

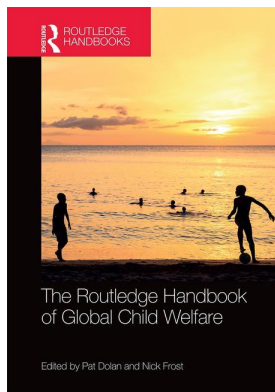
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Children and childhood

Viewed through different disciplinary lenses

Hazel Wright

Introduction

Children are our future, vital for the continuance of human society. They represent a sizeable proportion of the global population, so the well-being of contemporary society is dependent upon meeting their needs and developing their potential. By mid-2015, those under fifteen years old accounted for more than a quarter (26.1%) of a world total of 7.3 billion people (UN DESA, 2015). So children – their commonalities and differences, their welfare and education – must be central to global, regional and national policy. Children have always been important but have become more visible as a group in recent times, as nations developed the capacity to compute large numbers and to plan for long-term and global outcomes. This chapter focuses on these more recent times; it still reflects on change over time and place, but moves away from the historical treatment of childhood discussed in Chapter 1 to take a multi-disciplinary approach. It is interesting that UN statistics refer to children under fifteen, as the standard definition of childhood established by the 1989 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child sets the upper limit of childhood at eighteen. However, it is long recognized that, in many parts of the world, children have to assume adult responsibilities at a much younger age; the need to work to eat, a lack of educational opportunities and early marriage all play a role in positioning the age of majority below the UN ideal (Morrow, 2011).

Disciplinary lenses

Individual disciplines study childhood for different reasons. For some, the child is important *per se*. For others, children are an instance of an immature species or a type of living thing. Sometimes childhood is the focus, deemed the point of origin of later disorders. This diversity of interest is a valuable asset, as it provides those who study children with a breadth of expertise to draw upon. There is a wealth of contrasting but complementary perspectives to be examined further if we are to understand the lenses through which the child and childhood can be viewed (see Wright, 2015 for more details). Within academia, the conceptualization of childhood has adapted to fit successive dominant paradigms. During the twentieth century, the academy witnessed the destabilization of biological/psychological determinism as a consequence of

postmodern challenges to universalism. It observed growing sociological support for ‘constructs’ that allow for diversity and subjectivity but permit some distillation of human complexity, provided the interpretative nature of this process is acknowledged. It increasingly recognizes a globalized call for action built around a framework of children’s rights. This chapter offers an overview of the specific disciplinary knowledge that contributed to and/or develops out of these differing overarching frameworks from the standpoint that all three (and others) played, and play, a vital role in understanding childhood and promoting children’s welfare.

The Victorian era

This discussion of childhood takes Britain’s Victorian era (1837–1901) as a starting point. This period was a time of considerable technological invention and scientific discovery, in Britain and elsewhere: a time of classification and categorization to contain our growing knowledge of living things. Expert attention focused on the different elements of the natural world – its stars, rocks, flora and fauna – and ultimately its human inhabitants. Darwin was working on his theory of evolution (published in 1859) and wrote his *Biographical Sketch of an Infant* in 1877 from notes collected in the 1840s (Burman, 1994). This validated the importance of observational methods, and for a century (c.1850–1950) the study of children was lodged in the domain of psychology, with its main objective being the establishment of a universal developmental framework (Turmel, 2008). Advances in statistical analysis (for example, Bain’s 1859 work on aptitude tests and Galton’s 1875 work on normal distributions) facilitated data comparison, and the expansion of compulsory education from 1870 onwards made groups of children readily accessible to those who sought to observe, measure and count their behaviours (De Landsheere, 1988). Indeed, at the turn of the nineteenth century, ‘child study’ became a popular collective activity and parents and professionals formed clubs to gather data on the development of children. G. Stanley Hall set up the Child Study Association of America in 1888, the first of several similar societies (Huntsinger, 2007), and a separate Child Study Society was established in England in 1907 (Lowe, 2009). Russia and other European countries followed suit, notably enabling Piaget’s work in Geneva (De Landsheere, 1988) and Vygotsky’s activities in Russia (Byford, 2012).

