widely thought to have originated from Darwin's observations of his own son in the mid-19th century⁵. Taking a largely biological view informed by scientific paradigms which emphasised the search for scientific universals, early studies of childhood took little or no account of social or cultural influence. For a large part of the 20th century, it was developmental psychology which exerted most influence on studies of childhood⁶. In the western world, it was not until the 1960s that the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky began to move intellectual enquiry towards the study of children's development in the context of social and cultural activity (what is now called 'socio-cultural psychology')⁷.

More recent sociological studies of childhood have highlighted its 'constructed' nature within this context⁸. By constructed, what is meant is that ideas about childhood are formed and moulded by different societies at different times. The result is that attitudes towards children, what is expected of children, what is prohibited from them, or what capabilities and incapacities they are perceived to possess, depend upon the particular concepts of childhood that society has developed and maintained over time. These 'new social studies of childhood', emerging from the 1990s onwards⁹, have tended to avoid paternalism and to focus instead on the idea of children as 'people in their own rights' ("beings" and not "becomings"¹⁰). Such an intellectual orientation recognises children as active individuals capable of making informed choices and decisions about things that affect them. The central issue in such studies is the ways in which these capacities are either stifled or encouraged by adults and other sources of authority¹¹.

Critics working in this area have suggested that by 'deconstructing' the artificial nature of these constructions and the ways in which they have been created by adult power interests, it is possible to gain closer access to the truth of children's understanding of the world. Childhood is not universal, such accounts contend: it is coloured and shaped by adult concerns. Yet children also have concerns and capacities independent of the perspectives of adults. The task for the sociologist, therefore, is to uncover the distinct views and abilities of children untainted by the views of adulthood¹².

These arguments follow the logic that views of childhood in contemporary times are changing fast. This is not simply because we now possess more sophisticated theoretical inclinations or attitudes towards the study of children. Rather, changes in conceptions of childhood are following other and larger economic, social and cultural trends. Questions about childhood, increasingly, are to do with its social and historical contexts, as well as with its biological manifestations. As Alan Prout points out, the human species possesses a "hybrid form that cannot be reduced to either biology or culture", a characteristic of which is "its very extended juvenile stage, part of an evolutionary strategy that requires the transmission of culture and the acquisition of skills"¹³. For many critics, the culture that is being transmitted to children at the current time is one inflected by patterns of

economic globalisation and technological acceleration, as well as environmental catastrophe and the social and political effects of continuing armed conflict¹⁴.

From an educational perspective, these arguments may be considered important because they draw attention to the ways in which the organisation of schools and of the curriculum constructs ideas about childhood too. The National Curriculum is intended as a universal entitlement for children; a selection from the culture, to paraphrase Raymond Williams, of the very best that can be offered. But as Williams was well aware in his 1961 critique of any sort of "general education", such a selection necessarily involves teaching children the accepted values of the culture, regardless of each child's social background. A popular retort to the establishment of the National Curriculum in 1988, then, suggests that it is unfairly biased towards academic competence and to the teaching and learning of knowledge and skills appropriate to only a minority of adult occupations. In other words, a curriculum can act to reinforce existing class standards. Perhaps less polemically, it may be said to downplay the importance of popular cultural experience in favour of 'high culture'¹⁵. Another dimension in this area is what might be called the 'institutionalisation of childhood'¹⁶, where children's lives are increasingly spent in institutional settings (for example, extended school activities, pre-school nurseries, organised holiday clubs, and in organised leisure facilities)¹⁷.

The new social studies of childhood tend to start by emphasising the importance of children's lived experiences and by interrogating their own beliefs, capacities and understandings. In these respects, there is common ground between such studies and the emergence of children's rights activism in the two decades since the publication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. What both share is a commitment to the realities of children's lives, and to scrutinising the world of children as a microcosm of larger cultural, social and economic forces. It is worth exploring questions of children's rights in more detail.

The rights of the child

Since it was first drafted, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by every country in the world, except (since Somalia signed in 2003) the USA. The UNCRC is intended to supply a series of unquestionable and inalienable entitlements for children, covering everything from protection from physical and mental abuse to having freedom of expression¹⁸.

In the educational context, the UNCRC refers to the contention that children deserve to have their opinions respected and taken seriously on decisions that will affect their learning. Article 12 of the convention states that "Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters relating to the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child". Fundamentally, the UNCRC points to the fact of diversity in children's experiences rather than to their homogeneity; it insists that each one has the right to express his or her own opinion.

There is much in common between the new social studies of childhood and children's rights activism, at least insofar as both place the emphasis on a reconception of children as autonomous, active, agentive, and deserving of special rights of their own. Nonetheless, sociologists and cultural studies critics have been quick to point out that the rights of children are often neither respected in reality nor in images or texts.

In an analysis of discussions of childhood in both popular and academic texts, Bernadette Saunders and Chris Goddard have noted numerous instances of the "textual abuse" of children. Drawing on the critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough - which contends that language has the capacity to produce, reproduce and transform social structures, relations and identities - they suggest that language "may be a vehicle of disregard for children, denying the child personhood, dignity and respect". Textual abuse, they argue, refers to language that "objectifies children", "reframes or minimises the seriousness of offences committed against children", "exploits children", or degrades "full recognition of their rights". They suggest that such instances are as likely to be found in academia - including in circles advocating children's rights - as they are elsewhere, in news media for example¹⁹.

The alignment of children's rights with the new social studies is not uncontested. Michael King, for example, condemns the "blatantly instrumental use of theory" to bolster claims made in the name of children's rights activism. By creating a new "image of childhood autonomy, competence and agency", King argues, the new social studies of childhood claims access to a social reality which corresponds to "the perceptions, beliefs, capacities, and understandings of children themselves". On the contrary, he argues, all versions of social reality are products of whatever social system is being used to examine it. In other words, the active and agentive child that is ostensibly the *focus* of the new social studies of childhood is in actuality a *product* of the new social studies of childhood. He concludes therefore that "there is no possibility of society gaining access to what children *really are* or where their needs or interests *really lie* and even less possibility of gaining access to *what the future really holds for them!*"²⁰

While debates about the merits and demerits of different social theories of childhood continue, also circulating in the more popular and visible contexts of the media are other equally divisive constructions of childhood. In the next section, I set out some key arguments about the construction of childhood in news media and literature. This is important because media texts powerfully depict to children what society thinks about childhood.

Childhood in media

If theory has raised the temper of academic debates about childhood in contemporary times, then the press and television news broadcasters are often implicated in the raised temper of public discussions of childhood. Accounts abound of the ways in which news media mobilise particular events to fuel popular conceptions of children as either innately innocent and in need of protection, or evil and in need of regulation²¹.

Of course, this is nothing new²². Patricia Hollands's analysis of images of childhood during the latter half of the 20th century demonstrates how newspapers have long represented childhood in contradictory ways. This has, though, become especially pronounced since the death of Jamie Bulger in 1993, and since the newspaper 'name-and-shame' campaign against paedophiles in the late 1990s²³. Even more recently, a number of extremely high-profile cases such as the Soham murders, widespread fears of 'hoodie' gangs, coverage of teenage stabbings and shootings (always at the most hysterical when very young children are involved), and worries about internet child pornography, as well as the death of Victoria Climbié, which has given impetus to the government's *Every Child Matters* agenda, have all contributed to growing unease about childhood in contemporary times.

As Marquard Smith points out, whenever the question of childhood arises in these contexts, it results in an "obvious" and "pointless debate" devoted to:

...picking over the corpse of childhood, looking to explain both the essence and the end of innocence, scrutinising the grey areas between sensuality and sexuality, sentimentality and perversity, nudity and pornographic obscenities, natural purity and indecency, virtue and prurience.

He continues: "Questions of childhood are pivotal in this liberal, conservative, humanitarian western culture - this infantilising self-styled 'nanny state' - obsessed with protecting in general and protecting childhood in particular"²⁴.