Psychological perspectives

Alongside this early psychological interest in collective data about children, the sub-discipline of psychoanalysis established interest in individual childhood experiences. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), a trained medical practitioner, used hypnosis to explore the unconscious mind in his work to cure ‘hysterical’ female patients. This led him to believe that problems encountered in adulthood often emanated from childhood traumas (Jolibert, 1993), making children’s experiences newly important to the adult world of medical science. Freud proposed three mental states: the *id* that seeks instant gratification from birth onwards; the *ego* through which, from around the age of five, the child learns to modify desire in light of social expectation; and the *superego* through which the child absorbs parental and societal expectations, enabling him/her to understand what constitutes appropriate behaviour. For Freud, maturing children passed through five stages – oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital – and unresolved problems at any stage could lead to *fixations* in later life, *repression* of memories and/or *regression* to earlier stages under stress (Birch, 1997). Over time, Freud’s views have attracted considerable criticism, but they nevertheless played a key role in shaping contemporary developments.

Through his daughter Anna, Sigmund’s ideas were taken into the domain of childhood. She practised children’s psychoanalysis in Vienna in 1923 and established a nursery and child therapy

centre in Hampstead, London, after the Second World War. In Vienna, Anna influenced the work of Erik Erikson (1902–94), whose major contribution to psychology was a staged analysis of development over the life-course, marking a return to a collective typification of behaviour. For Erikson, each individual progressed through eight age-related stages and at each stage encountered a specific dilemma (1963). In early childhood, individuals achieved states of either *trust* or *mistrust*, *autonomy* or *shame and doubt*, and developed a sense of *initiative* or of *guilt*. Growing up, they saw themselves as either *industrious* or *inferior* and developed a *sense of identity* or *confusion*. In adulthood, this affected their ability to form relationships and to work productively, and, ultimately, how they looked back on their lives in old age. Thus, Erikson clearly saw adult achievement to be dependent on positive childhood experiences. For their unquestioning acceptance of innate drives, these theorizations were all open to later accusations of psychological determinism.

In contrast, Melanie Klein's work challenged the dominance of biological drives and mental constructs. She posited a relational basis for children's mental well-being, and consequently also challenged the predominant 'one-body' approach to psychology. For Klein, the mother–child role was central (Segal, 2004). The baby cannot differentiate between 'self' and 'other', so sees both as 'good' if needs are met, 'bad' if they are unmet (Gittins, 1998). Klein believed that psychic survival depends on the child splitting off negative feelings and attaching them to the mother figure, and thus the child learns to separate from the main carer. To discourage longer-term dysfunction, Klein devised forms of play therapy for use with young children, publishing *The Psychoanalysis of Children* in 1932. Psychiatrist John Bowlby (1907–90), working after the Second World War, was influenced by Klein's work. Bowlby worked predominantly with children who were separated from their mothers and institutionalized due to loss of family, difficult behaviour or illness. He developed a theory of *maternal deprivation* (1965/51), and later, his classic theory of *attachment* (1982/69). Through the development of *internal working models*, attachment was seen to affect the way the child formed relationships throughout life. Perhaps these theories focused too much attention on the role of the mother, for women experienced both support and blame for their children's later behaviours regardless of other social influences and/or negative neurological activity. Attachment theory effectively excluded other family members (and possibly other explanations) as it 'fitted' the contemporary social and political climate by foregrounding the mother–child relationship. For example, a longitudinal study led by Schaffer and Emerson (1964) established a pattern of single (monotropic) attachment that we now realize reflected the Westernized culture in which it was carried out.

There is evidence in many societies that children can bond with any number of people if they have frequent contact (Weisner and Gallimore, 1977) and that children can flourish with alternative suitable care (Clarke-Stewart, 1991). Greater theoretical support for substitute care was apparent in the work of Donald Winnicott (1896–1971), Bowlby's near-contemporary. Through his work with evacuees, Winnicott had already recognized the benefits of substitute care in the absence of a child's primary carer. He held steadfast to the one-body model of care, but viewed the mother-and-child as a single unit with the mother in the dominant role. Winnicott supported 'good-enough' mothering (mothering that allowed the child gradual independence) but used the term 'mother' to 'signify the person who is in the mothering role' (Jacobs, 1995, p. 47). Winnicott clearly states 'The good enough 'mother' [is] (not necessarily the infant's own mother)' (Winnicott, 1971, p. 7). The inference is that if care is nurturing and child-centred, as opposed to the detached and transient caring common within institutions, children could flourish. Winnicott (1953) showed too how children used *transitional objects* to support themselves in different environments and how some created *imaginary friends* to counteract potential loneliness (Majors, 2013), demonstrating the human child's immense capacity for self-protection.

Later, Michael Rutter (1972; 1981) endorsed the making of multiple attachments, highlighting Bowlby's confusion of 'privation', the lack of an emotional bond, with 'deprivation', the loss of an established bond. His own longitudinal study of 165 deprived Romanian infants taken from Ceausescu's orphanages clearly shows that to develop fully, children need both physical and emotional care. It appears possible to compensate for early malnourishment, but children who are deprived beyond the age of six months remain cognitively and socially deficient in later life. Rutter's naturalistic study, one that would have been ethically impossible to orchestrate deliberately, provides unquestionable evidence that the care of young children is of paramount importance. Developments in neurology and non-intrusive visualizing techniques (e.g. ultrasound and MRI scanning) offer physiological evidence to support this claim. Bruce Perry's 2002 work with deprived children in the USA clearly shows how neglect and abuse prevent normal growth – even shrink – the infantile brain, causing global developmental delay and ultimately inadequate processing powers. These are important findings in terms of the global welfare of children, but focus essentially on the child's psyche.

In contrast, behavioural psychology developed out of interest in physiology, the reactions to stimuli of animals. It stemmed from work with dogs (Pavlov), cats (Thorndike) and rats (Skinner) around the turn of the nineteenth century. John B. Watson applied this knowledge to children in the early 1900s, where he coined the phrase *behaviourism* and insisted on attention to the observable rather than the internalized. In implementing a notorious fear-inducing experiment with an eleven-month-old child, he showed how, through reflex responses, a child could be conditioned to react in a certain way (Sanrock, 2011). Thorndike's work, and later Skinner's development of operant conditioning, was ethically more acceptable. They trained animals to act in certain ways in anticipation of reward (Birch, 1997). Mildly behaviourist techniques are still evident in schools when teachers apply rewards and sanctions, and in society when we incentivize preferred actions and punish wrongdoing.

Like the behaviourists, cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) also transferred his interest from the animal world (snails) to children (Satterly, 1987), but unlike them he was interested in both the observable and intra-mental processes, seeking to discover how humans acquire knowledge. From observing his own children, he articulated four stages in thought processing. In an early *sensori-motor stage* (0–2), the infant learned through experience and movement, passing into a *pre-operational stage* (2–7) in which children are making sense of their world, but remain fundamentally egocentric. In the *concrete operational stage* (7–11), they are able to manipulate quantity, but need physical objects in order to facilitate this, and only in the *formal operational stage* (11 onwards) do they develop abstract thought and an ability to reason. He believed that children learned through action, *assimilating* new ideas and *accommodating* conflicting ones to reach new levels of *equilibrium*. His ideas were popular in the 1960s and remain central to early years' education today. The stages may have been criticized as overly rigid and his practice condemned as too clinical, but he remains 'a giant' in his field (Sanrock, 2011) – his ideas central to Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Hyun, 1996). Piaget's legacy to educators is immense – not least the understanding that children need a stimulating environment in order to learn.