Smith sees "the problem of childhood" as a "public spectacle in our historical moment"; a "fantasy of childhood" that is simultaneously dependent upon both fears and hopes for the future and which brings "adults' fears" for and about children into the "private imaginary sphere of childhood", thus conjuring up in children "feelings of being overwhelmed, of misconstruing the world, of the wobbly experience of being a child"²⁵. David Buckingham, too, has identified the "fantasies of childhood" that operate through popular news texts, most notably those fantastical longings for an earlier and ostensibly 'golden era' of childhood as well as the demonising tendencies of current media to condemn today's children as consumer-culture 'junkies' dangerously addicted to video games and the internet²⁶.

Following similar contours, Anneke Meyer's analysis of the ways in which British newspapers utilise particular types of language about childhood emphasises how a "moral rhetoric" has been adopted in the public domain. This rhetoric serves to promote the notion that children are uniquely sacred, innocent and in need of protection, a message that is communicated by conservative tabloids and liberal broadsheets alike. The language of childhood evil is implicated in the same debate since, from a more liberal and less punitive perspective, childhood is still regarded as in need of protection from the polluting tendencies of the adult world with which 'evil acts' are routinely associated²⁷. A more moral discourse of childhood, then, simply serves to overwhelm children, constructing them as uniquely dependent whilst simultaneously espousing their own rights and responsibilities.

Similar paradoxes can be found in the ways that childhood is positioned in relation to popular media and consumer culture. David Buckingham argues that a popular current construct of the child is the active consumer, "sophisticated, demanding and hard-to-please", "not easily manipulated" and "discerning when it comes to getting value for money". He notes the similarities here between the ways in which marketers and advertisers of products and services for children and advocates of the new social studies of childhood both conceive of childhood:

Academic work on advertising tends to confirm that children are not easily manipulated or exploited; that they can understand the persuasive intent of advertising from a young age; and that they are not merely helpless victims of consumer culture... This aligns quite well with the emphasis on children's autonomy and competence that characterises contemporary research in the sociology of childhood. For some researchers at least, there is an alarming coincidence in this respect between their own views and those of marketers.²⁸

Both advertising and the social studies of childhood are, then, situated in opposition to the 'moral majority' with its emphasis on protecting children, so that even from seemingly oppositional political standpoints surprising symmetries as well as incongruities can be seen emerging in the construction of modern childhood.

In the more 'old-fashioned' medium of children's literature, contradictions and paradoxes in relation to societal perspectives on childhood can also be located. The notion that fiction books written for children have at their core different constructions of childhood is amongst the most primary concerns of children's literature scholars. As Kimberley Reynolds points out, "children's literature is a uniquely focused lens through which children and young people are asked to look at the images of themselves made for them by their societies". It is therefore important for critics in this area, she argues, to be alert to "changing constructions of childhood and to the impact of trends such as commercialization, globalization, and the way media treat children"²⁹. This is quite akin to the motivations for some sociological investigations of childhood.

One significant example of children's literature scholarship that is concerned with the construction of childhood in particular ways is supplied by the Israeli scholar Zohar Shavit, who has analysed 50 years of children's books written and published in Germany after the second world war. Shavit argues that German children's literature routinely 'hides' the horrors of the Third Reich. "As an alternative," she argues, German children's writers "offer a 'story' that features the Germans as the prime and sometimes sole victims of the Third Reich and the Holocaust", with the consequence that they "unavoidably become participants in the telling of a distorted and fraudulent tale, at least from a non-German point of view"³⁰.

Though this work covers controversial territory, it is a useful example because it emphasises the ways in which texts written for children construct worlds for them that are historically, socially and culturally contingent. Other critics have explored the role of science fiction texts written for children and the role they play in projecting hopes, uncertainties and fears about childhood in the future. Elizabeth Bullen and Elizabeth Parsons read some examples of recent children's science fiction as telescoping "their cultural critiques into futures in which the hazards of techno-economic progress, predatory global politics and capitalist excesses of consumption are explored". Such texts, they argue "implicitly pose the question: In the absence of a happy ending for western civilization, what kind of children can survive in dystopia?"

Their argument is based on the sociologist Ulrich Beck's theory of the "risk society", where the production of wealth is counterpoised with the production of risk. Of course, 'risk' differs from region to region, so that, in one of Beck's examples, "as far as the Americans are concerned, the Europeans are suffering from an environmental hysteria", while "many Europeans see the Americans as struck by terrorism hysteria"³¹. As Bullen and Parsons put it, "Scarcity is no longer the most significant problem in the West; in its place capitalist expansion is creating chemical, nuclear, ecological and lifestyle risks as well as political hazards like terrorism". What this means is that the social world can no longer be regarded as stable; instead, it is characterised by the proliferation of uncertainty and contestation. Such a world, then, must be regarded as posing significant challenges for children, as they grow up facing the risks associated with political disengagement, of being "co-opted into the ideology of the market", threatened by "transnational corporate capitalism, rampant consumerism, and a raft of social and environmental side-effects"³².

This perspective reads the category of childhood as always changing according to economic and cultural currents, and sees children's books as important statements about the conditions to which children will continue to need to adjust. Furthermore, in the sci-fi texts that Bullen and Parsons examine, childhood is seen to embody hopes and fears about the future itself, by way of interrogating the insecurities and unpredictability of the present. In particular, they draw

attention to the ways in which some exemplary sci-fi books for children create dystopias in which the problems of the present are foregrounded, such as the excesses of consumption and the dangers of techno-economic progress. Their analysis suggests that the child who can survive in dystopia needs to adopt a critical and perhaps even activist response to capitalist excess.

Again, then, the construction of the active and autonomous child is developed here, as it is also in Noga Applebaum's reading of a range of other children's texts. For Applebaum, children's books demonstrate the existing gap between adults and children, and especially the "confusion and fear" that adults experience when children are able to make use of powerful technologies such as the internet. Given the growing prominence of such tools in children's everyday lives, this is an important observation. Like Bullen and Parsons, Applebaum notes how children in fictional texts are constructed as activists, children who "could make a difference", while adults are "anachronistic and weak, afraid to make changes". Using the internet "to be heard globally," she argues, "gives young people the chance to network behind their backs and challenge their authority and experience."³³

Such notions about childhood are not universally shared, even in other works of fiction less specifically aimed at child readers. Kenneth Millard's recent study of representations of young people in fiction in America, for example, finds that many novels are attenuated to studies of "the kind of anomie, ennui, or postmodern despair" that has been detected amongst young people. Millard suggests that a new "genre of analysis" merging "the sociological and the literary", which "brings into sharp focus the relationship between politics and aesthetics", is important in this area since young people "epitomise those particular qualities of restlessness and disaffection" that to adults seem "to be most urgent and problematical in contemporary society" as well as in "the future"³⁴.

If we take it that childhood is being constructed through a language of rights, activism, autonomy and authority in texts aimed specifically at children (and motivated by adult concerns about the future of society), is this construct also in circulation in those other texts that provide to children distinct perspectives about what society expects of them - educational policy texts?

Childhood in policy texts

The common perception of how the education system positions children is that it makes them out to be the recipients of a body of knowledge handed to them by teachers - a perspective attacked a century and a half ago by Dickens in *Hard Times*³⁵. Recently, however, educational policy texts have tended to concentrate on the idea of the child as innately inquisitive, active and autonomous. It is not my intention here to discuss how this might align with the reality of schooling; merely to query how aspects of the language of childhood rights and autonomy have entered into mainstream government texts.

Perhaps the most notable example is in the recent advertising campaigns of the Training and Development Agency (TDA)³⁶. These adverts, which have been displayed on billboards, in the press, and on television, tend to celebrate the dynamism of children, their natural curiosity, enthusiasm and creativity, and the excitement of working in the classroom (represented as an energetic environment) in direct counterpoint to the supposed routines of office-based employment. In this way, the adverts cleverly construct childhood, by way of interaction in the classroom with the future teacher, in terms of being active, full of wonder and engagement. Some of these adverts are clearly intended to appeal

to potential recruits from the business world - through the construction of ideas about students being enterprising company to work with - while others valorise children's opinions and their freedom of expression. And while some are directly intended to recruit new teachers to subjects where there is currently a shortage, for the most part the adverts are not subject-specific, tending to focus instead on the attributes of childhood as a selling point for the profession.