Physically isolated in Russia, Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) was nevertheless able to access Piaget's work, and this possibly influenced his staged approach to the development of speech and thinking. A social-constructivist, Vygotsky questioned how children learn their culture. He established the central role of language and therefore of social interaction in enabling internalized thought (Sanrock, 2011) and offered a means of discussing learning capacity through his conceptualization of a shift from the *zone of actual development* (ZAD) (describing the child's current state of competence) to the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) (the new learning attainable with the

support of an expert other) (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's work was translated into several European languages (including into English in the 1970s) and significantly transformed classroom practices, promoting group work to encourage socialization and verbalization. Educators such as Jerome Bruner (1915–) made it possible to operationalize the ZPD. Their *scaffolding process* provided guidance on the contingent support of learning (Wood, Bruner and Ross, 1976). Bruner (1977/60) also advocated *discovery learning* and a *spiral curriculum*, through which ideas are revisited at continually higher levels so that learning is truly embedded as children pass through *enactive* (physical learning), and *iconic* (mental and visual imaging) stages, in order to reach a *symbolic* stage at around seven when they can manipulate systems of notation (Bruner, 1966). These structures are still relevant when planning curricula for children.

Vygotsky was not alone in considering social aspects of learning. In America, Albert Bandura (1925–) and colleagues were bridging the gap between behaviourism and cognitive development. They examined how children learn from watching others (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961), developing *Social Learning Theory*. Concerned about its transmission, they studied children's reactions to violent behaviour and found that children can learn behaviour but choose not to copy it (Bandura, 1965). This is a useful finding for a world in which many youngsters witness and experience conflict (warfare and domestic violence, for example) first-hand. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005) also placed the child in a social context, finding clinical observation of children unnatural. His ecological approach positions children at the centre of their own lives. Mindful of systems theory, this model recognizes that changes at the proximal (micro) level will have immediate impact, and more distant changes at the meso, external (exo) and macro levels will have indirect effects, as will changes over time (the chrono level) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The model clearly identifies how every action ultimately affects children, and highlights the interconnectivity of changes in different fields, from the local to the global, demonstrating that everyone is implicated in the global welfare of the child. Considered in conjunction with Maslow's 1943 hierarchy of needs, then, we have an important framework that helps stress that children can only reach their full potential *if we work together* to meet their layered needs, starting with the food, shelter, warmth and care necessary for survival.

Sociological perspectives

The theoretical frameworks evinced by psychologists Maslow, Vygotsky, Bandura and Bronfenbrenner clearly place the child in a social context, anticipating a relational perspective that would become increasingly common as sociology became a mainstream academic discipline in the 1960s and 70s (BSA, 2016). In the 1950s, theorists like Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons, wanting to understand social cohesion (Giddens, 2006), foregrounded the family as the primary unit of care. But as minority groups increasingly challenged the status quo, demanding recognition and rights equal to those of the dominant majorities, women and children were also seen to have specific needs. Second-wave feminism played a key role in drawing public attention to discriminatory practices within the home and workplace (Bilton *et al.*, 2002), but the interrelation of feminism and childhood is still controversial (BSA Childhood Study Group, 2015). More generally, the 'postmodern' swing towards 'discourse' rather than concerted political activism opened up new spaces for debate and theorization, disestablishing dominant 'universal' doctrines. Knowledge was deemed to be 'situated', varying with place and circumstances (Haraway, 1988). Preferring the term 'late modernity' to 'postmodernism', Giddens (1991, 187 ff) talked about the 'intrusion of distance into local activities', recognizing that all knowledge must now be globally construed. On examination, many 'norms' of childhood were found to be localized, often applicable only to Westernized societies, and so were no longer foundational explanatory mechanisms for the field.