Without wishing to be too critical about the representations of school, childhood and teaching created by these texts (they are, after all, advertisements designed to meet particular teacher recruitment needs at the present time), what is clear is that they emphasise strongly one particular construction of childhood: the socially confident, academically competent and creative child who is motivated and eager to learn, secure about interacting with teachers, self-assured and articulate in his or her own views. Alex Moore's analysis of the iconography of previous teacher recruitment campaigns identifies how they produce a mix of seemingly incommensurable binaries - "orderliness and active engagement", "formality and informality", "oracy and literacy", "teacherly control over collective endeavour and pupils' control over their own engagement" - that he sees as "a happy mix of tradition and progressivism"³⁷. It is, then, an idealised view of both teaching and of childhood, currently being continued and extended at the tail end of New Labour's third term.

The *Every Child Matters*, *Children and Young People Today*, and *The Children's Plan* documents are indicative of New Labour perspectives on what childhood means in the early part of the 21st century³⁸. They simultaneously espouse a language of protection and of risk-taking, of personal creativity, freedom of expression, and of measurable world-class standards (with acknowledgement that some children feel pressured by exams), as well as of their media competence and online dangers (including the pressure from commercial media). One of the key messages in these documents is that as government does not bring children up, then parents, carers and families have the responsibility for supporting and encouraging children to lead healthy, safe and successful lives, which, in turn, government policy itself seeks to support through local services. In addition, the key educational policy is one of 'personalisation', where education should be 'tailored' to meet each individual's needs³⁹.

What is arresting about these texts is their emphasis on the responsible individual able to make choices about the services offered to them. For Ulrich Beck, the emphasis on individual responsibility "is the cynicism with which institutions whitewash their own failure" because it abnegates the responsibility of the state to control the risks that individuals negotiate on a daily basis⁴⁰. In a school-specific context, what this means is that the emphasis on 'personalisation', for example, has the potential to shift responsibility for the worst effects of mainstream schooling into the hands of the students who are themselves being failed by New Labour educational policy. As Michael Fielding has argued:

...the dominant policy context of economic neo-liberalism and the prevailing intellectual motifs of performativity will ensure 'personalization' binds us more securely and more comfortably to purposes we abhor and practices we have come to regret.⁴¹

From this perspective, while personalisation certainly sounds like a register in the language of children's rights, responsibility and autonomy, what it in actual fact disguises is a policy context designed around the notion of the responsible consumer whose failure to make best use of the opportunities offered to them remains that individual's failure. The individual's success, on the other hand, goes

a considerable way to buttressing the institution's celebration of its own successful advocacy.

Another critic of such practices, Stephen Ball, rehearses Beck in the specific context of UK education policy when he points out that "responsibilisation" "produces its own particular inequalities":

Those deemed unfit within these conditions of freedom are subject to interventions... aimed at cultivating appropriate personal attributes - such as self-esteem, self-confidence, self-motivation, ambition and efficacy... [W]ithin education policy students of all sorts have been explicitly reconstituted as 'customers', a development that further reinforces the idea that their learning experience is itself a commodity that (hopefully) can be exchanged at some point for entry into the labour market.⁴²

Rather than initiating a language of rights and autonomy, then, policies of "responsibilisation" such as personalisation must be regarded critically as commodifying the experience of education, that is, presenting it as capital with which the responsible, choosing consumer can exercise purchasing power. Yet the assumption that children have equal opportunities and capital here is, of course, misguided. The implicit construct of the child within such policy - by which I do not only mean the perception of childhood, but the deliberative intervention into childhood for political purposes - is of the consumer in a cultural context that, as we have seen, much children's fiction, rights discourse, and sociological analysis has set out to critique.

Throughout this article, I have been arguing that different analytical perspectives for distinguishing the meanings of childhood produce disparate modulations on our contemporary understandings of childhood itself. It is not enough to say that childhood is a construction without paying attention to the texts through which this may be taking place. As I have attempted to demonstrate, there do exist particular symmetries between some of these perspectives, as well as distinct variations, such that childhood today must be seen as being constructed according to blueprints of rights activism as well as punitive regulation, cultural apathy as well as responsible consumerism, creative expression as well as standardised measurement. The nexus of these oppositions is in contemporary mainstream schooling, where, perhaps, the question of how childhood is 'constructed' is most acute of all. In working with children, school teachers and other children's services workers need to be sensitive to what children see when they look into the cultural mirrors of educational policy and popular texts. Within current debates about the sort of education children require, we need clarity about the kinds of childhoods we might be constructing too.