In their seminal work *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood* (1990), Alison James and Alan Prout traced the growing interest in childhood to a global initiative – the United Nations’ rendering of 1979 as the International Year of the Child. Daily television coverage of children across the world raised public awareness of the variance in constitution of childhood, and new and more flexible frameworks were needed to make sense of this diversity. Chris Jenks had already provided a useful overview of changing perspectives in *The Sociology of Childhood*, where he had clearly shown how ‘the child is constituted purposively within theory’ (Jenks, 1982, p. 23) and recommended the formation of a ‘sociology of childhood’ that would see the child as a ‘being’ rather than a ‘becoming’, a person in his/her own right rather than an immature adult.

Relinquishing the Westernized view of childhood as ‘universal’, sociologists sought the means to make sense of and capture diversity, finding recourse in a ‘social constructs’ framework. It was the social historian Harry Hendrick who first proposed a set of constructs in his chapter in James and Prout’s 1990 text, revising these considerably in 1997. The constructs delineate a predominantly Westernized view of childhood. An initial *Romantic* category (Rousseau’s innocent child) was later prefaced by the *Natural* category (Locke’s neutral child in need of guidance). Together, these reflect the precious child cherished within the older Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths. The *Sinful* view of the child to be chastised (later better described as Evangelical) more closely aligns with the Christian child baptized at birth to seek redemption from primeval sin. This is a dangerous view in both its inherent power imbalance and the threat of punishment and abuse it poses. The historical categorization continues with the *Factory* child of industrialism, the *Delinquent* (often vagrant or working class) child requiring social rescue and the *School* child controlled through compulsory education. The *Psycho-medical* view refers to the ‘normal’ child derived from analysis and psychological study, and the *Welfare* view depicts the child of more modern times, the responsibility of both family and state. In 1997, the categories were modified to include the *Contemporary* child, one with the right to be heard.

James, Jenks and Prout (1998) devised a typology that extends beyond traditional (or pre-sociological) ideas to include a range of sociological views. The *Socially Constructed* perspective embraces the many different childhoods situated in time and place; the *Tribal* perspective describes the world of children following their own volition to do childish things; the *Minority Group* perspective acknowledges the dilemma inherent in using a homogeneous framework to represent a heterogeneous group, therefore positioning children alongside other aged, classed and ethnic categories as apart from the mainstream; and the *Social Structural* perspective conveys the constancy of childhood constituting children as a regular component in all societies, a group with common needs and rights that must be upheld. This is the substantive child whose rights can be addressed in law, whose needs are supplied through policy initiatives. This is ultimately the most useful categorization when planning global change, but awareness of the other categories will help us to avoid overly simplistic decision making.

Constructionist perspectives

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999), by openly declaring a postmodern approach, use longer and more descriptive labels. Their first three categories summarize earlier philosophical perspectives, but they also devote attention to more politicized categories with a wider global reach. Their ‘child as labour market supply factor’ considers employment issues and contrasts European views with practices stemming from economic necessity within the minority world. Their ‘child as co-constructors of knowledge, identity and culture’ explores participatory frameworks for children, prior to focusing on the Reggio Emilia philosophy of childcare through which educators are trained to follow the children’s interests rather than impose a predetermined curriculum.

'Constructs' continue to offer multiple lenses through which to view childhood, and a number of new typologies have been devised since the turn of the century that reflect societal change (see Mills and Mills, 2000; Jenks, 2005; Sorin, 2005; Ryan, 2008; and Whiteman, De Goia and Mevawalla, 2012). Some will be used later to frame new concerns arising in the field, but first, the child as 'labour market supply factor', which positions the child as both current and future worker, merits further attention. Children's employment has long been a controversial issue, and one that Western society has largely been able to relegate to history. When Dahlberg and colleagues reintroduced this topic, they described the contemporary European concerns about whether mothers should work and the provision of substitute care, and only briefly mentioned that in the minority world, the female workforce may be essential to prosperity for both family and society. Yet in many countries children also work to survive, and often in very unsatisfactory conditions. Some continue to live within their families, but many children take to the streets where they may, possibly, achieve higher incomes and better diets than they would at home. They may also experience less stress when they live independently (Panter-Brick, 2002), as they are young and active and can develop peer-support cultures that compensate for loss of family. Important case study research describes children living in gangs for mutual protection in the Ukraine (Naterer & Godina, 2011), in Accra (Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi, 2010) and in Zimbabwe (Bourdillon, 1994), for example. There is also evidence that children experience abuse, even deliberate genocide, as witnessed in police clear-ups in Brazil (Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch and Scanlon, 1998; Veash, 2000). *Surviving the Streets*, a report on Indian street children in Delhi and Kolkata (2010, in Nayar, 2011), describes children who eke out a living by scavenging, by running errands and by performing acrobatics in the street, but also identifies others who work in factories and rarely leave the workplace. The report acknowledges the impossibility of gauging the numbers involved, as few of these children possess birth certificates or identity cards. They live invisibly, exploited, lost to any safeguards that nominally exist. Such narratives have more in common with Mayhew's (1861) account of industrial London and Oastler's concerns for 'Yorkshire slavery' (1830, in Wilkes, 2011) than with the contemporary Westernized view of the child.

Narratives of national diversity must also consider rural childhoods. These again challenge the Westernized stereotypes, and can be very harsh: many face starvation when crops fail and children are especially vulnerable. Again, case study research focuses attention on particular communities. The work of anthropologists Harkness and Super focused attention on children living in the Kipsigis kokwet (villages) in Kenya (Super and Harkness, 1982; Harkness and Super, 1985, 2001), and these communities have been studied frequently as a consequence. Transient lifestyles in the African Sahel were similarly documented by Hampshire (2002), and there are various accounts of rural childhoods described in *Global Perspectives on Rural Childhood and Youth: Young Rural Lives* (Panelle, Punch and Robson, 2007). Such examples can only lightly reflect the possible range. The lifestyles were documented for other purposes, with geographical data included in order to provide context. Geographical perspectives of childhood go beyond description to consider the influence of landscape, climate and topology and to question what is happening. What is it about the area that encourages people to pursue particular livelihoods, to farm, to herd animals, to process raw materials, to come together in farmsteads or villages or urban areas, and how do such choices affect children? Are the systems sustainable? Do they support current and potential future population densities? Will children live comfortably, if simply, or will they lack basic amenities? What are the natural resources ripe for exploitation? How is industrial activity fuelled? Are there jobs that children can safely do or are they in demand for dangerous work that needs agility or smallness of stature? Are activities local, national or transnational? Are they newly developed or long-established, with practices embedded since colonial times? What does this mean in terms of investment in children as the future workforce?

The geographical, therefore, also draws on the historical, the economic and political. In doing so, it reveals the complex webs that bind families, and the children born to them, to existences that are less than ideal.

Change is difficult: it needs resources; it needs commitment; it needs determination. Global agreement on threshold standards is a start, but implementation is not so easily achieved when customs are embedded and infrastructures fragmented. Nevertheless, the UN Millennium Development goals (2000–2015) played an important role in targeting eight key agendas for global intervention (UN, 2015). Whilst the last two (the environment and partnership) focused on broader developments, the first six goals directly affected children by tackling poverty and hunger (1), child mortality (4) and disease (6); and by promoting universal primary education (2), gender equality (3) and improvements in maternal health (5). The 2030 Agenda intends to press forward with these aims but establish new objectives too. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN DP, 2016) targeted over the next fifteen years are aptly referred to as the ‘Global Goals’, as they focus attention on shared resources, on land and sea. They frame concerns that are replicated across nations, on cities, energy, industry and infrastructures. They also attend to ‘inter-national’ issues: peace and justice, responsible consumption and production, and reducing inequality. This Agenda is a significant step forward, but its activities extend beyond immediate concerns for children’s direct well-being. In Bronfenbrenner’s terms, it addresses the macro-level as this will have consequences at all other levels.