Notes and references

¹ It is possible to contest the use of the word 'child' in reference to young people over the age of 16 years. For the sake of clarity, I follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child statement that "A child means every human being below the age of 18 years".

² Buckingham, D (2003) *Media Education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press): 21.

³ James, A, Jenks, C and Prout, A (1998) *Theorizing Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

⁴ Cunningham, H (1998) Histories of childhood, *American Historical Review*, 103(4): 1195-1208 (1199).

⁵ This, as Alan Prout points out, is contestable since numerous earlier accounts of children's development exist; Darwin is nonetheless important because he exerted a significant influence on what would become the Child Study movement in the latter two

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- decades of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th. See Prout, A (2005) *The Future of Childhood: Towards the interdisciplinary study of children* (London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer): 44-47.
- ⁶ See, for example, the highly influential work of the psychologist Jean Piaget, in particular his theory that all children proceed through distinct developmental stages. A reflection on Piaget's legacy is supplied by Beilin, H (1992) Piaget's enduring contribution to developmental psychology, *Developmental Psychology*, 28(2): 191-204.
- ⁷ See Wertsch, JV (1985) *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind* (London: Harvard University Press).
- ⁸ This concept originates from Ariés, P (1962) *Centuries of Childhood* (London: Jonathan Cape).
- ⁹ The new social studies of childhood is intended to be an interdisciplinary (or at least multidisciplinary) approach encompassing the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences.
- ¹⁰ Qvortrup, J, Bardy, M, Sgritta, G and Wintersberger, H (eds) (1994) *Childhood Matters: Social theory, practice and politics* (Aldershot: Avebury): 4.
- ¹¹ See, for example, Prout, A and James, A (1997) A new paradigm for the sociology of childhood, in James, A and Prout, A (eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (London: RoutledgeFalmer): 7-33.
- ¹² See James, Jenks and Prout (1998); James and Prout (1997).
- ¹³ Prout, A (2005) *The Future of Childhood: Towards the interdisciplinary study of children* (London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer): 3-4.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Thorne, B (2003) Children and the 2003 War in Iraq, *Childhood*, 10(3): 259-263; Qvortrup, J (2002) Editorial: September elevens and invisible enemies, *Childhood*, 9(2): 139-145; and Rizzini, I and Bush, M (2002) Editorial: Globalization and children, *Childhood*, 9 (4): 371-374.
- ¹⁵ Williams, R (1961) *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus).
- ¹⁶ This term was coined in Nasman, E (1994) Individualisation and Institutionalisation of Childhood, Qvortrup *et al* (eds).
- ¹⁷ Various researchers have documented the changing trends in the places that children spend their time. See, for example, Eley, S (2004) Children's use of public space, *Children and Society*, 18: 155-164; and Karsten, L (2005) It all used to be better? Different generations on continuity and change in urban children's daily use of space, *Children's Geographies*, 3(3): 275-290.
- ¹⁸ For the full text of the UNCRC articles, see www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm.
- ¹⁹ Saunders, BJ and Goddard, C (2001) The textual abuse of childhood in the English-speaking world: the contribution of language to the denial of children's rights, *Childhood*, 8(4): 443-462 (445 & 446). The primary example the authors point to is the use of the word 'it' in place of 'his' or 'her' when referring to a child, a strategy they regard as denying children their individuality and identity; they note that this substitution occurs much more rarely when adults are discussed, even within the same literature.
- ²⁰ King, M (2007) The sociology of childhood as scientific communication: observations from a social systems perspective, *Childhood*, 14(2): 192-213 (197-198, 200 & 204 [emphases in original]).
- ²¹ For example, see, Madge, N (2006) *Children These Days* (Bristol: Policy Press), which highlights the fact that around three-quarters of newspaper coverage of children is negative in content or tone.
- ²² An accessible account of popular responses to childhood at different times - particularly in 'moral panics' about teenagers or youths - can be found in Savage, J (2007) *Teenage: The Construction of Youth, 1875-1945* (Ref).
- ²³ Hollands, P (2004) *Picturing Childhood: The myth of the child in popular imagery* (London: IB Taurus).
- ²⁴ Smith, M (2004) Fantasies of childhood: visual culture and the law, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 3(1): 5-16 (6-7).
- ²⁵ Smith (2004): 10.
- ²⁶ Buckingham, D (2000) *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media* (Cambridge: Polity).
- ²⁷ Meyer, A (2007) The moral rhetoric of childhood, *Childhood*, 14(1): 85-104.

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- ²⁸ Buckingham, D (2007) Selling childhood? Children and consumer culture, *Journal of Children and Media*, 1(1): 15-24 (16-17).
- ²⁹ Reynolds, K (ed) (2005) *Modern Children's Literature* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan): 3.
- ³⁰ Shavit, Z (2005) *A Past Without Shadow: Constructing the past in German books for children*, trans Aaron and Atarah Jaffe (New York and London: Routledge): 287-288.
- ³¹ For Beck, the long-term consequences of technological progress can no longer be predicted by science, with the result that all human activity must involve considering the risks potentially involved. The "risk society", then, is not necessarily growing more 'dangerous' but is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing, and managing risks that it itself has produced. See Beck, U (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity* (London: Sage). A shorter and more accessible introduction is available in Beck, U (2006) Living in the World Risk Society, A Hobhouse Memorial Public Lecture, 15 February 2006, London School of Economics, from which the quotation is taken (9). Available online: www.lse.ac.uk/collections/sociology/pdf/Beck-LivingintheWorldRiskSociety-Feb2006.pdf.
- ³² Bullen, E and Parsons, E (2007) Dystopian visions of global capitalism: Philip Reeve's *Mortal Engines* and MT Anderson's *Feed*, *Children's Literature in Education*, 38: 127-139 (128).
- ³³ Applebaum, N (2005) Electronic texts and adolescent agency: computers and the internet in contemporary children's fiction, in Reynolds, K (ed): 250-262 (260). Additionally, Len Unsworth argues that some children's writers are making increasingly sophisticated use of web publishing technologies as a way of celebrating children's alleged confidence with them, while recognising the diversity of children's 'reading' experiences in digital environments as well as print texts. Unsworth, L (2006) *E-literature for Children: Enhancing digital literacy learning* (London: Routledge).
- ³⁴ Millard, K (2007) *Coming of Age in Contemporary American Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press): 12. He also suggests that perceptions of childhood may be based on enduring national mythologies, for example, on the American mythology of being a youthful and dynamic nation, as a consequence of which when evidence emerges of childhood being traumatised it takes on symbolic dimensions of cultural and societal degeneration. Fiction about childhood therefore represents contemporary fears about cultural inheritance and futurity.
- ³⁵ For a reading of Dicken's depiction of classroom instruction in the context of enduring critiques of schooling from the 1850s to the end of the 20th century, and what may be regarded as only 'cosmetic' adaptations in education policy and practice, see Bloome, D and Kinzer, CK (1998) Hard Times and cosmetics: changes in literacy instruction, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 73(3&4): 341-375.
- ³⁶ At the time of writing (March 2008) the campaign is called 'Turn your talent to teaching', with all of the advertising materials available online: www.tdanewadvertising.com/talenttoteaching.htm.
- ³⁷ Moore, A (2004) *The Good Teacher: Dominant discourses in teaching and teacher education* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer): 130.
- ³⁸ HM Government (2004) *Every Child Matters: Time for Change*; DCSF (2007) *Children and Young People Today*; DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan*. Available online: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications.
- ³⁹ The key text here is Leadbetter, C (2004) *Participation Through Personalisation: A new script for public services* (London: Demos).
- ⁴⁰ Beck (2006): 8.
- ⁴¹ Fielding, M (2006) Leadership, personalization and high performance schooling: naming the new totalitarianism, *School Leadership and Management*, 26(4): 347-369 (349).
- ⁴² Ball, S (2008) *The Education Debate* (Bristol: Policy Press): 205.