Rights-based perspectives

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) remains a significant milestone for children. In positioning the child as an individual with rights rather than as an adjunct to the family, and in requiring signatories to enforce these changes in national law, the UN CRC gave children a legitimate voice in the decisions affecting their lives. In Western society, compliance led to wide-ranging policy changes, but in the developing world, the effects were less visible. In countries in crisis – those experiencing war, famine, ill-health, extreme poverty and mass immigration – the scale of problems holds back progress. When reviewing the 25 years since the Treaty was signed, UNICEF officials stressed that a ‘recognized right is not necessarily an executed right’ (UNICEF, 2014, p. 1). Executive Director Anthony Lake acknowledged that ‘gains are impressive and important – and prove that common goals and shared effort can drive real change for children on the global, national and local levels’ (p. 2). Although the UN reports ‘substantial progress’, it also states that ‘the task is far from finished’ (p. 11) and that ‘efforts must be stepped up’ (p. 50).

Poverty and affluence

Knowing that millions of children still lack the means of survival (UNICEF, 2014, p. 11) changes our perspective on the problems of the Western world, offering a timely reminder that unequal division of resources is damaging to all. This was made visible through international comparisons made in Wilkinson and Pickett’s *The Spirit Level* (2009), a work that processed data over a thirty-year period to demonstrate that everyone fares better in countries where inequality is less marked. Upon his retirement from world banking, Joseph Stiglitz (2012) revealed the crippling effects of the manipulation of the free market economy by those with power, and identified ways to challenge such activity. Thomas Piketty (2014) examined the cumulative effects of capitalist investment and the need to counter these to prevent civil unrest. Moving beyond the purely economic, Oliver James (2007) claimed that mental health improves when people focus on

their needs rather than their wants. In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam had already used a social capital framework to discuss the ‘civic malaise’ in American society (Putnam, 2000, p. 25). He found pressure of work, suburban lifestyles and reliance on home entertainment, TV – factors that align with the pursuit and consequences of a wealthier lifestyle – to be significant. Seeing that civic disengagement increases generationally, he called for immediate action to reverse this trend. There is a solid evidence base to guide the changes required to meet the new global goals.

The problems of affluence are clearly documented in contemporary descriptions of Western childhoods, and are captured in Sorin’s additional ‘constructs’ (2005). Within her ten-strong typology, the *Snowballing* child describes one who is ‘bribed’ to behave. In the home, material goods are used to minimize demands for attention, and in school, reward systems encourage extrinsic behaviour patterns. When adults lack the energy or confidence to intervene, the unchecked *Out-of-Control* child becomes dysfunctional, is expelled from school and often acquires criminal behaviours. The *Child-as-Commodity* represents the child exploited in the media, posed (and often paid) to market clothes, toys and other consumables. It also refers to localized activities that we might not consider exploitative, noting that polished ‘school’ performances may serve adult rather than children’s interests. Even photographs of children in documents like prospectuses can be a form of exploitation, as they are used to ‘sell’ the institution to others. Images of the *Child-as-Victim* are similarly used to focus public sympathy, and to raise funds to support action for those whose life chances are distorted by war or famine, causing us to ask if the ends justify the means. More positively, the *Agentic* child describes those empowered to make their own choices, reflecting the growing focus on participatory frameworks, a category echoed in Ryan’s (2008) typology, too. Simplifying the constructs to four, Whiteman, De Goia and Mevawalla (2012) place agency within a broader *Social* category, and add a *Cultural* construct that firmly embeds children within society, recalling Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological theory once more.

Conclusion

I would argue that the major issues damaging Western childhoods extend beyond even the fullest list of constructs. I find no mention of the fearfulness provoked by continual media attention to child abuse, perhaps in an effort to minimize its incidence. Society is repeatedly informed whenever a child is hurt or at risk, possibly to excess. In *Paranoid Parenting*, Furedi (2008) claims that anxiety is disproportionate to the actual levels of risk. He reports how parents live in a perpetual state of anxiety, fearing that their children will hurt themselves when they play outside. They might be attacked or abducted, or injured on the road – they could even come to harm in their own bedrooms through accessing inappropriate material online. The family home is no longer a safe haven. Fear causes parents to keep children close, encouraging an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and further constraining both their independent activity and social interaction. Stereotypically, the contemporary Western child is deprived of the freedom to play unfettered. They are unable to explore the natural world we want them to respect, leaving them victim to *nature deficit disorder* (Louv, 2005). Insufficient physical activity, a highly processed Western diet and the easy access to too much food as a result of Western affluence leads many children to gain excessive weight. The *Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity* (WHO, 2016, p. 2) estimated that in 2014, 41 million children under five years old were either overweight or obese. In absolute numbers, it found that the problem was greatest in low- to middle- rather than high-income countries. Migrant and indigenous children are particularly at risk, so countries undergoing rapid change face a dual challenge. They need to manage both excessive

weight gain and nutritional deficiency among their childhood population simultaneously. Both situations carry significant risk of long-term childhood illness.

The UN CRC made each nation's responsibilities towards its children very clear, but the question of when to intervene in an individual child's life remains difficult. Changing family structures demand more flexible attitudes to who cares for children. As David Morgan (1996) posited, it is more useful to think in terms of 'family practices', defining family by what people do together rather than specific roles and persons. Assumptions that the nuclear family is the optimum unit of care no longer dominate. Children live happy lives in lone-parent, reconstituted and extended units. Families enjoy differing gender structures and differing levels of legality, and children live with substitute carers provided by the state when all else fails. The discourse is one of 'families of choice' (Weston, 1991, in Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2011), and this includes both adoptive families and those termed 'families of origin' (Benavente and Gains, 2008). Increasing longevity is changing families, too. Within the Western world, the survival of ageing relations is reintroducing an intergenerational element still deliberately common elsewhere. As the number of siblings shrinks and the age range expands, we see an increase in what Brannen (2003) calls 'beanpole' families. Families will differ in attitudes as well as structure. They may be authoritative (firm but reasonable), authoritarian (controlling), permissive (indulgent) (Baumrind, 1966), even neglectful in their style of parenting (Maccoby and Martin, 1983, in Bee and Boyd, 2012).

Within Westernized societies, these changes are highly theorized and documented. One consequence of higher levels of educational attendance and, coevally, attendance at higher levels, is this tendency to research and label everything in order to make sense of it and, perhaps, to generalize. Because we frame our changing understandings, we can chart and analyse them. We can claim a move towards a more inclusive society, as we can identify a trend that moves from a medical or deficit model of thinking (one that defines difference as an individual problem to be solved through expert intervention) to a social model (that sees how normative social expectations and a failure to set enabling threshold standards restrict access to those who cannot conform) (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002). More recently we have favoured an 'affirmative model' (Swain and French, 2000), one that embraces the realization that everyone needs support to enjoy their *only* life to the full. This is a model that challenges stigma and patronizing behaviour, a model more in line with the participatory frameworks already discussed. These models of inclusion emanate from work on disability, but can be more widely applied. An affirmative approach is vital if children are to be enabled to live fulfilling lives whatever their physical and social heritage.

The extent to which such theorization is useful, however, should be continually questioned, as should its adaptation or applicability beyond the fields in which it was derived. This is particularly the case when we are considering global needs and practices. In Early Years Care and Education, we talk about Culturally and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Hyun, 1996), offering support that is appropriate to a child's ethnicity, social background and level of competence. At national levels, these terms could encompass broader understandings of culture and development, to make sure that Western styles are not equated with 'best'. With the introduction of the new Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, we are only beginning to agree that changes have to be multidirectional, and that resources must be shared and redistributed rather than simply increased. For some to have more, some will have to accept less and the grounds for division cannot replicate existing patterns of power and wealth. Children across the globe need more equal 'opportunities', but action must take account of the diversity of needs and wants, and the immediate and longer-term significance of different choices. If we care about children, we have to care about the broader picture. We have to address issues that govern lives

at the macro level as well as the daily care decisions that enable children to survive and flourish while young.

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